Doctoral Dissertation

The Role of the Frontier Elites in the Ottoman State-Building Processes: A Case Study on the Mihaloğlu Family

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

This dissertation challenges the widely accepted patrimonial model of Ottoman governance and reconceptualizes empire-building processes from the perspective of "peripheral" elites during the period of Ottoman imperial consolidation. Departing from the conventional center-periphery dichotomy often applied in the study of pre-modern state and empire-building in Eurasian history, it argues for a strong interdependence and close entanglement between the supposedly opposed "center" and "periphery" in the context of Ottoman state-building. Through a detailed examination of the Mihaloğlu dynasty, a family of frontier lords commonly marginalized in contemporary interpretations of state-building, this study sheds new light on the power dynamics and governance structures within the empire. It contends that the Ottoman frontiers and their socio-political elites were not peripheral to Ottoman politics but were, in fact, key agents in molding domestic governance, central imperial policies, and transregional dynamics.

Adopting a micro-historical approach, the dissertation scrutinizes the "infrastructural capacity" of the Mihaloğlu dynasty and demonstrates that they were not simply subsumed into the centralizing mechanisms of the Ottoman state/dynasty, as is commonly argued. On the contrary, this study reveals that they formed a significant "power node," capable of steering domestic governance and managing regional politics. These frontier elites presided over extensive networks of dependencies, forming vast military-administrative households that were the backbone of elite provincial society. Moreover, entangled in intra-elite alliances both within and beyond the bounds of Ottoman suzerainty, the frontier lords actively participated in shaping domestic and international politics, influencing broader Ottoman policies and governmental capacities. This involvement positioned them among the highest ranks of Ottoman elite society, deeply invested in the formation of the imperial socio-political landscape.

Ultimately, the dissertation moves beyond the conventional sultan-centric narrative of centralization, advocating for a reevaluation of Ottoman state-building that recognizes previously "marginalized" frontier elites as active participants in the imperial project. By examining the role of regional social actors in Ottoman governance, this study offers new insights into how provincial elites shaped imperial rule. These findings broaden the analytical scope of state- and empire-building processes in early modern empires, with implications that extend beyond the Ottoman context.

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INTRODUCTION

The processes of Ottoman state formation, particularly from the mid-fifteenth century, are widely regarded as synonymous with sultanic centralization and patrimonialism, in which the sultanic household is seen as the sole distributive power in the Ottoman realm, consolidating authority by curbing the influence of other social actors. This dissertation shifts the focus from the ruling Ottoman dynasty to examine state-building processes from the perspective of another power center: the Mihaloğlu dynasty of frontier lords. By analyzing this dynasty's rise to power, recruitment, and economic strategies during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and illustrating its significant impact on political, military, administrative, and diplomatic developments through extensive kinship and patronage networks, the dissertation underscores a more collaborative relationship with Ottoman dynastic power. By highlighting the essential role played by these "provincial" elites in shaping the empire's socio-cultural fabric and foreign relations, it challenges the conventional historiography that defines sultan-centered centralization as *the* defining feature of Ottoman state formation. Instead, it argues that Ottoman state-building was characterized by a significant degree of decentralization and the active involvement of non-state actors who contributed substantially to the imperial project.

THE DEBATE TO DATE: OTTOMANISTS' STANDPOINT ON STATE-BUILDING

The longevity of the Ottoman Empire, spanning more than six centuries, has naturally led historians to divide its history into distinct periods. Although the traditional periodization of Ottoman history, like older historiographical interpretations of other empires, followed the rise–decline–fall paradigm, the proliferation of Ottomanist studies in the past decades has moved decisively away from this model.[2] Compelling arguments have dismantled the entrenched notion that the Ottoman state entered a period of decline at the turn of the sixteenth century, with the concept of "transformation" now firmly embedded in the historiographical repertoire on post-sixteenth-century Ottoman history.[3] Currently, scholars are increasingly more mindful in

[2] For the traditional interpretations see, among others, Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Studies in the History of Turkey, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Colin Heywood (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1: *Empire of the Gazis: the rise and decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280–1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
[3] Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Suraiya N. Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change, 1590–1699," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 413–622; Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Rifa'at Ali

employing rigid time frames for different periods in Ottoman history, proposing varied periodizations in accordance with a wide-range of political, social, military, economic, religious, and cultural processes of the time.[4] Similarly to the "decline," the "rise" paradigm has also received some critical reading by historians, where the "early centuries" of the Ottoman state are no longer perceived as a block category of a "classical age" of the pre-seventeenth century, but rather as a continuous transformation with different components of that process.[5] The concept of "rise" has hence shifted to "emergence" and "expansion," while the reign of Süleyman I (1520–1566), once considered the "Golden Age," is no longer seen as a key reference point for the empire's state-building processes.[6] Acknowledging that the Ottoman history was characterized by different stages with varying degrees of consolidation and decentralization since its inception at the turn of the thirteenth century, scholars generally agree that the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) was *the* watershed moment, signaling the beginning of the polity's imperial phase.[7]

Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Pál Fodor, *The Business of State: Ottoman Finance Administration and Ruling Elites in Transition (1580s–1615)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2018); Seyfi Kenan and Selçuk Akşin Somel, eds., *Dimensions of Transformation in the Ottoman Empire from the Late Medieval Age to Modernity. In Memory of Metin Kunt* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021). Currently, there is a growing scholarly awareness that "transformation" as an analytical concept has its limits and masks other processes, institutions, and individual agents that are left out from this catch-all term. Cf. Olivier Bouquet, "From Decline to Transformation: Reflections on a New Paradigm in Ottoman History," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 60 (2022): 27–60.

[4] Halil İnalcık, "Periods in Ottoman History," in *The Turks*, ed. Hasan Celâl Güzel, C. Cem Oğuz, and Osman Karatay, vol. 3: *Ottomans* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2002), 15–21; Jane Hathaway, "Problems of Periodization in Ottoman History: The Fifteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 20, no. 2 (1996): 25–31; Linda T. Darling, "Another Look at Periodization in Ottoman History," *Turkish Studies Association Journal* 26 (2002): 19–28; Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, eds., *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, eds., *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries*, 15 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022).

[5] Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800* (London: Continuum UK, 2008); Gábor Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021).

[6] Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead, eds., *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1995); Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*; Kaya Şahin, *Peerless among Princes: The Life and Times of Sultan Süleyman* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2023); Derin Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 86–102.

[7] Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*; Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); Finkel, *Osman's Dream*; Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

One of the most enduring "transformational" phases in Ottoman history is, hence, closely linked to Sultan Mehmed II, whose focused and systematic empire-building efforts are widely credited with transforming the Ottoman state from a frontier principality into an empire.[8] These efforts were marked with increased institutionalization, consolidation of sultanic authority, centralization of the army, patrimonialization of official posts, and prebendization of the land. Mehmed's consolidation efforts occurred at the expense of the powerful social groups and elites that had shaped the proto-imperial, frontier stage of Ottoman history, in contrast to the earlier stages of state formation in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, when the Ottoman ruler was "first among equals," maintaining a suzerain-vassal or ally relationship with these elites.[9] Starting in the third quarter of the fourteenth century, however, the Ottoman rulers sought to curb the influence of these groups by enforcing measures to institutionalize Ottoman dynastic supremacy, focusing on the centrifugal tendencies of the old aristocratic Anatolian families and, more specifically, the frontier lords in the Balkans, who exercised considerable autonomy and carved out their own spheres of influence in the newly conquered European territories. These measures—the introduction of a centralized collection of a share of the war booty, namely the slaves acquired during the raiding expeditions of the marcher lords, and the emergence of a centralized administrative apparatus, exemplified by the appointment of the first military judge (*kadı asker*)—, it was argued, were exemplary of the tensions between the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, which shaped the Ottoman polity until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, when "the triumph of centralized absolutism was sealed," and the social forces of the frontiers (*gazi* warriors and antinomian dervishes) were largely subsumed and marginalized.[10]

This consolidation of sultanic authority, as widely acknowledged, took its most pronounced form in the expansion of the sultanic palace household of slaves, which became the

Press, 2008); Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*; Ágoston, *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe*.

[8] Metin Kunt, "State and Sultan up to the Age of Süleyman: Frontier Principality to World Empire," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1995), 3–29; Gábor Ágoston, "The Ottomans: From Frontier Principality to Empire," in *The Practice of Strategy: From Alexander the Great to the Present*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Colin S. Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105–31; Kaya Şahin, "From Frontier Principality to Early Modern Empire: Limits and Capabilities of Ottoman Governance," in *The Routledge History of the Renaissance*, ed. William Caferro (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 321–36; Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West": The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[9] Most markedly singled out by Lowry, *The Nature*, 55–94; Heath W. Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Publications, 2008), 16–58. Cf. Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 141–154; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*, 318–25; Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 1–21.

[10] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 14, 112–113; 142–143; 151–154.

primary source for bureaucratic and military personnel, extending sultanic governance throughout the Ottoman territories and largely displacing the pre-existing elites. The establishment of a larger slave household, along with the growth of a strong central army (comprising both *timariot* and Janissary forces), reinforced sultanic power, exemplifying the Ottoman patrimonial model of governance. This transformation of the Ottoman household was portrayed as the evolution from a "feudal kingdom" to a "patrimonial empire," in which the Ottoman ruler in the face of Mehmed II made a transition from being a "marcher lord" to a "great lord" and finally a patrimonial sovereign, replacing the previous feudal relations by ties of kinship based on "political slavery." Developing his court into a center of political power, the sultan (in the period from 1450 to 1566) now stood at the apex of a pyramidal structure of political control, which he exercised through his palace-bred slave-servants, who in turn substituted the Anatolian and Balkan nobility.[11]

Hence, modern historiography's conception of the Ottoman imperial formation after the second half of the fifteenth century largely adopts Max Weber's theoretical model of "patrimonial authority" and envisages the Ottoman state essentially as a patrimonial establishment, in which all power emanated from the sultanic household. Weber's concept of "bureaucratic patrimonialism," which he termed "sultanism,"[12] was first adopted by Halil İnalcık to support his statist interpretation of Ottoman history,[13] but the patrimonial power dynamics of the post-fifteenth century are still frequently highlighted in scholarship, particularly when contrasted with later periods, during which "patrimonial sultanic power" became more diffuse, and other social actors emerged as significant agents in their own right.[14]

Karen Barkey is one of the few scholars who have approached Ottoman state formation from a more sociological perspective. Barkey offers a sociological account of how a small group of individuals could alter their social relationships and transform them into enduring structures of power. Her concept of the state also builds on Weber's idea of a monopoly on

[11] For this formulation, see in particular Baki Tezcan, "The Second Empire: The Transformation of the Ottoman Polity in the Early Modern Era," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29, no. 3 (2009): 556–72; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81–93.

[12] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922). Cf. its English translation Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (University of California Press, 1978).

[13] Halil İnalcık, "Comments on 'Sultanism': Max Weber's Typification of the Ottoman Polity," *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1992): 49–72; Halil İnalcık, "Decision Making in the Ottoman State," in *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Caesar E. Farah (Kirksville, Mo., USA: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1993), 9–18.

[14] Tezcan, "The Second Empire"; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 79–114; Fodor, *The Business of State: Ottoman Finance Administration and Ruling Elites in Transition (1580s–1615)*, 21–36.

power but extends it by incorporating historical institutionalism and network analysis. Barkey interprets Ottoman political success as the outcome of a flexible and adaptive process of "brokerage across structural holes," allowing for the vertical integration of diverse networks under Ottoman control while maintaining their horizontal segmentation to preserve central authority. She likened this structural arrangement to the "hub-and-spoke" pattern of a wheel, whereby each spoke was attached to the center but was less directly related to the others, providing "power and influence to the state as the central actor that could behave as the broker among different sectors."[15] Hence, Barkey's framework, in essence, reinterprets the statist approach to Ottoman history, continuing to downplay the role of social elites in the imperial landscape.[16] Moreover, it reinforces the notion that the "state" and the "sultan" were co-terminus entities, forcefully implying that the state/ruler possessed autonomous power and maintained a largely subordinate relationship with society.

Beyond the Field of Ottoman Studies: Theories of State Power

While studies on Ottoman state formation, like those on other Islamic entities,[17] generally lack a strong focus on theoretical models of state-building, the few that do tend to adopt Max Weber's analytical framework. Weber's concept of bureaucratic patrimonialism has indeed been particularly influential in shaping further theories of state formation. His emphasis on the rationalization and bureaucratization of the state remains central to analyzing the development and functions of state power, while his focus on the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of physical coercion within a defined territory has provided a foundation for historians and sociologists alike to develop additional analytical tools.

Charles Tilly's work, for example, focused primarily on the coercive role of the state, emphasizing "war-making" and "state-making" as fundamental processes in state formation. He defined states as "coercion-wielding organizations," underscoring their key functions: coercion, extraction (through taxation), and protection. For Tilly, the process of state-building was inherently competitive, both within polities—among different internal groups vying for

[15] Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 67–108.
[16] Barkey's "hub-and-spoke model" has been adopted by other Ottomanist historians working on the later period to highlight the contrast between earlier eras and the eighteenth century, when powerful social elites emerged in the Ottoman provinces, and had started actively to participate in Ottoman governance. Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).
[17] A recent comparative volume on state-building processes during the fifteenth-century Islamic West Asia engages in a more comprehensive manner with the dominant state-formation theories and places them in a wider Islamic context. Jo van Steenbergen, ed., *Trajectories of State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Islamic West-Asia: Eurasian Parallels, Connections and Divergences* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020).

power—and between polities, as states contended with external rivals. The interplay of capital and coercion, in his view, was crucial in shaping the paths of state formation, with states needing to balance the accumulation of resources (capital) and the application of force (coercion) to maintain control and expand their influence. This dynamic interplay helped determine the relative success or failure of states in consolidating power and achieving stability.[18]

Pierre Bourdieu, for his part, extended Weber's idea of the state's monopoly on legitimate violence by introducing the concept of "symbolic violence" alongside physical coercion. He argued that the state not only exercises physical violence to enforce its laws and control but also employs symbolic violence, which operates through the imposition of cultural norms, beliefs, and social classifications that are internalized by the population. This dual control over both the material and symbolic realms allows the state to maintain its dominance and authority with minimal resistance, as the governed come to accept its legitimacy as part of the natural order of things.[19]

While Michael Mann also recognized the state's monopoly on rule-making backed by force, he further explored the concept of the "autonomous power of the state." Mann's multicausal analysis of state power emphasized that this power is not simply a top-down imposition but is embedded in the state's capacity to penetrate society through centralized, coercive institutions. He highlighted how state authority is exercised through a dialectic of power relations that operates across various social structures. Mann has theorized two models of state power: "despotic power" and "infrastructural power." In contrast to the former, the latter model envisages that state elites have the ability to penetrate the structures of society and hence implement their political decisions not autocratically but in close cooperation with other actors/social classes and elites, thus forming a dialectic of social development. His approach, hence, acknowledges the interplay between state institutions and societal forces, where the state both shapes and is shaped by these dynamics, allowing it to maintain control and enforce authority within a complex web of social relations.[20]

Marian Coman, utilizing Michael Mann's framework of "despotic" and "infrastructural power," argues that Wallachia's state formation followed a pattern similar to other medieval

[18] Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, A.D. 990-1990* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
[19] Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 1–18; Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).
[20] Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results," *European Journal of Sociology* 25 (1984): 185–213; Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1: *A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

states, with weak infrastructural power initially, which gradually strengthened as state structures integrated with society during the early modern period. This process reflected the broader European trend of territorialization, where control shifted from coercive power to institutional authority. Coman challenges the dominant historiographical view that Wallachia developed primarily through internal dynamics, emphasizing the significant influence of external forces such as Hungary, Byzantium, and the Mongol Empire. By applying a comparative framework, Coman underscores that Wallachia's state evolution was shaped by both internal and external factors, aligning with Mann's broader analysis of how states exert control through societal and geopolitical relationships.

Building further on Michael Mann's theoretical framework of the state's infrastructural power, Karin J. MacHardy developed an alternative model of early modern rulership with a particular focus on the role of elites in the expansion of the Habsburg state. MacHardy introduced the concept of the "co-ordinating state," in which she views state-building as an ongoing process of negotiation and collaboration between rulers and elites. In this model, elites actively participated in extending the ruler's authority, helping to regulate social relations, establish central institutions, and build larger armies. However, MacHardy also emphasizes that while the elites shared some goals with the Habsburg rulers, they simultaneously pursued their own distinct objectives, such as protecting regional privileges and securing their local authority. This dual growth of infrastructural power—both by the ruler and the Estates—intensified their interdependence, as the elites played a crucial role in the state's ability to govern effectively, while also strengthening their own position within the evolving political framework. Thus, MacHardy's model highlights the complex and symbiotic relationship between central authority and local elites, where mutual interests facilitated the expansion of state power but also allowed for the persistence of local autonomy.[21]

I find both Mann's framework of dialectic power relations and MacHardy's concept of the "co-ordinating" state particularly valuable for studying Ottoman state-building. They provide a compelling lens through which to challenge the dominant historiographical model of "sultanic patrimonialism" and offer a means to critically examine the "infrastructural power" of repeatedly overlooked and marginalized social elites, such as the Balkan frontier lords. By focusing on the infrastructural power of these elites, particularly in the context of regional governance, this approach can lead to a deeper understanding of the agency exercised by various

[21] Karin J. MacHardy, *War, Religion and Court Patronage in Habsburg Austria: The Social and Cultural Dimensions of Political Interaction, 1521–1622* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 21–46.

social actors in shaping the broader Ottoman imperial structure. This shift in perspective has the potential to move beyond the prevailing statist approach to Ottoman state-building, highlighting the contributions of multiple forces in the creation and maintenance of Ottoman power. It opens new avenues for exploring how these social elites, often relegated to the margins of historical analysis, played a pivotal role in the formation of regional and imperial governance, challenging the idea of an all-powerful, centralized sultanic authority.

Past Research, Current Objectives and Methodological Approach to Studying the Frontier Elites

Although early Ottoman state-building has long been a subject of scholarly interest, much of the current research focuses primarily on the development of the Ottoman governmental institutions and the evolution of imperial, including religious, ideology.[22] There is often an overemphasis on the central role of the state/sultan, leading to a methodological limitation that frames Ottoman state-building in binary terms, such as center-periphery, centripetal-centrifugal, or suzerain-subject. This approach tends to overlook the active role of other sociopolitical actors who were instrumental in shaping the power dynamics among various stakeholders during the early Ottoman state formation, thus playing a crucial role in its socio-cultural development.

Starting with the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans since the mid-fourteenth century, such actors were several distinguished lineages of military commanders (from the Evrenosoğlu, Mihaloğlu, Paşa Yiğitoğlu, and Malkoçoğlu families) who took part in virtually all military campaigns in Europe. These frontier lords (*uc begis*), played a crucial role in the expansion of the Ottoman control into the Balkans, operating with significant independence while helping conquer regions such as Thessaly, Macedonia, and Serbia.[23] Moreover, as a more recent upsurge in the study of the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans has revealed, these powerful lords were the ones with whom the Balkan nobility collaborated for their own political ends, hence facilitating the process of conquest and integration, blurring the lines between conquerors and

[22] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*; Linda T. Darling, "The Development of Ottoman Governmental Institutions in the Fourteenth Century: A Reconstruction," in *Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Community Essays in Honour of Suraiya Faroqhi*, ed. Vera Costantini and Markus Koller (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 17–34.

[23] Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "La conquête d'Andrianople par les Turcs: la pénétration turque en Thrace et la valeur des chroniques ottomans," *Travaux et mémoires* 1 (1965): 439–61; Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "En marge d'un acte concernant le penğyek et les aqınğı," *Revue des études islamiques* 37, no. 1 (1969): 21–47.

the conquered. These alliances were often a matter of survival in a fragmented political landscape where neighboring powers also played significant roles.[24]

Past research has also revealed that during the Ottoman conquest of Europe these frontier lords played a crucial role in subjugating vast regions, conducting relentless plundering raids that weakened the targeted territories. These lords were often entrusted with the governance of newly conquered frontier zones, where they exercised considerable autonomy from the central Ottoman administration.[25] There, the dynastic clans of these frontier lords formed large hereditary estates (in the form of endowments, *vakıf*), which were transformed into ancestral residences and seats of power through vast architectural patronage.[26] Having emerged as distinct power elites and sociopolitical entities in their own right with substantial financial and military resources, these influential families exercised political authority as well, attested most categorically during several dynastic struggles in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Ottoman pretenders relied heavily on the support of the Balkan *beg*s to ascend the throne.[27]

Commendable efforts were made lately to assess the regional power of the frontier lords' families in the face of their hereditarily held large landed foundations (*vakıf*s) in the districts which they previously conquered. This growing body of scholarly publications underlines the instrumental role of the architectural patronage of these families, which is interpreted as a legitimizing device to maintain their territorial control and to assert their regional power. Noteworthy in this respect is the pioneering work of Machiel Kiel, who drew attention to the architectural patronage of the marcher lords in a number of localities in the Balkans and thus opened

[24] Emir O. Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386–1463)* [*The Bosnian Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire (1386–1463)*] (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2019); Oliver Jens Schmitt, "The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and Its Historical Arenas: on the Relationship between Regional and Supraregional History," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 59 (2021): 9–35; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Traîtres ou champions de la survie? Les seigneurs de tendance ottomane dans les Balkans à l'époque de la conquête ottomane," *Travaux et mémoires* 25, no. 1 (2021): 213–75; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "'Sie kämpften mit den Türken, wider Willen zwar, aber es war nicht anders möglich': Beobachtungen zur serbisch-osmanischen Verflechtung zwischen der Schacht am Amselfeld und dem Untergang des serbischen Despotats (1389–1459)," *Zeischrift für Balkanologie* 58, no. 1–2 (2022): 131–52.

[25] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*, 186–188, 260–265; Lowry, *The Nature*, 45–94; Pál Fodor, "Ottoman Warfare, 1300–1453," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Kate Fleet, vol. 1: *Byzantium to Turkey, 1071–1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 204–5.

[26] Recent systematic studies on the founding father of the Evrenosoğlu family and on the territories under the family's direct control have demonstrated that convincingly. Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*; Heath W. Lowry and İsmail E. Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar: Notes & Documents* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Press, 2010). A general assessment of the architectural heritage of members of the frontier lords' families in the Balkans is presented by Machiel Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Kate Fleet, vol. 1: *Byzantium to Turkey, 1071–1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 138–91.

[27] Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 135–94; H. Erdem Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 91–107.

the way for a more detailed analysis of their role in the governing of the provinces.[28] Recently, the systematic studies by Heath Lowry on the Evrenosoğlu family of frontier lords and the territories under their direct control have demonstrated that its members were not only the actual conquerors of large areas in the Balkans, where they established their headquarters, but were indeed responsible for the infrastructural development and shaping of the regions under their governance, both transmitting the permanent intentions of the Ottoman presence there and expressing the governing mastery of the power-holders.[29] The interest in the history of the marcher lords' families and the lands they controlled has recently proliferated, hence enriching the understanding that outside the palace, the patronage activities of the frontier lords in the Balkans constituted a distinct type of power in the provinces.[30] Rarely, however, the architectural patronage of these families in their principal cities and immediate landed possessions is interpreted within the larger political dynamics that were taking place within and outside the Ottoman state

[28] A number of Kiel's studies are accessible in his collected volume of articles Machiel Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990). A more general assessment of the architectural heritage of members of the noble families and its role in conquering the Balkan territories is presented by the author in his Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453."

[29] Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*; Heath W. Lowry, *The Evrenos Family & the City of Selânik (Thessaloniki): Who Built the Hamza Beğ Câmi'i & Why?* (İstanbul: Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi, 2010); Lowry and Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar*; Heath W. Lowry, *Fourteenth Century Ottoman Realities: In Search of Hâcı-Gâzi Evrenos* (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University Press, 2012).

[30] It is impossible to cite here all the studies dealing with the raider-commanders' families and their architectural patronage for they pursued a rich program of building, single representatives of which have been the subject of scholarly attention. More recent works addressing these families and their architectural patronage in a broader frame include: H. Çetin Arslan, *Türk Akıncı Beyleri ve Balkanların İmarına Katkıları (1300–1451)* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001); Theoharis Stavrides, "Alternative Dynasties: The Turahanids and the Ottomans in the Fifteenth Century," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 36 (2011): 145–71; Theoharis Stavrides, "*Uç Beys*, Dervishes, and *Yürüks*: The Cultural Politics of the Turahanoğlu of Thessaly," in *Crafting History: Essays on the Ottoman World and beyond in Honor of Cemal Kafadar*, ed. Rachel Goshgarian, Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, and Ali Yaycıoğlu (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2023), 219–34; Levent Kayapınar, "Osmanlı Uç Beyi Evrenos Bey Ailesinin Menşei, Yünanistan Coğrafyasındaki Faaliyetleri ve Eserleri," *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1, no. 8 (2004): 133–42; Levent Kayapınar, "Teselya Bölgesinin Fatihi Turahan Bey Ailesi ve XV.–XVI. Yüzyıllardaki Hayır Kurumları," *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1, no. 10 (2005): 183–95; Mustafa Özer, "Turhanoğulları'nın Balkanlar'daki İmar Faaliyetleri," in *Balkanlar'da İslâm Medeniyeti II. Milletlerarası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri, Tiran, Arnavudluk, 4–7 Aralık 2003* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2006), 247–79; Mustafa Özer, "Mihaloğulları'nın Anadolu ve Balkanlar'daki İmar Faaliyetleri," in *Doğu–Batı Bağlamında Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Kültürü Kongresi Bildirileri (Konstantin Preslavski Üniversitesi, 26–29 Ekim 2002 Şumnu–Bulgaristan)* (Şumen, 2004), 344–64; Ayşe Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları (XV.–XVI. Yüzyıl)," *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1, no. 10 (2005): 169–81; Orlin Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler," *OTAM (Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi)* 33 (2013): 229–44; Ayşegül Kılıç, *Bir Osmanlı Akıncı Beyi: Gazi Evrenos Bey* (İstanbul: İthaki, 2014); Grigor Boykov, "In Search of Vanished Ottoman Monuments in the Balkans: Minnetoğlu Mehmed Beg's Complex in Konuş Hisarı," in *Monuments, Patrons, Contexts : Papers on Ottoman Europe Presented to Machiel Kiel*, ed. Maximilian Hartmuth and Ayşe Dilsiz (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 47–68; Mariya Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland: The Architectural Patronage of the Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family," in *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, ed. Maria Baramova, Grigor Boykov, and Ivan Parvev (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 185–220.

at the time. Several studies, nevertheless, suggest that a discernible change occurred after the mid-fifteenth century when the architectural patronage in the European Ottoman provinces shifted from the agency of the frontier warriors in favor of the new palace-bred elites of the Ottoman capital.[31]

Another set of studies that combine the cross reading of architectural evidence, archival sources, and hagiographical works of antinomian dervish groups (especially the *abdal*s), which were textualized at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, provide further insights into the impacts of the Ottoman centralizing dynastic policies, which curtailed the authority of the frontier elites and disaffected several other elements of the socio-cultural landscape of the frontiers that were closely associated with them. Current scholarship unanimously argues that the centralizing sultanic policies of the time, which went hand in hand with intensified Sunnitizing measures evident since the time of Mehmed II,[32] alienated the increasingly marginalized segments of the frontiers (the frontier lords, the antinomian dervishes and the semi-nomadic *yürük*s) and drew them closer together in response.[33] This alliance of the dissatisfied groups of the frontier milieu was headed by the Balkan frontier lords, who enthusi-

[31] Maximilian Hartmuth, "The History of Centre-Periphery Relations as a History of Style in Ottoman Provincial Architecture," in *Monuments, Patrons, Contexts : Papers on Ottoman Europe Presented to Machiel Kiel*, ed. Maximilian Hartmuth and Ayşe Dilsiz (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 14–25; Maximilian Hartmuth, "A Late-Fifteenth-Century Change in the Rapport of Friday Mosque and Ottoman City? A Case Study of Macedonia, Centre and Periphery? Islamic Architecture in Ottoman Macedonia, 1383–1520," Working Paper #2 (https://www.academia.edu/34115981/A_LATE_FIFTEENTH_CENTURY_CHANGE_IN_THE_RAPPORT_OF_FRIDAY_MOSQUE_AND_OTTOMAN_CITY_A_CASE_STUDY_OF_MACEDONIA, n.d.). This change in architectural patronage was more apparent during the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566). See Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (London: Reaktion, 2005), 47–56; Güneş Işıksel, "Ottoman Power Holders in the Balkans (1353–1580): A Case of Upward and Downward Elite Mobility," in *Medieval Bosnia and South-East European Relations: Political, Religious, and Cultural Life at the Adriatic Crossroads*, ed. Dženan Dautović, Emir O. Filipović, and Neven Isailović (Amsterdam: Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 85–95. An important step, taken by Umur, was to assess how this overall change affected the private domains of the frontier lords and its implications for their own patronage programs. Yasemin Umur, "Reconstructing Yenice-i Vardar: Patronage of the Evrenosoğlu Family" (MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2008).

[32] Derin Terzioğlu, "How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion," *Turcica* 44 (2012): 301–38. On the Ottoman Sunnitization project cf. Tijana Krstić, "State and Religion, 'Sunnitization' and 'Confessionalism' in Süleyman's Time," in *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*, ed. Pál Fodor (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 65–91; Krstić and Terzioğlu, *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*.

[33] Halil İnalcık, "Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilāyetnāmesi," in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1993), 19–36; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 45–48; Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

astically patronized and endowed principal gathering places of the non-Sunna minded antinomian dervishes both in the Balkans and in Anatolia.[34] From the end of the fifteenth century, these shrines and the antinomian dervishes associated with them were often targeted by the state elites on the ground as heretics. The process intensified with the growing political and religious rivalry with the Safavids and peaked in the sixteenth century when a more centrally coordinated effort was made to strengthen Sunni Islam. Further Sunnitizing measures, initiated by the Ottoman dynasty, but in which different agents—Sufi orders with more pronounced *sunna* consciousness and Ottoman grandees—also took an active role, seem to have intensified in the sixteenth century, especially during the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566).[35] They appear to have targeted in an orchestrated manner the dervish shrines patronized by the frontier lords' families, and hence by extension – the patronage network of these dynastic clans, which was eventually overcome by the clientelistic network of the Sunnitizing agents.[36] Apparently, this was a long process that stretched through most of the sixteenth century and outlived the reign of Süleyman I, as it also involved multiple agents with their own political and religious agendas.[37] Further investigation into the dynamics of the provincial power struggles between different actors would undoubtedly elucidate this multi-layered and protracted process. It also has the potential to reveal what were the reactions of the frontier lords to the centralizing and Sunnitizing measures and what was their involvement in their implementation or rejection.

Even though recent scholarship acknowledges the prominent role of frontier lords' families during the first two centuries of Ottoman history, the understanding of their contributions remains fragmented both spatially and thematically. Different strands in the historiography tend to focus either on their political factionalism and involvement in Ottoman dynastic struggles or

[34] Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire*; Rıza Yıldırım, "History Beneath Clouds of Legend: Seyyid Ali Sultan and His Place in Early Ottoman History According to Legends, Narratives, and Archival Evidence," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 15, no. 1–2 (2009): 21–57; Rıza Yıldırım, *Rumeli'nin Fethinde ve Türkleşmesinde Öncülük Etmiş Bir Gâzi Derviş: Seyyid Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli) ve Velâyetnâmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007); Rıza Yıldırım, "'Heresy' as a Voice of Tribal Protest against Bureaucratic State: The Bektashi Case of Seyyid Rustem Gazi in the Ottoman Rumelia," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3–4 (2011): 22–46; Mariya Kiprovska, "The Mihaloğlu Family: *Gazi* Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 32 (2008): 193–222; Levent Kayapınar, "Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey Vakfı ve Bayezid Baba Âsitanesi," *Alevelik - Bektaşilik Araştırma Degisi* 1 (2009): 105–15; Levent Kayapınar, "Balkanlarda Erken Dönem Osmanlı Akıncı Uçbeyleri Bektaşi Miydiler?," in *Doğumunun 800. Yılında Hacı Bektaş Veli Sempozyumu Nevşehir, 17-18 Ağustos 2009): Bildiriler*, ed. Filiz Kılıç (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, 2009), 245–67; Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West": The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 49–93.

[35] Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization."

[36] For the importance of the clientelistic network of Sokollu Mehmed Paşa and the Halveti preachers in overcoming the patronage network of the frontier lords centered on the dervish lodges which they patronized in the Eastern Balkans see Grigor Boykov, "*Abdāl*-Affiliated Convents and 'Sunnitizing' Halveti Dervishes in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli," in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 308–40.

[37] Boykov, "*Abdāl*-Affiliated Convents".

their territorial estates, illustrating their growing regional authority. As a result, modern studies fall short of fully explaining their role in Ottoman state-building, beyond recognizing them as influential power holders targeted by the centralizing efforts of the Ottoman dynasty.

The established historiographical narrative, which views these dynasties as "marginalized" by the mid-fifteenth century, hence warrants serious reevaluation. Although the prevailing perspective assumes that the centralizing policies of the Ottoman sultans significantly weakened the authority of the Balkan frontier lords, empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Despite the scattered nature of current findings, sufficient evidence has emerged to challenge the notion that sultanic authority greatly diminished the power of these lords. Local studies have shown that many frontier families retained substantial control over their provincial domains, governing frontier districts through hereditary estates centered on *vakıf* foundations and commanding large military forces. Their local authority persisted well into the sixteenth century, even as provincial appointments increasingly favored palace elites, particularly the *kul*s of *kul-devşirme* origin.[38] Furthermore, their decisive role in Selim I's accession struggle, as demonstrated by Erdem Çıpa, underscores their ongoing political relevance, directly challenging the notion of their diminished power. In parallel, Zeynep Yürekli has highlighted their funding of significant architectural projects around principal dervish shrines in Anatolia, which had far-reaching social impacts. Together, this evidence suggests that the frontier lords played a far more crucial role in Ottoman governance and state-building than previously acknowledged, and their influence was not easily erased by the state/sultan's centralizing efforts. Nonetheless, the question of whether they were truly marginalized, as suggested by Yürekli and Çıpa, is only peripherally addressed in more general studies, allowing the "idealistic" view of sultanic patrimonialism—one that privileges the imperial center and the sultanic household—to remain dominant, while obscuring the intricate web of power relations and local structures that persisted in the provinces.

Building on recent studies that raise doubts about whether the power of the frontier lords was considerably curtailed by sultanic patrimonial authority, this dissertation shifts the focus away from the imperial household to explore the networks of the provincial military elites. Departing from the received wisdom that the sultanic household stood at the apex of numerous smaller households,[39] I will argue that a closer examination of the elite households of the Balkan

[38] M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devri Başlarında Rumeli Eyaleti, Livaları, Şehir ve Kasabaları," *Belleten* 20 (1956): 247–94; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*; Işıksel, "Ottoman Power Holders in the Balkans (1353–1580): A Case of Upward and Downward Elite Mobility."

[39] Metin Kunt, "Royal and Other Households," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 103–15.

frontier lords, each with its own horizontally and vertically integrated networks, has the potential to uncover not only the sources of their local authority but also the growing interdependence between rulers and elites during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—to emphasize just the period in the focus of this thesis, when provincial elites were supposed to have been rendered powerless. This interdependence may explain why these frontier lords were not simply eradicated but continued to play a significant role throughout the Ottoman Empire's existence, and would reveal their active participation in the consolidation of the Ottoman state.[40]
This process is examined in this dissertation through a micro-historical study of the Mihaloğlu dynasty of frontier lords.

The Mihaloğlu family originated from Bithynia, where their eponymous ancestor, Köse Mihal, a Christian castellan on the Middle Sangarios/Sakarya River, allied with Osman Beg and became one of his closest confidants. From that point onward, the descendants of Köse Mihal, known as the Mihaloğulları (the sons of Mihal), fought under the Ottoman banner, conquering territories and expanding the boundaries of the Ottoman state in Anatolia, the Balkans, and Eastern and Central Europe. Traditionally, they were entrusted with governing several key Ottoman frontier districts, including Vidin, Niğbolu, Semendire, and Hersek, and they led the vanguard (*akıncı*) Ottoman forces in nearly all military campaigns in Europe. In recognition of the successful military exploits of distinguished members of this dynastic clan, the sultans granted them property rights to parts of the conquered lands—most notably around Pınarhisar, İhtiman, and Plevne. Unlike the military prebends typically allotted to other dignitaries, these lands were hereditary, allowing them to be passed down to future generations. This solidified their status as a powerful landed military aristocracy, capable of influencing the social, political, and cultural development of vast regions within the empire. At the same time, it strengthened their political clout as key powerbrokers in the internal Ottoman political arena.

The family, as a distinct power constellation within the Ottoman socio-political landscape, hence, offers a valuable lens through which to explore the broader dialectic power relations central to the Ottoman state-building process. This lens also provides an effective way to challenge the dominant historiographical model of "sultanic patrimonialism" and allow for a

[40] The Mihaloğlu and Evrenosoğlu families certainly survived the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, when their dynastic possessions remained within the territories of the newly born Balkan nation states. See Lowry and Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar*; Mariya Kiprovska, "Power and Society in Pleven on the Verge of Two Epochs: The Fate of the Mihaloğlu Family and Its Pious Foundations (*Vakf*) during the Transitional Period from Imperial to National Governance," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 1–2 (2017): 172–204.

more critical examination of the "infrastructural power" held by the elites, such as the Mihaloğlu family of frontier lords. By focusing on the role of these elites in regional governance, this approach has the potential to deepen our understanding of the influence exercised by various social actors in shaping the broader Ottoman imperial landscape. Shifting the focus away from a purely statist interpretation of Ottoman state-building, this perspective could also highlight the contributions of multiple forces in the development and preservation of Ottoman power.

Building on the theoretical insights of Mann's concept of the state's "infrastructural power" and MacHardy's "co-ordinating" state, and incorporating current sociological theories that view social reality in terms of networks of power rather than rigid structures or individual agency,[41] this study will assess the scope and influence of the patronage network led by the Mihaloğlu family. To achieve this, I will examine the evolution and regional spread of the family's network—through the example of their landed estates and extended household—as well as its influence within and beyond the Ottoman state, focusing on political alliances with both Ottoman and non-Ottoman elites.

The primary aim of this study is, hence, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-political power wielded by the Mihaloğlu dynasty of frontier lords and to uncover their essential role in the broader imperial landscape, particularly as active participants in the consolidation of Ottoman power. Achieving this, however, would be impossible relying solely on Ottoman narrative sources, which, while rich in details about the major military campaigns led by family members, provide little to no information on the dynamics of power at the provincial level. These sources are largely silent on the infrastructural power of provincial elites, which is critical to understanding the family's influence. Therefore, this dissertation will primarily draw on diverse archival sources, with a focus on Ottoman documentation, while also incorporating a variety of non-Ottoman sources. These additional material are crucial for identifying the Mihaloğlu family's broader networks and political influence, particularly outside the Ottoman domains. By tracing the evolution of the power mechanisms employed by the family, examined in separate chapters and in close connection to the broader historical context, this study seeks to illuminate their significant role in the state-building processes of the Ottoman Empire. Through this multi-faceted approach, it aims to provide a fuller picture of how the Mihaloğlu dynasty operated as a key player in both provincial governance and the larger impe-

[41] Anthony King, "The Odd Couple: Margaret Archer, Anthony Giddens and British Social Theory," *The British Journal of Sociology* 61:1 (2010): 253–260.

rial structure. In pursuit of this goal, the dissertation makes significant contributions to the advancement of Ottoman history by offering a fresh perspective on the complex dynamics of power, governance, and land tenure within the empire. Each part of the dissertation challenges long-standing historiographical frameworks and advances the understanding of Ottoman history by revisiting key assumptions and introducing new evidence.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into three interrelated chapters that aim at scrutinizing the "infrastructural" capacity of the family to hold sway over social, political, and diplomatic spheres of life. Chapter 1 examines the Mihaloğlu family's prominent role within the Ottoman political sphere, emphasizing their influence as crucial intermediaries in various political and diplomatic efforts beyond the state during key moments for the Ottoman dynasty. Using a wide array of underexplored sources, the chapter deliberately focuses on the period after the supposed triumph of Ottoman absolutism over the frontier forces. In this way, it aims to provide a new perspective on Ottoman patrimonialism, particularly highlighting the interactions between the Balkan frontier lords and elites outside the Ottoman state. The chapter, hence, underscores the family's regional power and considerable "infrastructural capacity" to shape inter-state processes, which ultimately contributed to the consolidation of Ottoman state's power.

In Chapter 2, I shift attention to the Mihaloğlu household as a key distributive power node, where various clientelistic dependencies and collective groupings converged. I examine the composition of their larger military-administrative household, arguing that it was this loyal entourage—tied to the Mihaloğlus through patron-client relationships—that formed the local governing apparatus and wielded power in the provinces. By analyzing several matrimonial alliances between the Mihaloğlu family and other influential households, I argue that these marriage ties bolstered the power of individual stakeholders and contributed to the formation of a distinct caste of Ottoman governors. This elite group dominated the social, administrative, and military hierarchy in the provinces well before the commonly accepted period of "decentralization," challenging the idea that locally autonomous provincial stakeholders only emerged later in Ottoman history.

Chapter 3 examines the Mihaloğlu estates by evaluating their scale and geographic location, and focusing on their initial formation, development over time, inheritance practices, and specific management. Through this analysis, I address key issues that offer new insights into how these estates served as a liminal space between governmentality and nobility. The chapter,

hence, confronts the widely held view that there existed no hereditary nobility in the Ottoman socio-political landscape. I further argue that these domains were not just centers for cultivating a sense of belonging to an elite caste of governors, with social, governmental, and cultural ties to a defined space and its inhabitants, but also acted as platforms for shaping the territories beyond their immediate borders. In doing so, these estates contributed to the infrastructural, socio-economic, and cultural development of the broader Ottoman world.

By closely examining the Mihaloğlu family, this dissertation reveals that the frontier elites were far from being marginalized; instead, they played crucial roles in governance, diplomacy, and military affairs within and outside the Ottoman suzerainty. It also challenges the "hub-and-spoke" model proposed by Karen Barkey that emphasizes centralized control by the sultanic household, and which has been by now firmly integrated into the field of comparative empires. Instead, the dissertation presents new insights into Ottoman governance, highlighting a more decentralized and collaborative structure where provincial elites held significant power and autonomy and held sway over many of the processes in the empire. This shift not only deepens our understanding of the power dynamics within the Ottoman state but also broadens the analytical framework for studying imperial governance in pre-modern states, providing a more nuanced comparative model for exploring governance across early modern empires.

CHAPTER 1 | DIPLOMATIC BROKERAGE AND REGIONAL AUTHORITY

INTRODUCTION[42]

Mainstream historiography on the Ottoman imperial consolidation maintains that the centralization policies of Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) were primarily directed at diminishing the influence of the prominent Rumelian frontier lords.[43] According to this widely accepted view, after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, "the triumph of centralized absolutism was sealed" and the social actors from the geographic frontiers were largely subsumed and marginalized.[44] After that point, the Balkan marcher lords' dynasties were supposedly ousted from the Ottoman political arena and reduced to "ordinary" governor officials of the bordering districts.[45] This perspective, however, suffers from inadequate evidential support or, rather, overreliance on selected Ottoman administrative documents, which have served as the primary source base for examining the office-holding Ottoman provincial elites.[46]

This chapter seeks to challenge this prevalent understanding of the Ottoman imperial consolidation, centralization, and growing patrimonial power from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. It aims to highlight the Mihaloğlu family's role as influential players within the Ottoman political sphere and as key brokers in several supra-state political and diplomatic endeavors during crucial episodes for the Ottoman dynasty and state. Basing my analysis on a variety of sources that have not been sufficiently explored by Ottomanists, in the present chapter I focus on the period after the presumed triumph of Ottoman absolutism over the centripetal frontier

[42] The archival research for this chapter was partially funded by the Central European University Foundation of Budapest (CEUBPF). The interpretations presented herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CEUBPF. I am grateful to CEUBPF for supporting a research trip to Istanbul during 2023, where I had the opportunity to consult documents at the Ottoman Archives of the Presidency of the State Archives, which are not available online.

[43] This view, deep-rooted in Ottomanist historiography, was originally uphold by Halil İnalcık in a number of his studies. See Halil İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954); Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103–29; Halil İnalcık, "Mehmed II," in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 1957; Halil İnalcık, "The Rise of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Halil İnalcık, "How to Read 'Āshık Pasha-Zāde's History," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V.L. Ménage*, ed. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1994), 139–56; İnalcık, "Periods in Ottoman History."

[44] Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 14, 112–113; 142–143; 151–154. I have previously also supported this view in Kiprovska, "The Mihaloğlu Family: *Gazi* Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices." However, in what follows, I revise my previous opinion in light of new research.

[45] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*.

[46] Metin Kunt's pioneering (yet presently somewhat outdated) book remains the primary reference for studying Ottoman provincial administration. Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*.

forces in order to reframe the notion of Ottoman patrimonialism and shed light on the relationship between the Balkan frontier lords and the Ottoman dynastic rulers from a new perspective. The evidence below suggests a different view on the governance of the Ottoman Empire post-Mehmed II, which is commonly perceived of as primarily a patrimonial system centered on the sultanic household.[47]

Furthermore, this chapter diverges significantly from the theoretical model of Ottoman imperial rule set out by Karen Barkey, who conceptualized it as a flexible and inclusive "hub-and-spoke" patrimonial system, in which the dynasty/state asserted its dominance by vertically integrating elites while simultaneously fragmenting their horizontal networks, thus ensuring control over power dynamics among them and the rest of the society.[48] Bringing up evidence that highlights the interconnectedness and political alliances among frontier elites on the horizontal level, which operated independently of the sultanic center, I suggest a more decentralized and collaborative model of Ottoman governance than traditionally recognized. Distancing myself from the Istanbul-centered historiographical approach,[49] which views the sultanic court and its associates as *the* locus of Ottoman political decision-making, thereby obviating provincial elites' policymaking capacities, I will look at various instances from the vantage point of the frontier elites. Besides highlighting the involvement of the regional power holders in events critical for the Ottoman dynasty/state, this approach, I believe, opens up different avenues of analysis that reveal collaboration, partnership, and mutual reliance between the sultanic and provincial dynasties rather than assuming a priori antagonism, rivalry, and factionalism, geared

[47] The patrimonial character of power in the Ottoman state was first discussed by İnalcık, "Comments on 'Sultanism': Max Weber's Typification of the Ottoman Polity"; İnalcık, "Decision Making in the Ottoman State." More recently, the patrimonial relationships of power during the period after the second half of the fifteenth century were emphasized again by Tezcan, "The Second Empire"; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 79–114; Fodor, *The Business of State: Ottoman Finance Administration and Ruling Elites in Transition (1580s–1615)*, 21–36.

[48] Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 67–108.

[49] The sultan's court in Istanbul and the heterogeneous multi-space of the Ottoman capital—which emerged as a diplomatic and information center in the Mediterranean during the sixteenth century and where different communities with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds intermingled daily and—naturally attracted the focus of most studies devoted to diplomatic encounters and negotiation practices. See, among others, Emrah Safa Gürkan, "Early Modern Istanbul as a Center of Diplomacy," accessed July 7, 2023, http://www.levantineheritage.com/pdf/Early_modern_Istanbul_as_a_Center_of_Diplomacy.pdf; Christine Vogel, "Istanbul as a Hub of Early Modern European Diplomacy," Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz, European History Online (EGO), January 12, 2021, http://www.ieg-ego.eu/vogelc-2020-en URN: urn:nbn:de:0159-2020113011 and the literature cited there; Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006); John Paul Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities. Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Tobias P. Graf, *Der Preis der Diplomatie: Die Abrechnungen der kaiserlichen Gesandten an der Hohen Pforte, 1580–1583* (Heidelberg: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, 2016).

towards identifying a winning and a losing party – a common feature in the analysis of the Ottoman state-building process in general.

The inquiry in the current chapter builds on recent methodological developments in the study of inter-state diplomatic encounters, diverging from the earlier state-centric approach and adopting a more nuanced, actor- and network-centric perspective that highlights the roles of diverse social agents in shaping diplomatic discourses.[50] Rather than focusing on formal diplomatic relations, this new strand of research emphasizes the *practices* of diplomacy, negotiation processes, and diplomatic mediation, bringing up the notions of interconnectedness in economic, cultural, and religious spheres of life.[51] Consequently, the role of intermediaries in these processes has received increasing scholarly attention, with dragomans, captives, renegades, spies, traders, and courtiers straddling multiple identities and loyalties being important agents of cross-cultural and cross-confessional brokerage.[52] The cases presented in this chapter show

[50] John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (2008): 1–14; Tracey A. Sowerby, "Early Modern Diplomatic History," *History Compass* 14, no. 9 (2016): 441–56; Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings, eds., *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800* (London: Routledge, 2017). For the specific context of Ottoman-European diplomacy see Daniel Goffman, "Negotiating with the Renaissance State: The Ottoman Empire and the New Diplomacy," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 61–74; Maartje van Gelder and Tijana Krstić, "Introduction: Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2015): 93–105; Michael Talbot and Phil McCluskey, "Introduction: Contacts, Encounters, Practices: Ottoman-European Diplomacy, 1500–1800," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 48 (2016): 269–76; Claire Norton, "Iconographs of Power or Tools of Diplomacy? Ottoman *Fethname*s," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 4 (2016): 331–50; Sándor Papp and Gellért Ernő Marton, *New Approaches to the Habsburg-Ottoman Diplomatic Relations* (Szeged: SZTE BTK, 2021); Michał Wasiucionek, *The Ottomans and Eastern Europe: Borders and Political Patronage in the Early Modern World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019).

[51] Recently, greater attention has been given to regional-level diplomacy, particularly in the borderlands, where regional and local governors, as well as lower-ranking soldiers on both sides of the border, engaged in practical diplomatic encounters through continuous interaction and exchange. Robyn Dora Radway persuasively argues that diplomacy should not be viewed solely through the lens of official channels, such as ambassadorial missions, but should also encompass the multi-layered, regionally based small scale diplomatic practice and daily interactions she describes as "vernacular diplomacy." This type of diplomacy operated alongside, and sometimes in opposition to, the formal imperial diplomacy between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans in the sixteenth century. It should be viewed as complementing the official interactions between the two empires to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their overall diplomatic relations. Robyn Dora Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593" (Princeton, N.J, Princeton University, 2017).

[52] Suraiya Faroqhi, "Ottoman Views on Corsairs and Piracy in the Adriatic," in *The Kapudan Pasha, His Office and His Domain*, ed. Elizabeth Zachariadou (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2002), 357–71; Eric Dursteler, "On Bazaars and Battlefields: Recent Scholarship on Mediterranean Cultural Contacts," *Journal of Early Modern History* 15, no. 5 (2011): 413–34; Tijana Krstić, "Of Translation and Empire: Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Imperial Interpreters as Renaissance Go-Betweens," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 130–42; Gülru Necipoğlu, "Connectivity, Mobility, and Mediterranean 'Portable Archaeology:' Pashas from the Dalmatian Hinterlands as Cultural Mediators," in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence*, ed. Alina Alexandra Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 313–81; Pascal Firges et al., eds., *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History* (Leiden: Brill,

that the Balkan frontier elites, exemplified by the Mihaloğlu family members, were also pivotal brokers in diplomatic processes.

The analysis that follows centers on key episodes where the agency of the Mihaloğlu family members is clearly evident. It revolves around political and diplomatic crises, which had broader implications, resulting in increased communication among the stakeholders that left a substantial textual trail for examination. These challenging predicaments, including several succession disputes within the Ottoman political arena and in neighboring Wallachia, often coincided, particularly in the early 1480s and early 1510s. However, to emphasize the involvement of various Mihaloğlu family members in distinct political and diplomatic contexts, these episodes will be analyzed independently for greater clarity.

Diplomatic Brokerage: Ottoman Succession Strife as a Diplomatic Enterprise

When Mehmed II passed away unexpectedly on May 3 1481, his death stirred up yet another civil war in the Ottoman realm. This time, however, the Ottoman dynastic crisis pitting Mehmed's two sons, *şehzade*s Bayezid and Cem, against each other went far beyond the Ottoman dominion, extended far beyond the Ottoman suzerainty, causing havoc both within and beyond its territorial bounds, and dominating the domestic and international scene until Cem Sultan died in 1495 (on February 24 in Naples). The crisis was triggered immediately after the Conqueror passed away. Receiving the news of their father's death, the two princes set out from their provincial governorships—Prince Bayezid from Amasya (the center of Amasya *sancağı*) and Cem from Konya (the center of Karaman *sancağı*)—for Istanbul to claim the Ottoman throne. Bayezid was the first to reach the capital, where he was crowned as Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) on May 21, 1481. However, Cem opposed his elder brother's enthronement and quickly (May 27) declared his sovereignty in Bursa. Sultan Bayezid refused Cem's claim of partitioning the Ottoman territories, and the two brothers went to war. At an open battle at Yenişehir (June 19), Cem was defeated and fled first to his governmental seat in Konya and then to the Mamluk

2014). Cf. the studies published in the special issue of *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2-3 [Special issue: *Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, guest ed. by Maartje van Gelder and Tijana Krstić] (2015); and the studies in the Michael Talbot and Phil McCluskey, eds., "Special Section: *Contacts, Encounters, Practices: Ottoman-European Diplomacy, 1500-1800*," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 48 (2016): 269–416. Cf. Gábor Kármán, *A Seventeenth-Century Odyssey in East Central Europe: The Life of Jakab Harsányi Nagy* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Tobias P. Graf, *The Sultan's Renegades. Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite, 1575-1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Natalie E. Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012); Ella Natalie Rothman, *The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2021).

sultan Qaytbay in Cairo. This was just the first in a series of the claimant prince's courtly sojourns around the Mediterranean. After a short return to Anatolia, where Cem suffered a number of military setbacks, he fled the Ottoman territories for good, spending the rest of his life in exile.[53] Roaming through Europe, he became a hostage of several Christian leaders, who used him as a strategic tool in implementing their plans to provoke disorder and partitioning of the Ottoman realm, to prevent Ottoman attacks against their dominions, or to plan an anti-Ottoman crusade.

Cem's case generated a flurry of diplomatic correspondence between the parties involved, integrating the Ottoman Empire in the diplomatic affairs of Europe on the one hand and dominating the foreign policy of Bayezid II on the other. This dynastic crisis and the ensuing intensified negotiations with multiple European leaders prompted modern historians to label the period of Bayezid's reign as the proper beginning of Ottoman diplomacy.[54] To ensure that Cem was detained outside the Ottoman domains and to counter the European and Mamluk plans to use him for their agendas, the ruling Ottoman sultan Bayezid II started dispatching envoys and spies, making multiple concessions and concluding peace treaties at a hitherto unprecedented pace and range. The preserved rich multilingual correspondence between all partakers allowed historians to track the development of the crisis in detail. Additionally, it presented a unique opportunity to go beyond the otherwise stagnant inter-state diplomatic relations, elucidate in more detail the procedure of the protracted negotiation processes, and reveal the actual mediators' agency. It is by now apparent that Bayezid II entrusted the discussions about the delicate matter of his brother's custody to his most trusted men, who rose to prominent positions in his reign.[55]

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[53] Louis Thuasne, *Djem-Sultan, Fils de Mohammed II, Frère de Bayezid II (1459-1495): D'après Les Documents Originaux En Grande Partie* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892); Selâhattin Tansel, *Sultan II. Bâyezit'in Siyasî Hayatı* (İstanbul: MEB Devlet Kitapları Müdürlüğü, 1966); Nicolas Vatin, *Sultan Djem. Un prince ottoman dans l'Europe du XVe siècle d'après deux sources contemporaines: Vakı'ât-ı Sultân Cem, Œuvres de Guillaume Caoursin* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997).

[54] Sydney Nettleton Fisher, *The Foreign Relations of Turkey (1481–1512)* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1948); Halil İnalcık, "The Ottomans, the Crusades and Renaissance Diplomacy," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Harry W. Hazard and Norman P. Zacour, vol. 6 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Winsconsin Press, 1989), 331–53; Nicolas Vatin, "II Bayezid'in Diplomasi Araçları," in *Harp ve Sulh: Avrupa ve Osmanlılar*, ed. Dejanirah Couto (Istanbul: Institut français d'études anatoliennes, 2010), 169–85; Nicolas Vatin, "Les instruments de la diplomatie de Bayezid II (1481–1512)," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 2 (2013): 715–27.

[55] Şerafettin Turan, "Barak Reis'in Şehzade Cem Meselesi ile İlgili Olarak Savoie'ya Gönderilmesi," *Belleten* 26 (1962): 539–55; Victor L. Ménage, "The Mission of an Ottoman Secret Agent in France in 1486," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 97, no. 2 (1965): 112–32; Halil İnalcık, "A Case Study in Renaissance Diplomacy: The Agreement between Innocent VIII and Bayezid II on Djem Sultan," in *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 66–88; Nicolas Vatin, "À Propos du voyage en France de Hüseyn, ambassadeur de Bajazet II auprès de Louis XI (1483)," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 4 (1984): 35–44; Nicolas Vatin, "Une tentative

One such person figured prominently in the peace negotiations between Bayezid II and the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus (r. 1458–90) in the period of Cem's European sojourn. Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, the then Ottoman governor-general of the Semendire province that bordered the Hungarian lands, was intricately involved in the Ottoman-Hungarian peace negotiations. The preserved correspondence from 1482/83 and 1486/87 allows us to track certain details from the negotiation processes and permits making specific observations regarding the frontier lord's role and position vis-à-vis the sultanic center.[56]

manquée d'ouverture diplomatique: la lettre de créance d'un envoyé de Bajazet II auprès de Louis XI (1483)," in *L'Empire ottoman, la République de Turquie et la France*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Hâmit Batu (Istanbul; Paris: Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes d'Istanbul; Association pour le Développement des Etudes Turques, Paris, 1986), 1–13; Nicolas Vatin, "Itinéraires d'agents de la Porte en Italie (1483–1495). Réflexions sur l'organisation des missions ottomanes et sur la transcription turque des noms de lieux italiens," *Turcica* 19 (1987): 29–50; Nicolas Vatin, "Macabre trafic: la destinée post-mortem du prince Djem," in *Mélanges offerts à Louis Bazin par ses disciples, collègues et amis*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Rémy Dor (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1992), 231–39; Nicolas Vatin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem, l'Empire ottoman et la Méditerranée orientale entre les deux sièges de Rhodes (1480–1522)* (Paris; Louvain: Peeters, 1994); Vatin, "Les instruments de la diplomatie de Bayezid II (1481–1512)"; Jacques Lefort, *Documents grecs dans les archives de Topkapı Sarayı. Contribution à l'histoire de Cem Sultan / Topkapı Sarayı Arşivlerinin Yunanca Belgeleri: Cem Sultanın Tarihine Katkı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1981); Gümeç Karamuk, "Hacı Zağanos'un Elçilik Raporu," *Belleten* 56, no. 219 (1992): 391–403. The origins and the career paths of some of these individuals are discussed by Hedda Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1983). Cf. Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2011); Cihan Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

[56] For a general assessment of Ottoman-Hungarian military and diplomatic relations see Ferenc Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare before the Battle of Mohács (1365-1526)," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33 (1979): 65–111; Sándor Papp, "Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (from the Beginnings to 1540)," in *Fight against the Turk in Central-Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century*, ed. István Zombori (Budapest: METEM, 2004), 37–89; Sándor Papp, *Die Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden der Osmanen für Ungarn und Siebenbürgen: eine quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003); Sándor Papp, "Peacemaking between the Ottoman Empire, the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy," in *"Buyurdum Ki…." – The Whole World of Ottomanica and Beyond: Studies in Honour of Claudia Römer*, ed. Hülya Çelik, Yavuz Köse, and Gisela Procházka-Eisl (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2023), 239–69; Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526*, *From Nicopolis to Mohács* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018). For the truce of 1483 see Mihai Maxim, "Stephen the Great and the Great Porte: New Turkish Documents," *Transylvanian Review* 14, no. 1 (2005): 15–25; Alexandru Simon, "Truces and Negotiations between Bayezid II and Matthias Corvinus in the Context of the Hunyadi-Habsburg Conflict (1482–1484)," *Revista Arhivelor* 86 (2009): 107–14. For the later documentation accompanying the peace negotiations, see the correspondence published by [Ljubomir Stojanović] Љубомир Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма,* vol. I: *Дубровник и суседи његови* [*Old Serbian Charters and Letters,* Book I: *Dubrovnik and Its Neighbours*] (Београд-Ср. Карловци: Српска манастирска штампарија, 1934); [Nikola Radojčić] Никола Радојчић, "Пет писама с краја XV века [Five Letters from the Fifteenth Century]," *Јужнословенски филолог* 20, no. 1–4 (1953 1954): 343–55; György Hazai, "A Topkapu Szeráj Múzeum levéltárának magyar vonatkozású török iratai [Hungarian-Related Turkish Documents in the Archives of the Topkapı Saray Museum]," *Levéltári Közlemények* 26 (1955): 286–95; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Korvin Mathias (Mátyás)'ın Bayezid II'e Mektupları, Tercümeleri ve 1503 (909) Osmanlı-Macar Muahedesinin Türkçe Metni," *Belleten* 87 (1958): 369–81; György Hazai, "Eine türkische Urkunde zur Geschichte der ungarisch-türkischen Beziehungen im XV. Jh.," *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* 36 (1964): 336–39; György Hazai, "Eine Urkunde der ungarisch-türkischen Friedensverhandlungen in der Zeit von Matthias Corvinus und Bāyezīd II," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 38 (1976): 155–60; György Hazai, "Ein Bericht über die Lage des ungarisch-türkischen Grenzgebiets in den letzten Jahren der Regierungszeit von Matthias Corvinus," *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1979): 183–87; [Katarina Mitrović] Катарина Митровић, "Пет писама деспота Вука

This tangled set of documents, the majority of which are written in Cyrillic,[57] has been partially published and discussed in previous scholarship. They make it clear that besides the Hungarian and Ottoman rulers, several other individuals, border officials on both sides, took active part in the Hungarian-Ottoman peace negotiations. These were the then voivode of Transylvania Stephen Báthory,[58] Vuk Grgurević, the scion of the Serbian Branković dynasty, who was at that point in Matthias Corvinus's service as a titular despot of Serbia,[59] and the then *sancakbegi* of Semendire Mihaloğlu Ali Beg.

Гргуревића [Five Letters of Despot Vuk Grgurević]," *Браничевски гласник* 3–4 (2006): 63–83. For the draft of Bayezid's alleged *ahdname* of 1488 see György Hazai, "Urkunde des Friedensvertrages zwischen könig Matthias Corvinus und dem türkischen sultan 1488," in *Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, Volkskunde und Literaturforschung: Wolfgang Steinitz zum 60. Geburtstag am 28. Februar 1965 dargebracht*, ed. Alexander V. Isačenko, Wilhelm Wissmann, and Hermann Strobach (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1965), 141–45. The latter dating was refuted by Karamuk, "Hacı Zağanos'un Elçilik Raporu." The relations between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Matthias Corvinus are discussed in detail by Davor Salihović, "Definition, Extent, and Administration of the Hungarian Frontier toward the Ottoman Empire in the Reign of King Matthias Corvinus, 1458-1490," (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2021), esp. 12–80. The author corrects the chronology of the possible conclusion of the treaties, which was hitherto accepted in previous historiography, but most importantly—on the basis of their contents and the substantial multilingual correspondence that accompanied the negotiations—he discusses the practical arrangements on the border between the two states in which multiple actors played prominent roles. Davor Salihović, "The Process of Bordering at Late Fifteenth Century Hungarian-Ottoman Frontier," *History in Flux* 1 (2019): 93–120.

[57] For the use of Slavic/Cyrillic as an official language of correspondence in the Ottoman context see György Hazai, "Zur Rolle des Serbischen im Verkehr des Osmanischen Reiches mit Osteuropa im 15.-16. Jahrhundert," *Ural-Altaische Jahrbücher* 48 (1976): 82–88; Lejla Nakaš, *Jezik i grafija krajišničkih pisama* [*Language and Graphics of the Border Region Letters*] (Sarajevo: Slavistički komitet, Biblioteka Bosnistika, 2010); Lejla Nakaš, "Portina slavenska kancelarija i njen utjecaj na pisare u prvom stoljeću osmanske uprave u Bosni [The Ottoman Porte's Slavic Chancellery and Its Influence on Scribes in the First Century of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia]," *Forum Bosnae* 74–75 (2016): 267–97; Miloš Ivanović, "Cyrillic Correspondence Between the Commune of Ragusa and Ottomans from 1396 to 1458," in *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, ed. Srđan Rudić and Selim Aslantaş (Belgrade: The Institute of History - Belgrade, Yunus Emre Enstitüsü - Belgrade, 2017), 43–63; Neven Isailović and Aleksandar Krstić, "Serbian Language and Cyrillic Script as a Means of Diplomatic Literacy in South Eastern Europe in 15th and 16th Centuries," in *Literacy Experiences Concerning Medieval and Early Modern Transylvania*, ed. Susana Andea and Adinel Ciprian Dincă (Cluj-Napoca: "George Barițiu" Institute of Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 185–95; Marijana Mišević, "Writing Slavic in the Arabic Script: Literacy and Multilingualism in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Harvard, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2022), esp. 115–44, 494-501, where she discusses the surviving examples of written Slavic both as means of pragmatic literacy and as a significant language of diplomacy in the Ottoman context.

[58] Richárd Horváth and Tibor Neumann, *Ecsedi Bátori István. Egy katonabáró életpályája 1458–1493* [*István Bátori Ecsedi: The Career of a Military Baron 1458–1493*] (Budapest: MTA, 2012).

[59] Dušanka Dinić-Knežević, "Sremski Brankovići [The Brankovići of Srem]," *Istraživanja* 4 (1975): 5–47; [Sima Ćirković] Сима Ћирковић, "О деспоту Вуку Гргуревићу [About the Despot Vuk Grgurević]," *Зборник Матице српске за ликовне уметности* 6 (1970): 283–90; [Sima Ćirković] Сима Ћирковић, "Српска властела у борби за обнову Деспотовине [Serbian Nobility in the Fight for the Restoration of Despotovina]," in *Историја српског народа*, ed. J. Калић, vol. 2 (Београд, 1994), 373–89; [Sima Ćirković] Сима Ћирковић, "Последњи Бранковићи [The Last Brankovići]," in *Историја српског народа*, ed. J. Калић, vol. 2 (Београд, 1994), 445–64; [Katarina Mitrović] Катарина Митровић, "Вук Гргуревић између Мехмеда II и Матије Корвина (1458–1465) [Vuk Grgurević between Mehmed II and Matthias Corvinus (1458–1465)]," *Браничевски гласник* 2 (2003): 19–31; [Momčilo Spremić] Момчило Спремић, "Српски деспоти у Срему [Serbian Despots in Srem]," in *Срем кроз векове: слојеви култура Фрушке горе и Срема*, ed. М. Матицки (Београд–Беочин, 2007), 45–73; Aleksandar Krstić, "'Which Realm Will You Opt For?' – The Serbian Nobility between the Otto-

During the first phase of these negotiations in 1482/83, letters were exchanged between Vuk Grgurević and Bayezid II, as well as between Vuk Grgurević and Ali Beg.[60] Several points emerge from the preserved correspondence that shed light on the matters discussed and the practical details of the diplomatic negotiations. Thus, Vuk Grgurević emphasizes in his letters that he acts in Matthias Corvinus's name and mediates for peace between the king and the sultan. The letter of Vuk Grgurević to Ali Beg, in particular, also attests unanimously that the mediator on behalf of the Ottoman sultan was Ali Beg, who communicated with his Christian counterparts and carried out the negotiations. Ali Beg's mediation is further attested by a set of letters in the Ottoman language that were exchanged between the latter and Bayezid II in the course of the same talks, in which the frontier lord informs the sultan about the messages between him and the titular Serbian Despot, as well as about the dispatch of couriers to the court, who ought to transmit the communications directly to Bayezid.[61]

What also becomes clear from the contents of Vuk Grgurević's letters is that Bayezid made an offer to restore the vassal Serbian despotate as a kind of buffer zone on the Ottoman-Hungarian border. The despotate was previously headed by the Branković family, and was now to be commanded by their scion Vuk Grgurević, on the condition that he pays an annual tribute to the sultan as his predecessors did.[62] This proposition, however, was never put into force, and neither was Bayezid's offer to Venice to grant her the whole of the Morea, which was extended by one of his most trusted envoys, İskender Beg.[63] İskender Beg was sent to the Serenissima to

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mans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century," in *State and Society in the Balkans before and after Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, ed. Srđan Rudić and Selim Aslantaş (Belgrade: The Institute of History - Belgrade, Yunus Emre Enstitüsü - Belgrade, 2017), esp. 145–149.

[60] [Radojčić] Радојчић, "Пет писама с краја XV века [Five Letters from the Fifteenth Century]"; [Stojanović] Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма,* vol. I: *Дубровник и суседи његови* [*Old Serbian Charters and Letters,* Book I: *Dubrovnik and Its Neighbours*], 487–89; [Mitrović] Митровић, "Пет писама деспота Вука Гргуревића [Five Letters of Despot Vuk Grgurević]," 63–83.

[61] BOA, TSMA, e. 756/101 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 6373/1]; BOA, TSMA, e. 967/44 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10159/1]; BOA, TSMA, e. 968/2 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10160/2]; BOA, TSMA, e. 968/96 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10160/96].

[62] [Radojčić] Радојчић, "Пет писама с краја XV века [Five Letters from the Fifteenth Century]," doc. 1, 353–54.

[63] İskender Beg acted as an emissary of Bayezid on multiple occasions – first in the 1480s to Venice and then in 1480s to Rhodes. He was a brother of Andreas Milas, a Christian merchant from Pera of Greek-Italian origin, who drafted letters in Greek as part of the correspondence between Bayezid and the Grand Master d'Aubusson. Cf. Lefort, *Documents grecs dans les archives de Topkapı Sarayı. Contribution à l'histoire de Cem Sultan / Topkapı Sarayı Arşivlerinin Yunanca Belgeleri: Cem Sultanın Tarihine Katkı*, 20, 48, 84–87. Giovanni Maria Angiolello affirms that Bayezid sent to Venice İskender Beg, who was his preceptor at Amasya, to deal with the issue of his brother Cem. Ioan Ursu, ed., *Donado da Lezze, Historia Turchesca (1300–1514)* (Bucharest: Carol Göbl, 1909), 183. On İskender Beg's correspondence with Dubrovnik in the period 1506–1511, see Ćiro Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive [Turco-Slavic Documents from the Dubrovnik Archive]," *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu* 23 (1911): 89–90; 128–134; 137–138; Vesna Miović, "*Dragomano Nostro Della Porta*: Dragomans of the Porte in the Service of Dubrovnik in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Dubrovnik Annals* 24 (2020): esp. 73–74.

ratify the treaty that was agreed upon in the previous year in Istanbul by Antonio Vituri and Alvise Manenti.[64] Once in Venice (May 1483), İskender Beg stated openly in front of the Council of Ten the reason for this generous sultanic proposal. He declared that Bayezid strongly desired to see his brother Cem in Venetian custody. In recognition of this service, the sultan offered to give the Morea to Venice, making the Serenissima the mistress of all of Greece.[65] Although this offer did not materialize, it seems reasonable to suggest that both proposals by Bayezid to Hungary and Venice were meant as a ransom for his brother Cem, or at least as a guarantee that the Hungarian and Venetian rulers would either detain or not shelter him, and will not use him against the ruling Ottoman sultan.

A previously unexamined, to the best of my knowledge, undated letter penned by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg to Sultan Bayezid emerges as a critical piece of evidence in the historical puzzle. Based on the participants involved, their respective roles, and the subjects addressed, this letter is likely tied to the negotiations of 1482/83. Crucially, it reveals that the core of Bayezid's proposal for reestablishing a Serbian despotate under Ottoman vassalage centered precisely on the custody of Cem. In this letter, Ali Beg conveys to the sultan what seems to be the Hungarian king's reaction to Bayezid's offer, transmitted to him by the Despot's trusted man (most certainly priest Jovan, who acted as the Hungarian messenger throughout the negotiations), the sultan's servant (*kul*) Murad (who transferred messages on behalf of Bayezid), and Ali Beg's unnamed servant. According to the message that Ali Beg received, Matthias Corvinus assured Bayezid (through Vuk) that Cem will not be brought to his lands and that the king will reconcile with the sultan as a father with a son if Bayezid consents to grant the territories that Lazar once ruled.[66] In the ensuing correspondence between Vuk and Bayezid (the last letter of the Despot that has survived), however, no further allusion to the restitution of the Serbian despotate was made. In it, Vuk Grgurević assures the sultan that he will comply with all his conditions, and therefore, the king, as his brother and a good friend, sends his envoy to Bayezid. In exchange, Matthias requested that the Ottoman ruler sends two envoys to Hungary to guarantee the well-being of the king's ambassadors to the Ottoman state. The king stipulated a single condition for successfully concluding the peace negotiations: the Ottoman troops must remain behind the

[64] Thuasne, *Djem-Sultan, Fils de Mohammed II, Frère de Bayezid II (1459-1495): D'après Les Documents Originaux En Grande Partie*, 106; Fisher, *The Foreign Relations of Turkey (1481–1512)*, 30.
[65] Vladimir Ivanovich Lamansky, *Secrets d'Etat de Venise: documents, extraits, notices et études servant à éclaircir les rapports de la Seigneurie avec les Grecs, les Slaves et la Porte ottomane à la fin du xve et au xvie siècle* (Saint-Pétersbourg: Imprimerie de l'Académie impériale de sciences, 1884), 202–5.
[66] BOA, TSMA, e. 968/96 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10160/96]. The king specifically requests the handing over of the following fortresses: İzvornik, Sokol, Uziçe, Göğercinlik, and possibly also Semendire.

Smederevo line, in Niš/Niş and Kruševac/Alaca Hisar. In return, he promised that the Hungarian armies would not advance past Futog and Slankamen, and would stay stationed in Szeged/Segedin and Timişoara/Temeşvar.[67]

Yet, from the preserved documentation, the rationale behind Sultan Bayezid's decision to retract his offer concerning the reestablishment of the Serbian despotate remains obscure. One may speculate that in the meantime the sultan became aware of Matthias's efforts to take hold of Cem. During 1482, the Hungarian king was in constant communication with the Grand Master of the order of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem Pierre d'Aubusson (1476–1503), Pope Sixtus IV (1471–1484), and the French king Louis XI (r. 1461–1483). Matthias persistently endeavored to convince the parties involved to permit him assume the supervision of Cem. He was also conspiring with them to wage a coordinated war against the Ottomans: Corvinus was planning to attack by land, while the Pope and the other maritime powers had to attack by sea.[68] Moreover, it is also plausible to suggest that Bayezid became aware of Cem's plans to reach the Hungarian court after leaving Rhodes (September 1, 1482) and getting to Nice (October 17).[69] However, his planned initial route must have been changed since in March 1483 Bayezid struck a deal with Cem's primary protector d'Aubusson, who promised to detain the prince in return for an annual payment of 40,000 ducats for his maintenance.[70] The latter agreement between d'Aubusson and Bayezid must have halted the sultan from delivering on the offers made to the doge of Venice and the Hungarian king for territorial concessions in Peloponnese and Southern Hungary, and he contended himself with concluding peace agreements with them in the same year.

Messengers and information gathering channels

While the extant correspondence provides valuable insights into the central topics of discussion, it remains somewhat concise in nature. This brevity can be attributed to the practice of transmitting the complete messages between the concerned parties exclusively through oral means by couriers, a fact explicitly noted in nearly all of the letters. Some do not disclose any other information but only notify the addressees that such and such trustworthy man was dispatched

[67] [Stojanović] Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма*, 488–489.
[68] Thuasne, *Djem Sultan*, 101–103, 127.
[69] Vatin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Jean-de-Jérusalem, l'Empire ottoman et la Méditerranée orientale entre les deux sièges de Rhodes (1480–1522)*, 173–75; Nicolas Vatin, "L'affaire Djem (1481-1495)," in *Les ottomans et l'occident (XVe - XVIe siècles)*, by Nicolas Vatin (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2001), 94.
[70] Vatin, *Sultan Djem*, 35–47.

and his words were to be relied upon.[71] Consequently, the messengers' names are prominently featured in nearly all of the letters, serving as a testament to the sender's unequivocal trust in these individuals as the sole bearers of the messages. For the Hungarian part, it was the priest Jovan through whom the messages of Vuk Grgurević and Stephen Báthory—and of Matthias Corvinus—were extended to their respective addressees, while for the Ottoman part it was a certain Murad who acted as the envoy of Ali Beg and Bayezid II. The letters sent by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg to Bayezid also attest that Murad acted as the Ottoman messenger throughout the negotiations.[72] In these letters Ali Beg informs repeatedly about the dispatch of Murad to Vuk Grgurević (named either simply as Despot or as Gırgoroğlu), as he had to convey to the latter the sultanic memos on the matters discussed, along with some written letters.

In the letters addressed to the sultan, all individuals on the Ottoman side, including Ali Beg, are referred to with humility as "slaves" (*kul*) or "servants" (*bendegi*). This generic label precludes making any inferences about the messenger Murad's possible ties to the provincial court of the frontier lord. Nevertheless, the existence of another undated letter, sent by Ali Beg to Bayezid II, strongly implies such a connection. In this communication, while narrating Murad's accomplished and significant roles during the negotiations with the Despot in Buda, Ali Beg interceded with Bayezid II for Murad's payment.[73] Whether a dependent of Ali Beg or not, the messenger Murad was certainly an important informant for the frontier lord, who transmitted the news further to the sultanic court. Given the available sources, it remains exceedingly challenging to engage in further conjecture regarding whether Ali Beg had the capacity to manipulate information to his advantage. Regardless, it is evident that he possessed a comprehensive understanding of all phases of the negotiations, a fact that is discernible from the preserved records.

The pressing news on the immediate happenings during the Hungarian-Ottoman negotiations reached Ali Beg also through other channels, including direct reports from the interpreters who participated in them. Thus, for example, a letter was sent to Ali Beg by certain *tercüman*

[71] On the orality of the messages in an Ottoman context see Nicolas Vatin, "Remarques sur l'oral et l'écrit dans l'administration ottomane au XVIe siècle," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 75–76 [Special issue : *Oral et écrit dans le monde turco-ottoman*, ed. Nicolas Vatin] (1995): 143–54. On the Ottoman courier system see Colin Heywood, "The Evolution of the Courier Order (ulaḳ ḥükmi) in Ottoman Chancery Practice (Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)," in *Osmanische Welten: Quellen und Fallstudien: Festschrift für Michael Ursinus*, ed. Johannes Zimmermann, Christoph Herzog, and Raoul Motika (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2016), 269–312.

[72] BOA, TSMA, e. 968/96 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10160/96]; BOA, TSMA, e. 756/101 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 6373/1]; BOA, TSMA, e. 968/2 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10160/2]; BOA, TSMA, e. 967/44 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 10159/1].

[73] BOA, TSMA, e. 756/101 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 6373/1]

(interpreter) Kasım,[74] which could be dated either to the end of the previously discussed Ottoman-Hungarian peace negotiations in 1483 or, more plausibly, to 1486, when Ottoman envoys were sent to the Hungarian court to ratify the peace treaty (‘*ahd*).[75] In it, Kasım explains to Ali Beg how the Ottoman delegation to the Hungarian court in Buda, which he was obviously part of, was received and who were the main protagonists during their sojourn in the court. In his eyewitness report the interpreter Kasım conveys to Ali Beg that the Ottoman envoys were met outside the capital and were escorted to the court in Buda by two Hungarian lords, the brothers Stefan and Dmitar Jakšić (*Yahşi oğlanları* in Kasım's letter), heirs of another Serbian noble family who relocated to Hungary in the second half of the fifteenth century and subsequently served Matthias Corvinus.[76] The Serbian lords now in Hungarian service treated them with high respect and admiration. After staying for 30 days in Corvinus's court and after the sultanic provisions of the peace agreement (‘*ahd*) were finally authorized by the king, the delegation left for the Ottoman territories with two Hungarian envoys, who most certainly had the mission to receive the sultanic ratification of the final oath.

[74] For Kasım acting as an interpreter, writer of Cyrillic correspondence, and a missionary to Dubrovnik see Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive [Turco-Slavic Documents from the Dubrovnik Archive]," 60–61; 81–82, 88–89; Miović, "*Dragomano Nostro Della Porta*: Dragomans of the Porte in the Service of Dubrovnik in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 71–72. Cf. Mišević, "Writing Slavic in the Arabic Script: Literacy and Multilingualism in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire," 140–41. It is highly probable that the same person is the *çavuş* Kasım, who in the late 1480s took part in multiple diplomatic missions to Rhodes, Naples and Rome. Lefort, *Documents grecs dans les archives de Topkapı Sarayı. Contribution à l'histoire de Cem Sultan / Topkapı Sarayı Arşivlerinin Yunanca Belgeleri: Cem Sultanın Tarihine Katkı*, docs. 15, 17 and 20. Kasım Bey/*çavuş* played central role in the intense diplomatic exchange between Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, and Bayezid during the 1490s. These amicable engagements were motivated by Bayezid's desire to acquire precise information about Cem's whereabouts and the European plans against the Ottomans, as well as by his attempts to retrieve the dead body of his brother after his death in 1495. See Hans Joachim Kissling, *Sultan Bâjezîd's II. Beziehungen zu Markgraf Francesco II. von Gonzaga* (München: Huber, 1965). Portraits of the envoy Kasım adorned the rooms of the Marmirolo palace of Francesco II Gonzaga, who, except trading with the Ottomans, showed a pointed esthetic and cultural interest in the Ottomans as well. Molly Bourne, *Francesco II Gonzaga: The Soldier-Prince as Patron* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008), 124–125, 241–244. Cf. Daniela Sogliani, "The Gonzaga and the Ottomans between the 15th and the 17th Centuries in the Documents of the State Archive of Mantua," in *The Ottoman Orient in Renaissance Culture. Papers from the International Conference at the National Museum in Krakow, June 26–27, 2015*, ed. Robert Born and Michał Dziewulski (Kraków: The National Museum in Krakow, 2015), 67–94. On the Mantuan envoys to the Ottoman court as important transmitters of military and technological expertise between the Italian city-state and the Ottomans, see Antonia Gatward Cevizli, "More Than a Messenger: Embodied Expertise in Mantuan Envoys to the Ottomans in the 1490s," *Mediterranean Studies* 22, no. 2 (2014): 166–89.

[75] BOA, TSMA, e. 758/28 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 6528/1].

[76] On the estates of the Jakšić family in the areas of Srem and Eastern Slavonia see [Aleksandar Krstić] Александар Крстић, "Поседи Јакшића у Славонији и Сему [Estates of the Jakšić Family in Slavonia and Srem]," *Историјски часопис* 70 (2021): 177–213; [Momčilo Spremić] Момчило Спремић, "Породица Јакшић у Банату," in *Банат Кроз Векове: Слојеви Култура Баната*, ed. Миодраг Матицки and Видојко Јовић (Београд: Вукова задужбина, 2010), 33–63; Adrian Magina, "Două documente privind posesiunile familiei Jakšić din comitatele Cenad și Timiș [Two Documents Regarding the Possessions of the Jakšić Family in Cenad and Timiș Counties]," *Revista de Studii Banatice* 1 (2012): 25–32; Adrian Magina, "Acta Jakšićiana. Documents Regarding the Jakšić of Nădlac Family in Romanian Archives," *Иницијал* 6 (2018): 159–88.

Besides being an important mediator during peace negotiations, when communicating diplomatic messages and coordinating actions with the Ottoman sultan through "official" channels via interlocutor messengers and translators, Ali Beg maintained a network of his own spies and retainers who kept him informed about the most recent developments in neighboring territories. When it comes to the identities of the actual informants some details are revealed by another set of documents that elucidate the Hungarian-Ottoman negotiations during 1486/87. These parleys were spurred by a fatal incident in Smederevo/Semendire, when the Hungarian emissary to the Ottoman court Dmitar Jakšić, who previously welcomed and escorted the Ottoman delegation to the king's court in Buda, was killed on his way back from Edirne. Dmitar Jakšić's mission to Bayezid's court in Edirne and his subsequent assassination were chronicled in contemporary Ottoman and Serbian narrative sources, shedding light on the individual who killed him and elucidating the latter's personal motivation for the vendetta. The assassin was certain Gazi Mustafa, who, along with his brother, was previously captured by Dmitar Jakšić in one of the military conflicts along the Hungarian-Ottoman frontier. Jakšić treated the captives with utmost cruelty, knocking out Gazi Mustafa's teeth and forcing him to roast his own brother on a spit over a low fire.[77] Gazi Mustafa's blood feud led to an incursion into Ottoman-controlled areas in Bosnia by two Hungarian bans, who broke the ceasefire in violation of the established peace agreement. The violence on the border triggered a prompt correspondence between Bayezid II and Matthias Corvinus, in which the sultan, after being informed about the issue and in hopes to keep the armistice, explained how the murder happened and assured the king that the killing was a matter of personal dispute and no Ottoman authority was involved in it.[78]

What renders this incident particularly noteworthy for the current context is the existence of a letter that provides firsthand insight into the manner in which the news of Dmitar Jakšić's

[77] Johann Christian von Engel, *Geschichte des Ungrischen Reichs und seiner Nebenländer III. Geschichte von Serwien und Boßnien, nebst einer Fortsetzung der Denkmäler Ungrischer Geschichte und der historischen Literatur der Ungrischen Nebenländer* (Halle, 1801), 449; Joseph von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 2 (Pest, 1828), 296. The incident is also described by the Ottoman authors, without, however, mentioning the name of the perpetrator. See, for example, Oruç b. ʿAdil, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2014), 140; Hans Joachim Kissling, "Eine anonyme altosmanische Chronik über Sultan Bäjezid II.," in *Sultan Bajezid II. und der Westen*, vol. 2, Dissertationes orientales et balcanicae collectae (München: Trofenik, 1986), 138–39. Cf. Güneş Işıksel, "Friendship and the Principle of Good Neighbourhood between Bayezid II and Matthias Corvinus," in *Matthias Corvinus und seine Zeit Europa am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit zwischen Wien und Konstantinopel*, ed. Christian Gastgeber et al. (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 35; [Aleksandar Ivanov] Александар Иванов, "Убиство Дмитра Јакшића у Смедереву [The Murder of Dmitar Jakšić in Smederevo]," *Зборник Матице српске за историју* 99 (2019): 7–19.

[78] Bayezid's letter to Mathias, written in Slavic, was published by Ivan Biliarsky, "Une page des relations magyaro-ottomanes vers la fin du XVe siècle," *Turcica* 32 (2000): 291–305.

assassination was managed upon its arrival at the Hungarian court of Matthias Corvinus. The letter was sent to Mihaloğlu Ali Beg by certain Vuk Koluçegovik (possibly Ottoman rendition of Kolaković), a spy in the Hungarian court.[79] Witnessing the happenings he described, Vuk informed his Ottoman patron what were the immediate reactions to and the decisions made regarding the murder of the Hungarian envoy. Besides detailing the heated discussions between the king and his courtiers, in which the former took more conciliatory stance not wishing to break the truce with the sultan, while his lords advocated for an immediate invasion in Ottoman lands, Vuk also disclosed several interesting details concerning his position in the king's court proper and his relationship with Ali Beg. On the basis of his briefing, or rather spy report, we learn that Vuk Koluçegovik/Kolaković served at the court of Matthias Corvinus as a scribe and/or translator, and except for his native Serbian, he must have mastered also Latin, since they were simultaneously used in court communication—oral and written.[80] We also learn that he had access to the correspondence the king exchanged with his noblemen.

The letter of the spy Vuk Koluçegovik/Kolaković is revealing in more than one way: it not only establishes the information channels that the powerful frontier lords maintained at the heart of the Hungarian power center, but also sheds light on the dependency network they were entwined with.[81] Apparently, Vuk Koluçegovik/Kolaković was one of the Christian refugees from the Ottoman-occupied Balkan areas who came to Hungarian-held territories and carved out a career for themselves as castellans, military commanders, envoys, diplomats, translators and scribes in various courts, including the royal one. As was the case for many such refugees,

[79] A copy of the letter (*suret*) sent by Vuk Koluçegovik to Ali Beg is kept in the Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, currently digitally available in the Ottoman Archive in Istanbul: BOA, TSMA.e. 672/8 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 4088]. It was previously published twice: in facsimile, transcription and German translation by Hazai, "Zur Rolle des Serbischen im Verkehr des Osmanischen Reiches mit Osteuropa im 15.-16. Jahrhundert" (Hazai thinks that it was originally written in Serbian); and in transcription, Romanian translation, and facsimile by Tahsin Gemil, "Un izvor referitor la moartea lui Dmitar Jakšić – solul lui Matia Corvin la Bayezid II [A Document on the Death of Dmitar Jakšić – Matthias Corvinus's Ambassador to Bayezid II]," *Anuarul Institutului de istorie şi arheologie „A. D. Xenopol"* 22, no. 2 (1985): 597–604. The letter and the incident of Jakšić's murder were recently analyzed by [Ivanov] Иванов, "Убиство Дмитра Јакшића у Смедереву [The Murder of Dmitar Jakšić in Smederevo]," 12–15.

[80] In contrast, Hungarian as a diplomatic language at the court appears to have been used only beginning in the sixteenth century, with the Ottomans' more enduring presence in the region serving as a catalyst for its broader adoption. Ágoston Szalay, *Négyszáz magyar levél a XVI. századból. 1504–1560* [*Four Hundred Hungarian Letters from the 16th Century. 1504–1560*] (Pest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1861). For the increased use of Hungarian as a language of interaction in the "vernacular" borderland diplomacy between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans, see Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593," chap. 3: The Regional Diplomacy of Archdukes and Pashas.

[81] For the spy network of Slavic speaking refugees (*pribeg*s) in the Hungarian power centers maintained by the governors of bordering Ottoman districts in the second half of the sixteenth century, see Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, "Oszmán Hírszerzés Magyarországon [Ottoman Intelligence in Hungary]," in *Információáramlás a Magyar És Török Végvári Rendszerben*, ed. Tivadar Petercsák and Mátyás Berecz, Studia Agriensia 20 (Eger, 1999), 197–205.

parts of whose families remained in Ottoman-held territory and chose to make a living on the Muslim side of the border, some of Vuk's kin was in the service of an Ottoman master. In a revealing statement found in his espionage report to Ali Beg, Vuk candidly expresses his commitment to keeping the latter apprised of any developments related to the intentions of the king and his lordship. He articulates this loyalty by affirming, "I am your servant [*kul*], and for the sake of my brothers who are in your servitude [*kulluk*]," underscoring his allegiance to Ali Beg and his shared bonds with his kin who serve under Ali Beg's authority. It remains impossible to identify the brothers of Vuk who worked in the court of Ali Beg, as they were most likely already converts and did not retain their Christian names. Yet the mere fact that former Christians with presumable high social status and valuable linguistic competences were serving in his court, bespeaks the sophisticated dependency network that the frontier lord maintained on the one hand, and allows hypothesizing that it was indeed this complex and wide dependency web of skilled personnel of the Ottoman frontier districts' governors that the sultanic court was reliant on when dealing with the neighboring polities and rulers, on the other.[82] In support of such a hypothesis come several occurrences in Wallachia, in which members of the Mihaloğlu family were also intricately involved.

Regional Policymaking: Ottoman-Wallachian Relations as a Kinship Issue

The succession crisis that erupted in the Ottoman lands when Mehmed II passed away in May 1481, and in which Mihaloğlu Ali Beg played an important role, coincided with another succession struggle to the north of the Danube, in Wallachia, where Ali Beg appeared to play a similarly instrumental role in the concurrent dynastic contention, thus signifying his substantial impact on the regional power balance. When in 1481 Vlad IV the Monk (Călugărul) was striving to ascend the Wallachian throne and depose Basarab IV the Young (cel Tânăr, also known as Țepeluș), Mihaloğlu Ali Beg pledged his support to the pretender. In a correspondence with the council of the Saxon town of Brașov/Kronstadt, Vlad confirmed to the assembly that he had secured the support of the Wallachian boyars, as well as that of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, who interceded with sultan Bayezid II to recognize him as the rightful ruler of Wallachia.[83] Indeed, Ali Beg presented (*arz*) the stormy events in Wallachia to Bayezid II and asked him to reduce the

[82] For the composition of the courtly Mihaloğlu household see the next chapter.

[83] Ioan Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la relaţiile Ţării Româneşti cu Braşovul şi cu Ţara Ungurească în sec. XV şi XVI* [*Documents Regarding the Relations of Wallachia with Braşov and Hungary in the 15th and 16th Centuries*], vol. 1: *1413–1508* (Bucharest, 1905), 181–182 (no. 149); Grigore George Tocilescu, *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346–1603* [*534 Slavic-Romanian Historical Documents from Wallachia and Moldavia Regarding the Connections with Transylvania 1346–1603*] (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1931), 146–147 (no. 153).

Wallachian tribute (*harac*) by 100,000 *akçe*.[84] Although the reasons for this intervention of Ali Beg are not known, it is likely that he pleaded with Bayezid for the Wallachian tribute reduction in order to assure the enthronement of Vlad the Monk who was supported by the powerful boyar Craiovescu family with whom Ali Beg was in an open alliance.[85] This alliance, forged before Vlad's ascension to power, was cemented through a dynastic union between the two noble houses. The foundational patriarch of the Danubian branch of the extensive Mihaloğlu lineage, Ali Beg, solidified these ties by marrying a daughter of the ban of Strehaia, the *jupan* Neagoe – grandfather of the future voivode Neagoe Basarab.[86]

The Craiovescu and the Mihaloğlu families were naturally connected owing to their domains' proximity on the Danube's two sides. The rich and influential Craiovescu boyar dynasty were virtually independent rulers of Oltenia, who owned the largest feudal estates in the region since the last quarter of the fifteenth century.[87] Their Ottoman counterparts, the Mihaloğlu clan, de facto ruled over a large part of the neighboring Ottoman provinces (*sancak*s) of Niğbolu, Vidin, and Semendire on the right bank of the river, where the family established its largest

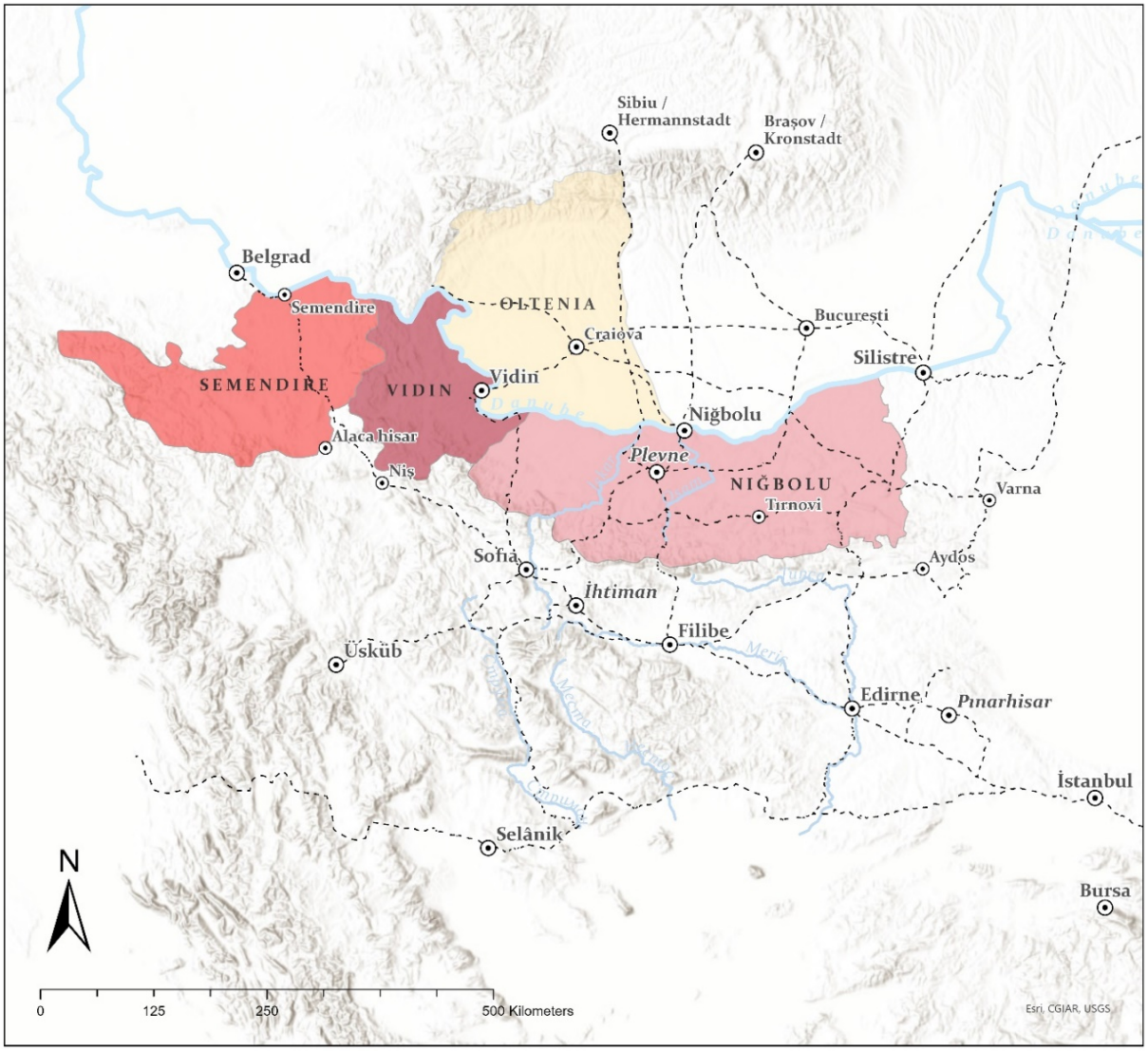
[84] Mustafa Ali Mehmet, "Un document turc concernant le kharatch de la Moldavie et de la Valachie aux XV–XVI siècles," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 5, no. 1–2 (1967): 265–74. This must have happened before the second enthronement of Vlad in 1482.

[85] Michał Wasiucionek offers the most comprehensive examination of "familial matters" in building cross-border elite networks across the Ottoman, Moldavian-Wallachian, and Polish-Lithuanian domains, albeit focusing on the seventeenth century. He uncovers numerous marriage, kinship, and military alliances that reinforced regional patronage networks between local and central elites, emphasizing that trust-building was crucial for the sustainability of these alliances. My observations below concerning fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman-Wallachian noble alliances further support his view by highlighting the significance of marital ties in the regional political landscape. See Wasiucionek, *The Ottomans and Eastern Europe: Borders and Political Patronage in the Early Modern World*, chap. 2: "Building Bridges, Building Trust," 43–79.

[86] The kinship ties of the Mihaloğlus to the Craiovescu boyars are supported by documentary evidence published by Mustafa A. Mehmet, "Două documente turceşti despre Neagoe Basarab [Two Turkish Documents about Neagoe Basarab]," *Studii* 21, no. 5 (1968): 921–30. It was Cristina Feneşan who proposed that the mother of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, the heroine from Suzi Çelebi's poem, must be a daughter of Neagoe of Strehaia, whom his father Ali Beg married and who later adopted the Muslim name Selimşah. Cristina Feneşan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508-1532)," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 15 (1995): 137–55. The love story of Ali Beg with the Wallachian noblewomen as presented in the *gazavatname* of Ali Beg is thoroughly analyzed by Ayşe Ezgi Dikici, "Christian Imagery in an Ottoman Poem: The 'Icons' of Muslim Holy Warriors in Sūzī's *Ġazavātnāme*," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 14 (2008): 9–22.

[87] On the Craiovescu boyars and their political role in Wallachia see Ioan C. Filitti, "Banatul Olteniei și Craioveștii [The Banat of Oltenia and the Craiovescus]," *Arhivele Olteniei* 11 (1932): 3–123; Ioan C. Filitti, "Craioveștii și rolul lor politic [The Craiovescus and Their Political Role]," *Arhivele Olteniei* 77–78 (1935): 3–16. The biggest boyar domain within Wallachia at the end of the fifteenth century was that of the Craiovescus. The bulk of the substantial domain (91 settlements, including the town of Craiova) seems to have been constituted by the ban Neagoe Strehăianu prior to the enthronement of Vlad IV, possibly around 1475, when Neagoe is already mentioned in the sources as the biggest landlord of the country. Cf. Ion Donat, *Domeniul domnesc în Ţara Românească (sec. XIV–XVI)* [*The Princely Domain in Wallachia (14th–16th Centuries)*], ed. Gheorghe Lazăr (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1996), 153–190. Donat presents a list of 164 villages that could safely be identified as belonging to the Craiovescus' domain in Southern Oltenia.

hereditary landed estates, centered on Plevne, at the end of the fifteenth century.[88] The geographical proximity of the lordships of these clans meant that the two families, each quasi-independent within their respective political spheres, found themselves mutually reliant both for the preservation of peace and for military cooperation against common enemies (See Map 1).



Map 1: The Mihaloğlu and Craiovescu clans' spheres of influence on both sides of the Danube during the second half of the fifteenth century. The Ottoman districts of Semendire, Vidin, and Niğbolu were governed alternately by Mihaloğlu family members, while the region of Oltenia in Wallachia was under the governance of the Craiovesu boyar clan.

Not surprisingly, the two families became intimately connected over time, through both matrimonial and political alliances. On the one hand, the Craiovescus found a powerful ally in the Mihaloğlus who could defend their interests before the Ottoman court, as well as offer them

[88] For the provincial governorates of different family members since the second half of the fifteenth century see Chapter 2, while details about the familial estates south of the Danube are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

military support in their internal Wallachian struggles. The Mihaloğlus could also help them evade direct plunder of their territories by the raiding expeditions of these frontier lords, who engaged in incursions north of the Danube on a yearly and seasonal basis. On the other hand, by allying themselves with the boyars of Craiova, the Mihaloğlus could rely on their support in receiving intelligence about the Christian plans against the Ottoman territories, use their domains as an outpost for their military expeditions to the north and northwest, especially against Hungarian-held territories, and rely on their backing to elect the preferred pretender for the throne during the Ottoman succession struggles, in which the frontier lords were principal protagonists. Indeed, this was the case in 1512, when the succession strife in Wallachia coincided with the one at the Ottoman court. Last but not least, the coming together of these clans was in all probability influenced by shared commercial and economic interests in the region. Given the geographic location of their domains, this likely involved participation in the region's principal economic activities, such as the slave, cattle, grain, and salt trades.

It is, therefore, tempting to suggest that it was this particular union between the influential Craiovescu supporters of Vlad IV the Monk and Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, which prompted the latter to intercede with Bayezid II at the beginning of his reign in 1481/82 to reduce the Wallachian tribute by the substantial sum of 100,000 *akçe*. In all likelihood, Ali Beg did so through the incentive of his relatives, the Craiovescu boyars, who in turn certainly used the alliance with their powerful Ottoman counterparts to strengthen their political influence in Wallachia. It, hence, does not appear fortuitous that during his unprecedentedly long (13 years) for the period reign—when Wallachian voivodes could hardly retain the rulership for more than a couple of years[89]—Vlad the Monk (r. 1481, 1482–1495) initiated a policy of reconciliation, among others but most pronouncedly, with the Craiovescu boyar family. That strategy was continued during the equally long and uninterrupted reign of his son, Radu the Great (cel Mare, r. 1495–1508), who was invested by Bayezid II with the rule of Wallachia,[90] most certainly through the Craiovescu-Mihaloğlu agency. Likely, it is not a mere coincidence that precisely Radu the Great created for the Craiovescu family the office of great ban (*mare ban*) of Craiova—essentially, the viceroy of Lesser Wallachia and most prominent Wallachian high official,—a position that

[89] Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], vol. 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001).

[90] As he has proudly announced to the Brașov burghers. Tocilescu, *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346–1603 [534 Slavic-Romanian Historical Documents from Wallachia and Moldavia Regarding the Connections with Transylvania 1346–1603]*, 206–207 (doc. 218). Cf. Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 129–131.

became hereditary for the family, who moved their residence from Strehaia to Craiova.[91] The conciliatory stance of these two Wallachian voivodes toward the Craiovescu boyars was paralleled with a notable rise of confiscations of other boyars' estates during the quarter-century period of their continuous reigns,[92] strengthening the position of the Craiova boyars, on the one hand, weakening the potential of the other noble houses to raise a pretender for the Wallachian throne, on the other, and, subsequently, countering the aspirations of Hungary to insert its political influence in Wallachia by instating a dutiful voivode of its choice.[93] Although there exists no direct evidence for the Mihaloğlus' involvement in the Wallachian domestic politics, it is tempting to suggest that their partnership with the Craiovescu boyars, whose protégés they were ready to support with military power when needed, was one of the main reasons for the relatively stable period in the principality at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. Based on the sequence of events that unfolded, it can be surmised that the alliance between the two noble families catalyzed the later involvement of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg's descendants, notably his son Mehmed Beg, in various Wallachian succession conflicts during the early decades of the sixteenth century. This inference points to a legacy of political engagement and influence extended by this familial alliance, shaping the course of local political dynamics, succession intrigues, and ultimately, the regional power balance.

Succession struggles in and around the Ottoman realm during the early 1500s

Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg was closely linked to Wallachian political life, primarily as an ally of the related Craiovescu boyar family who relied on his support both as a protector when they were facing persecution and as a powerful political partner in their quests for power. Hence, when the Craiovescus experienced cruel persecutions by the voivode Mihnea the Bad (cel Rău, r. 1508–1510),[94] who endeavored to eradicate his potential enemies in the face of the powerful

[91] Ștefan Ștefănescu, *Bănia în Ţara Românească* [*The Banate in Wallachia*] (Bucharest: Editura Stiinţifică, 1965), 99 and ff.; Radu Ștefan Ciobanu, *Neagoe Basarab* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1986), 26–44; Radu Ștefan Vergatti, "Radu le Grand – un voïvode Valaque méconnu," *Annals of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, Series on History and Archaelogy* 2, no. 1 (2010): 21–36.

[92] Donat, *Domeniul domnesc în Ţara Românească (sec. XIV–XVI)* [*The Princely Domain in Wallachia (14th–16th Centuries)*], 30–38.

[93] Marian Coman signals out the reigns of Vlad the Monk and Radu the Great as an extraordinary period in Wallachian history, in which, contrary to other periods, the throne was challenged only once. However, he thinks that it might well be seen as an illusionary peaceful era and cautions against regarding it as void of tensions between different domestic boyar fractions only on the basis of external source material that do not register rival contenders to the Wallachian throne. Cf. Marian Coman, "The Battle for the Throne: Wallachian Pretenders and Ottoman Troops (Early 15th c. – Early 17th c.)," in *Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium, Proceedings, 8-9 May 2023 İstanbul*, ed. Bünyamin Kocaoğlu and Ahmet Taşdemir (Istanbul: Turkish National Defense University, 2023), 68.

[94] Mihnea, the eldest son of Vlad Dracula (Vlad III Țepeș/the Impaler), was trying to get hold of the Wallachian throne for more than a decade against the ruling voivode of Wallachia, his cousin Radu the Great. When he could

nobles through confiscation of their properties, destruction of their foundations, and maltreatments of their associates, Neagoe Craiovescu sought the backing of Mehmed Beg. A contemporary source, the Vita of St. Niphon, written by the Athonite protos Gabriel probably within two decades after the death (in 1508) of the former Constantinopolitan Patriarch (1486–1488 and 1497–1498) and a short-time archbishop of Wallachia (1504–1505), reveals details about the events in Wallachia and especially the involvement of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg.[95] Despite the discursive nature of the text—which, in addition to being a hagiographical work praising Niphon's life, was primarily written to glorify Neagoe Craiovescu (by then the crowned voivode Neagoe Basarab) and likely commissioned by him, thus portraying his enemies negatively—the vita remains a valuable historical source, authored by a contemporary observer deeply familiar with the socio-political landscape of Wallachia at the time.[96] St. Niphon's vita narrates that the oppressed boyars went to the court of Bayezid, to whom they related all the

not secure the support of the Wallachian boyars, while residing in Saxon Transylvania, he finally sought the help of Mehmed Beg, who ultimately brought him to power immediately after the death of voivode Radu in 1508. Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxin de Hurmuzaki* [*Documents Related to the History of the Romanians Collected by Eudoxin de Hurmuzaki*], vol. II, Part 2: *1451–1510* (Bucharest: Academie Române, 1891), 574. Cf. Matei Cazacu, *Dracula*, ed. Stephen W. Reinert (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 185–89; Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries]:132–36.

[95] For details about Niphon's life and career, see Nicolae M. Popescu, "Nifon II Patriarhul Constantinopolului [Niphon II Patriarch of Constantinople]," in *Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secţiunii Istorice*, vol. 36, 2 (Bucharest: Academia Română, 1914), 731–98. The original Greek version of the Vita is not preserved to date, but survives through later Romanian and Greek redactions. Cf. Petre Ș. Năsturel, "Recherches sur les rédactions gréco-roumaines de la 'Vie de Saint Niphon II, Patriarche de Contantinople,'" *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 5, no. 1–2 (1967): 41–75. The oldest manuscript (1682) of the Romanian version could be found in G. Mihăilă and Dan Zamfirescu, eds., *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)* [*Old Romanian Literature (1402–1647)*], vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1969), 66–99. Two later Romanian redactions were incorporated in the Wallachian chronicle from the second half of the seventeenth century, known as *The Annals of the Cantacuzinos* (*Letopiseţul cantacuzinesc*) and the "Chronicle of Radu Popescu" (circa 1720).

[96] Neagoe is portrayed in the vita as a spiritual child of Niphon, while the Saint is a protector of the voivode. On the discursive strategies evident in St. Niphon's vita and their ideological background cf. Radu Păun, " 'La couronne est à Dieu.' Neagoe Basarab (1512–1521) et l'image du pouvoir pénitent," in *L'Empereur-hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et postbyzantine. Textes réunis et présentés par Petre Guran, avec la collaboration de Bernard Flusin* (Bucharest: Editions CRIS, 2001), 186–223; Radu Păun, "Mount Athos and the Byzantine-Slavic Tradition in Wallachia and Moldavia after the Fall of Constantinople," in *The Balkans and the Byzantine World before and after the Captures of Constantinople, 1204 and 1453*, ed. Vlada Stanković (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2016), 117–63; Fabio Martelli, "Archetipo costantiniano e retaggio bizantino negli scritti del voevoda Neagoe Basarab," *Bizantinistica: Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi* 3 (2001): 385–401. Based on the examination of multiple hagiographical topoi found in the text of St. Niphon's vita, Olar and Cristea have argued that it should be regarded as a textual palimpsest with its own narrative strategies reflecting the political contexts in which various interpolations were added to the sixteenth-century original. Cf. Ovidiu Olar and Ovidiu Cristea, "*Giochi di pazienza*. Viața Sf. Nifon și istoria Țării Românești: un sfânt și un domn ideal [*Patience Games*. The Vita of St. Niphon and the History of Wallachia: a Saint and an Ideal Prince]," in *Românii şi Creştinătatea Răsăriteană (secolele XIV–XX)*, ed. Petronel Zahariuc (Iași: Doxologia, 2021), 11–66. For the lavish donations of Neagoe Besarab to monasteries and churches both in Wallachia and outside its borders, in the northern and Central Balkans and Greece, and across the Mediterranean, including Jerusalem and Sinai, see Alice Isabella Sullivan, "Donors and Donations in Sixteenth-Century Wallachia and Moldavia," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa* 68, no. 1 (2023): 15–46.

repressions inflicted on them by Mihnea.[97] After discussing how to overthrow Mihnea, Bayezid concurred to enthrone the prince whom the nobles requested, Vlad the Younger (cel Tânăr), brother of the preceding voivode Radu the Great (cel Mare, r. 1495–1508). Vlad and the Craiovescu boyars swore an oath before the sultan and the Danube Pasha, laying themselves under the curse of their kin's extinction if they committed any wrongdoing against each other.[98] After feasting for some time, they left the court and headed for Wallachia.[99] On their way, they stopped by the court of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, where they took further oaths of allegiance. Together with the Craiovescus Mehmed Beg pledged his word saying: "If we act in dishonesty, and if we do not serve our lord Vlad in righteousness, let our lineage and name perish from the face of the Earth forever." In return, Vlad swore his oath to Mehmed Beg: "If I do any harm to this clan, or if I do any mischief, let your sword cut off my head with great shame, and let my kin perish from the face of the Earth."[100] Thereafter, the boyars and the army, headed by Mehmed Beg, entered Wallachia to purge Mihnea and his son, Mircea, whom the latter has meanwhile installed on the throne, and instate their own voivode Vlad. One of the contingents, led by Neagoe Craiovescu, attacked Cotmeana Monastery, where Mircea was present at that time, and captured all the voivode's men except Mircea and one of his courtiers, who managed to escape to Mihnea and relate to him what has just happened. Terrified of Neagoe's revenge, Mihnea fled to Hungarian-held territories, in his ancestral house in Sibiu,[101] and Vlad the Younger (cel Tânăr or Vladuț, r. 1510–1512) was successfully crowned voivode of Wallachia.[102]

[97] Mihăilă and Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)* [*Old Romanian Literature (1402–1647)*], 1:81–82.
[98] Ibidem, 82.
[99] The Venetian *bailo* in Constantinople at that time, Andrea Foscolo, mentions in his ambassadorial report that at the beginning of 1510 Ali Pasha sent an army of 12,000 – 15,000 soldiers across the Danube to repress the progress of the Wallachian voivode. His *Relazioni* is published in Maria Pia Pedani, *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, vol. 15: *Relazioni inedite, Costantinopoli (1512–1789)* (Padova: Aldo Ausilio, 1996), 5–32, here: 15.
[100] Mihăilă and Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)* [*Old Romanian Literature (1402–1647)*], 1:82. This episode was recently discussed by Radu Păun, "Calling for Justice and Protection: Sixteenth–Century Wallachian and Moldavian Tributaries as Petitioners to the Imperial Stirrup," in *Tributaries and Peripheries of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Kármán (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020), 65–66, 81–82.
[101] Cazacu, *Dracula*, 191. Mihnea converted to Catholicism and plotted against Vlad with the Hungarians, attacking Wallachia at some point, but was repelled by Vlad's army. Shortly afterwards, Mihnea was killed by a group of assassins, among whom – a Serbian noble (wrongly identified as Dmitar Jakšić in St Niphon's vita, since the latter was already dead), whose sister was raped by Mihnea. Cf. Mihăilă and Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)* [*Old Romanian Literature (1402–1647)*], 1:83–84.
[102] Ibidem, 82–83.

The relationship between the new voivode and the boyars, however, soon deteriorated, either due to a conspiracy against the Craiovescus, instigated by one of Vlad's courtiers – *dvornik* Bogdan, who accused Neagoe Craiovescu of aspiring to usurp the throne,[103] or it was in close connection to the internal Ottoman dynastic strife between Bayezid II and his son Prince Selim (the future Selim I). Whatever the case may be, the Craiovescus, faced with another persecution by the ruling voivode, who was advised to eliminate them—as related by the hagiography of St. Niphon,—resorted to the help of Mehmed Beg once again. Furious of the sufferings that befell the Craiovescus and bent on saving them, the young Mehmed summoned an army and invaded Wallachia. In an open battle near Bucharest he defeated the army of Vlad, who was captured and brought in front of the Danubian beg in the Wallachian capital. Referring to Vlad's own oath of allegiance, which he broke, Mehmed Beg beheaded the voivode.[104]

This dethronement brought a radical change in the Wallachian ruling tradition. Not only was the Wallachian prince forcefully deposed and killed, but the throne was usurped for the first time by a representative of the nobility, namely a member of the Craiovescu boyars – Neagoe Craiovescu, who would adopt the name Basarab, hence claiming royal descent and legitimizing his rulership.[105] This event, on the other hand, also marked the pinnacle of the powerful Mihaloğlu clan's influence over the Wallachian internal affairs, a token of the family's prominent role in the political landscape of the region.

In addition to installing his relative and close associate on the Wallachian throne, the forceful removal of Vlad, led chiefly by Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, was likely motivated by his effort to secure a strong ally for the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II, who was faced with a succession struggle between his sons. Mehmed Beg aligned himself with Bayezid II—as his father Ali Beg had done at the start of Bayezid's reign—and his favored heir Prince Ahmed, rather than supporting Bayezid's other son, the claimant Prince Selim. The murder of the Wallachian voivode, therefore, must also be placed within the events that unfolded during the last phase of this Ottoman succession struggle, when the two belligerent brothers, Ahmed and Selim, were fever-

[103] The writer of St. Niphon's vita blames the courtier Bogdan of giving bad advice to Vlad who accused Neagoe of conspiring against the voivode. Mihăilă and Zamfirescu, *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)* [*Old Romanian Literature (1402–1647)*], 1:84.

[104] Ibidem, 85. Cf. Feneşan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508-1532)," 149; Liviu Marius Ilie, "Neagoe Basarab and the Succession to the Throne of Wallachia," *Analele Univesităţii Bucureşti, Seria Istorie* 53 (2004): 43–44; Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Ţara Românească şi Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 139–143.

[105] Ilie, "Neagoe Basarab and the Succession to the Throne of Wallachia," 37–52. Cf. Păun, " 'La couronne est à Dieu.' Neagoe Basarab (1512–1521) et l'image du pouvoir pénitent."

ishly gathering forces in preparation for a conclusive combat. At the end of 1511 and the beginning of 1512 Selim mustered an army of supporters, amongst whom many of the Rumelian frontier lords, in Crimea, from where he would march to the capital, while amassing more troops on the way.[106] At the same time, Ahmed was assembling troops from Karaman (that he has just occupied) and other Anatolian provinces, but also a sizeable force in Rumelia from among the noble frontier lords' families as well, who, like Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, pledged their support to him. These were members of the Mihal, Evrenos, and Yahya Pasha families, who have already gathered a sizable force of 15,000 men south of the Danube in the Mihaloğlus' residential domain at Plevne, while simultaneously Mehmed Beg murdered voivode Vlad, certainly in an effort to eliminate the Wallachian military support for Selim.[107] Additionally, an intelligence report sent to Prince Selim by one of his supporters, the former governor-general (*beglerbegi*) of Rumelia Hasan Pasha, discloses the contents of an intercepted letter of Mehmed Beg to Bayezid II. The correspondence reveals that Mehmed Beg's rationale for displacing Vlad was primarily due to Vlad's decision to pledge allegiance to Prince Selim.[108] At the same time, the Craiovescu boyars remained loyal to the ruling sultan Bayezid, most certainly manipulated by their alliance with Mehmed Beg. What also becomes apparent from the report of Hasan Pasha is that Mehmed Beg was acting on his own behalf and without the prior knowledge and approval of the Ottoman sultan: he murdered voivode Vlad and installed on the throne Neagoe Craio-

[106] A list recording the names of the supporters of Selim who joint him at Kefe (Feodosia) and later on at Akkirman (Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi) was presented and analyzed in depth by Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 91–101. A number of the Balkan frontier lords' families' members with their associates and large military contingents figure prominently in this list as representatives of the pro-Selim faction in the Rumelian provinces. Amongst them were nine individuals from the lineages of the Malkoçoğlus, Gümlüoğlus, Karlıoğlus, Turahanoğlus, Mihaloğlus (specified as two brothers from the İhtiman branch), and Yahya Pasha-zades.

[107] A letter by certain Ahmed addressed to İskender Beg relates that the military preparations of Prince Ahmed stirred a discontent amongst the Janissaries in the capital who once again voiced their determination to enthrone Selim as a sultan and entreated the elimination of Ahmed and his troops. Besides the vividly described atmosphere in the capital, the letter makes clear that Prince Ahmed's supporters in the Balkans, among whom the troops of the Mihallu, Evrenoslu, and Yahya Pashalu begs, mustered in Plevne, and that Mehmed Beg murdered the Wallachian lord. See the transcription of the letter [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 2667], published by Çağatay Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu?," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 8, no. 11–12 (1955 1956): 185–200. [Hereafter: Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu? (II)"], esp. 124, fn. 15. A testimony of an anonymous person coming from prince Ahmed's camp and bringing information about his supporters, also relates—much in confirmation of the previous information—that in addition to the Mihaloğulları, and specifically Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, some other lords whose names he did not know, and Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, were taking the side of Prince Ahmed. Cf. BOA, TSMA, e. 855/12 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 7994/1].

[108] For the regional implications of Selim's succession strife north of the Danube and its entanglements with the local power struggles within the Danubian principalities, based primarily on bailo Andrea Foscolo's Relazioni, see Ștefan Andreescu, "Marea Neagră în lupta pentru succesiunea la tronul otoman din anii 1510–1512 [The Black Sea in the Struggle for Succession to the Ottoman Throne in 1510–1512]," *Studii şi Materiale de Istorie Medie* 25 (2007): 29–46.

vescu, the approval of whose appointment he only subsequently requested from Bayezid, saying: "Give [the] banner to my kin Parvul-oğlu [Neagoe] and appoint him ruler (*bey*). And if prince Selim goes against you, I, your subject, shall go against him, wherever you will order me, with the army from Wallachia, and I shall add 100,000 akçe more to the tribute (*harac*) [that was paid in the] past."[109]

A slight digression: dynastic strife amongst the Mihaloğlus?

The cited letter is known to the historiography and has been widely used by the Romanian researchers, mostly to argue for the noble descent of voivode Neagoe Basarab and to prove the kinship of the Craiovescu family with that of the Mihaloğlus. As much as this document indeed stands as a direct proof of the two families' kinship, it also reveals a very interesting detail about the identity of the person who wrote it, namely Hasan Pasha. It is commonly acknowledged that the Pasha in question was the Rumelian *beglerbegi* of Bayezid II,[110] who in the course of the succession struggle among Bayezid's sons pledged his support to two of the pretenders – first he sided with Prince Ahmed, and then with Prince Selim. An active supporter of Prince Ahmed, whom Bayezid favored as his successor, Hasan Pasha became a target of a janissary revolt that erupted in Istanbul in September 1511, when Prince Ahmed was invited to the capital by his father.[111] The janissaries, who pledged their support to the claimant Prince Selim, attacked the residences of the statesmen who favored Ahmed and demanded that they be expelled from the city. Janissaries' demands were met by Bayezid, and the pro-Ahmed-inclined statesmen, among them Hasan Pasha, were dismissed from office in early January 1512, receiving appointments as provincial governors. Hasan Pasha was offered the district of Semendire, but he requested instead a three-month appointment as a district governor of Gelibolu in order to support his pilgrimage to Mecca.[112] Apparently his demand was not satisfied at first and he received the governorship of Hersek, which, as attested in the Ragusan registers, he held from

[109] BOA, TSMA, e. 1010/79 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 11 876]. The document was published by Mehmet, "Două documente turceşti despre Neagoe Basarab [Two Turkish Documents about Neagoe Basarab]," 927. Cf. Tahsin Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans in the XIVth to the XVIth Century* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2009), 222–23; Păun, "Calling for Justice and Protection: Sixteenth–Century Wallachian and Moldavian Tributaries as Petitioners to the Imperial Stirrup," 82–83.
[110] Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 205–212.
[111] Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu? (II)," 120–122. Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 52–54.
[112] Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu? (II)," 120, fn. 11, where he cites an undated letter (TKSMA, E. 6186) of certain Hacı, which mentions the new appointments.

December 1511 to May 1512, yet in January 1512 he received sultanic gifts as the newly appointed governor of Gelibolu.[113]

Hasan Pasha's disillusionment with Bayezid was likely substantial, leading him to covertly support Prince Selim, while maintaining an outward appearance of loyalty to Bayezid II.[114] There are two preserved letters of Hasan Pasha to Selim, in which he pledged his allegiance to the prince, most certainly hoping for a promotion in governmental office if Selim ascends the throne. One of them Hasan Pasha wrote in all probability while en route to his new appointment, as he writes from a place in the vicinity of Belgrade (mod. Belogradchik) in the Vidin district.[115] Complaining that his followers are naked (*çıplak*) and un-mounted (*piyade*) since the time after he lost the *beglerbeglik* and separated from the *padişah*, Hasan Pasha assures Selim that he will serve him unconditionally and will go wherever he is ordered to go.[116] In another letter, most likely written shortly after Prince Korkud's arrival in Istanbul in March 1512, as this was the main information passed to Selim by Hasan Pasha, the former *beglerbegi* reassured Selim that he is ready to be summoned to any place as soon as he equips his solders with weapons and horses. Additionally, he informs Selim that his own (Hasan Pasha's) son Süleyman will also

[113] The section *Acta Consilii Rogatorum* (*Cons. Rog.*) of the Dubrovnik Archives contains records of emissary missions to each newly appointed Ottoman district governor of Hersek (specifying the names of the envoys and the gifts presented to the Ottoman governors), on the basis of which one could rather safely conclude who were the Ottoman *sancakbegleri* and what was the duration of their office. Ćiro Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," *Glasnik zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* 23 (1911): 448–49; Toma Popović, "Spisak Hercegovačkih namestnika u XVI veku [List of Herzegovinian Governors in the 16th Century]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 16–17 (1970): 94. Cf. Muamer Hodžić, "O hercegovačkim sandžakbegovima do osnivanja Bosanskog ejaleta 1580. godine [About the Herzegovinian *Sancakbegi*s Until the Establishment of the Bosnian Eyalet in 1580]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 68 (2019): 181–216, where the author used additional information from several Ottoman sources to rectify the data from the Ragusan archives and add more details to the identities and careers of the Ottoman governors. See also the data from a register of gifts, on the basis of which Hasan Beg/Pasha's various appointments could be traced more accurately, İlhan Gök, "İnamat Defteri'ndeki Verilere Göre 16. Yüzyılın İlk Çeyreğinde Osmanlı Eyalet ve Sancak Yöneticileri," *Mavi Atlas* 9, no. 1 (2021): 178–97. An entry in the latter register, dating from 21 Şevval 917 H. (January 21, 1512) specifies Hasan Pasha as the new governor of Gelibolu [Hasan Paşa ki mîr-livâ-i Gelibolı şud]. See İlhan Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909-933/1503-1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Istanbul, Marmara University, 2014), 1397.

[114] At the time when he sent his intelligence report to Selim I, Hasan Pasha endorsed a petition to the ruling sultan Bayezid II by a group of dissatisfied Wallachian boyars, who opposed the enthronement of Neagoe and were discontented with the Craiovescus in general. The *arzuhal*, in which the nobles accused the new prince, his followers, and their Ottoman patron, of usurping the power against the old custom and killing ruthlessly their opponents, is published by Mehmet, "Două documente turceşti despre Neagoe Basarab [Two Turkish Documents about Neagoe Basarab]," 928–29. Cf. the discussion in Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans in the XIVth to the XVIth Century*, 222–24; Păun, "Calling for Justice and Protection: Sixteenth–Century Wallachian and Moldavian Tributaries as Petitioners to the Imperial Stirrup," 83–84.

[115] Hasan Beg was a district governor of Vidin on several occasions. Cf. Gök, "İnamat Defteri'ndeki Verilere Göre 16. Yüzyılın İlk Çeyreğinde Osmanlı Eyalet ve Sancak Yöneticileri."

[116] BOA, TSMA. e. 756/64 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 6339/1].

fight on Selim's side together with all forces from his district (*çeri başılar, subaşılar, sipahiler*).[117] This letter has been used by Ottomanists who study this particular Ottoman succession struggle, particularly as evidence of Prince Korkud's sojourn in Istanbul.[118] All researchers univocally accept that the "servant" Hasan who so humbly signed his letter (which was an established practice) was the acting governor general of Rumelia Hasan Pasha, known from the contemporary narrative sources. While Hasan Pasha wrote his letter not in the capacity of governor-general of Rumelia but rather as a deposed one, which slightly corrects the previously held opinion, there is something of greater importance that has thus far escaped scholarly attention. All three letters cited above—including the spy report informing of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's interference in Wallachia, and the briefing about Prince Korkud's arrival to Istanbul—are signed by certain "bende-i Hasan el-fakir" (the humble servant Hasan). The seals of the sender at the back of the documents, however, read "Hasan Beg bin Mihal, el-fakir" (Hasan Beg, the son of Mihal, the humble), which establishes the Hasan Beg in question as a member of the Mihaloğlu family. The identification of Hasan Pasha with the oldest brother of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg actually explains how he was able to intercept his brother's letter to Bayezid and sent it to the pretender he chose to side with. The letter's contents were likely duplicated prior to its dispatch to Bayezid, probably by a scribe at Mehmed Beg's provincial court in Plevne. This replication could be attributed to the presence of Hasan Beg's loyalists in the court, particularly since Hasan Beg had been serving as the administrator (*mütevelli*) of the family's endowment (*vakıf*) established by his father almost a decade earlier, a role he had held since 1505.[119]

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[117] Contrary to what Uluçay supposed, namely that Hasan Pasha actually promised to mobilize all the Rumelian forces, the document makes it clear that he referred specifically to the forces that his son Süleyman could gather from the district under his command. Çağatay Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu?" *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 8:11–12 (1955/1956): 185–200 [Hereafter: Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu? (III)"], esp. 185, fn. 54 and 187. BOA, TSMA. e. 758/34 [former shelf marks: TKSMA, E. 6534/1; E. 6420].

[118] Uluçay, "Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu? (III)," 185, fn. 54 and 187; Tansel, *Sultan II. Bâyezit'in Siyasî Hayatı*, 297; Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 54.

[119] An addendum (*zeyl*) to the original endowment deed, made at the request of Hasan Beg in 1505, ascertains that he, as the eldest son of Ali Beg, became the acting *mütevelli* of the *vakıf*. A copy of the original Arabic *vakfiye* is kept in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi in Istanbul: BOA, Hariciye Nezareti, Siyasi (HR. SYS.), dosya 310, gömlek 1, vesika No 51, vr. 1–8. The sixteenth-century poet Za'ifî, once a *müderris* in the *medrese* of Plevne, was asked to translate the original *vakfiye* into the Ottoman language. He included this translation in his *Külliyât-ı Zaʿifî*, ms. Topkapı Palace Library, Revan 822, fols. 181a–184a. See Robert Anhegger, "16. Asır Şairlerinden Za'ifî," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 4, no. 1–2 (1950): 162–63. The content of the document was also reproduced in short by Agâh Sırrı Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, second (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1956), 359–60. Its short version is published also by Nüzhet Paşa, himself a member of the family, in his Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahvâl-i Gazi Mihal* (Der Sa'adet, 1315), 86–91. The *vakfiye* of Ali Beg is also translated into Bulgarian, apparently following the Ottoman translation of the Arabic original, which was handed by the then *mütevelli*s of the pious foundation to the special commission established to solve the question of the so-called "müstesna" *vakıf*s ("special" endowments with extraordinary rights) in 1909. Diamandi Ihchiev (1854–1913) was appointed as an expert translator to the commission, which had to examine the claims made by the administrators of the *müstesna* endowments on

The letters also reveal that there was an open conflict between the two Mihaloğlu brothers, who pledged their support to two distinct opponents in the Ottoman succession struggle, serving as a stark reminder that one should not conceive of these families as block entities with all their members having identical agendas. In this case, Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg chose the path of securing his gubernatorial position at the Danubian frontier, where he could augment his authority on a regional level and built a wide network of dependencies across the border, extending his political power on a supra-regional level. His brother Hasan, in contrast, strove to position himself at the court, which would have secured him primacy in the decision making processes in the Empire, yet bore the risk of being ousted from his position at the ascendance of a new ruler. Most importantly, however, the identification of the Rumelian *beglerbegi* of Bayezid II (and later of Selim I for a short time before he was killed at the Çaldıran battle), Hasan Pasha, as one of the Mihaloğlu brothers shows that—contrary to what is commonly assumed in Ottoman studies—the frontier lords' families were certainly not increasingly marginalized and gradually subsumed to the patrimonial power of the Ottoman rulers since the reign of Mehmed II. Quite to the contrary, they seem to have gained much more authority both in the provinces and at the central government, being active participants at the highest levels of the Ottoman governance at a sub- and supra-state level, manipulating the domestic and foreign political dynamics to their own ends and in accordance with their own interests. The latter point is further substantiated by Mehmed Beg's continued interference in the Wallachian political life.

Further meddling in Wallachian affairs

Mehmed Beg's request to Bayezid II to accept Neagoe's accession to the Wallachian throne, which Mehmed Beg helped bring about, was approved by the sultan. This sanction should not come as a surprise, keeping in mind that Mehmed Beg was one of Bayezid's staunch supporters and an opponent to Prince Selim's enthronement. The enthronement of Neagoe also testifies to the real workings of the Ottoman interferences in Wallachian fights for the throne, where the agency of the actual actors, in the case Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, local governor with authentic

the territory of Bulgaria, from where he must have acquired the *vakfiye* of some of the biggest Muslim endowments in the Bulgarian lands, including the ones of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg in Plevne and that of Karlıoğlu Ali Beg in Karlova. See *Доклад и решения на комисията назначена съгласно чл. II на Турско-Българския Протоколъ отъ 6/19 априлъ 1909 год. върху рекламациите досежно вакуфите „мюстесна“* [*Report and Decisions of the Commission Appointed Pursuant to Art. II of the Turkish-Bulgarian Protocol of April 6/19, 1909 on Claims Concerning the "Mustesna" Waqfs*] (София, 1910), 4; [Diamandi Ihchiev and Georgi Balaschev], Диаманди Ихчиев, and Георги Баласчев, "Турските вакъфи в българското царство и документи върху тях [The Turkish Waqfs in the Bulgarian Kingdom and Documents on Them]," *Минало: Българо-македонско научно списание* 3 (1909): 243–55.

familial, political, military, and commercial interests in the region, is noticeably evident. In light of that, it comes as no surprise that neither Neagoe Basarab nor Mehmed Beg was punished by Selim I (r. 1512–1520) who usurped the Ottoman throne by deposing his father (on April 24, 1512) and eliminating other pretenders shortly after Neagoe's enthronement. Although the two allies have openly contested Selim's quest for the throne, neither lost his position. Neagoe ruled uninterruptedly until he died in 1521,[120] while Mehmed Beg retained his position of governor of the frontier Ottoman district of Niğbolu, which gave him the prerogative to continue his raiding expeditions north of the Danube. The deal that Neagoe and Mehmed struck with the new Ottoman ruler remains unknown. Most likely, the agreement included an increase in Wallachia's tribute by 100,000 akçe, which was promised by Mehmed Beg in exchange for recognizing Neagoe as the legitimate ruler of Wallachia. This is evidenced by the actual tribute of 700,000 akçe sent by Neagoe Basarab during his reign.[121] On the other hand, Selim could not afford to overthrow an influential figure such as Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, who had already proven to be not only an accomplished connoisseur of the regional affairs north of the Danube but also an eminent military leader of a competent army that would play a significant role both during the Wallachian succession fights and during Selim's major military campaigns as well.

This conciliatory stance of Selim serves as an indication that even as late as the sixteenth century not all authority in the Ottoman Empire emanated from the sultan, as is often imagined by modern scholarship. On the contrary, it seems that a modus vivendi of shared values, personal agendas, and carefully calculated compromises between sometimes competing power agents was put into play, amongst whom the sultan was only one—albeit the most potent—protagonist. Certainly, Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg was one of those influential power holders who could not be easily surpassed either by the Ottoman rulers or by the neighboring Christian political elites, even during the rule of the most eminent and authoritative Ottoman sultan, Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566).

Mehmed Beg's brokerage came to light at the very beginning of Süleyman's reign during his first military campaign, that ended with the conquest of Belgrade/Nándorfehérvár (1521),

[120] It is worth noting that his 9-year long reign was challenged only once, by Mihnea's son Mircea, which is suggestive of the strong support (military and political) on the part of his Mihaloğlu kin. An undated letter of Neagoe Basarab to the sultan (BOA, TSMA, e. 5299/1 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 5299]) makes clear that Mircea and his Hungarian mercenaries were defeated by Neagoe with the help of unspecified Ottoman pashas. For a Romanian translation of the letter see Mustafa A. Mehmed, ed., *Documente turceşti privind istoria României*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474* [*Turkish Documents Regarding the History of Romania*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474*] (Bucharest: Academiei, 1976), 9 (doc. 8).

[121] Mehmet, "Un document turc concernant le kharatch de la Moldavie et de la Valachie aux XV-XVI siècles."

and which was essential not only for its military triumph but, more importantly, for consolidating his power at the opening of his rule.[122] This was also the time when military commanders took the opportunity to demonstrate their martial skills and diplomatic capabilities that would enhance their position and possibly affect their upward mobility in the military hierarchy during the reign of the new ruler. Certainly, this was the case with Mehmed Beg, who manifested his competences as an experienced expert of regional dynamics, while his actions facilitated the overall success of the operation.[123] In a letter to Süleyman during the preparation of the campaign, Mehmed conveyed the situation in Wallachia, whose voivode was to join the Ottoman troops during the expedition.[124] In it Mehmed relates that he met with Neagoe Basarab with whom they discussed the latter's commitment to join with his entire army Mehmed's troops in Wallachia, from where they would march to Transylvania.[125] Neagoe confirmed that he will have his army ready, yet he asked for a delay of 20 days, because he could not muster it in such a short notice, while Mehmed Beg requested an *ahdname* to be send to Neagoe so that the Wallachian army could be pacified. Mehmed Beg transmitted the concerns of the Wallachian

[122] Süleyman's military conquests of Belgrade (1521) and Rhodes (1522) had immense implications on the consolidation of the sultan's sovereign power and the building of his image and reputation as a world conqueror. Nevin Zeynep Yelçe, "The Making of Sultan Süleyman: A Study of Process/Es of Image-Making and Reputation Management" (Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Istanbul, Sabancı University, 2009), 178–279.

[123] A comprehensive account of the Belgrade campaign is presented by Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526*, 372–95, here: 394. Cf. Feridun M. Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2022), 58–66. Cf. Ferenc Szakály, "Nándorfehérvár, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom," in *Hungarian–Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnifijicent*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Budapest: Loránd Eötvös University; Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1994), 47–76; Pál Fodor, "Ottoman Policy towards Hungary, 1520–1541," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 45, no. 1–2 (1991): 285–91; János B. Szabó, "The Ottoman Conquest in Hungary: Decisive Events (Belgrade 1521, Mohács 1526, Vienna 1529, Buda 1541) and Results," in *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*, ed. Pál Fodor (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 263–75.

[124] The letter, BOA, TSMA. e. 996/30 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 11 691], is published in Romanian translation in Mehmed, *Documente turceşti privind istoria României*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474* [*Turkish Documents Regarding the History of Romania*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474*], 12–14 (doc. 12). Its contents were recently scrutinized by Ovidiu Cristea, "The Ottoman Campaign against Belgrade (1521): The Wallachian and Moldavian Response to the Sultan's Orders," in *Türkiye-Romania Joint Military History Symposium, Proceedings, 8-9 May 2023 İstanbul*, ed. Bünyamin Kocaoğlu and Ahmet Taşdemir (Istanbul: Turkish National Defense University, 2023), 41–57. For an overview of Wallachian and Moldavian participation in Ottoman military campaigns as part of the vassal principalities' obligations, see Ovidiu Cristea, "The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), 253–74.

[125] The letter specifies Sibiu, which has been recently repaired by the Transylvanian lord, as the target of the joint troops of Mehmed and Neagoe. Other sources speak of a large joint Ottoman-Wallachian force amounting to 80,000 men (half of them Wallachian) which prepared to attack Transylvania. Cf. Cristea, "The Ottoman Campaign against Belgrade (1521): The Wallachian and Moldavian Response to the Sultan's Orders," 47–48. In his chronicle Celalzade Salih Çelebi specifies that Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, leading an army of 30-40,000 *akıncı*s, together with the Wallachian forces, was to attack Transylvania and hence prevent its ban from joining the troops of the Hungarian king. See Felix Tauer, "Addition à mon ouvrage «Histoire de la Campagne du Sultan Süleymān Ier contre Belgrade en 1521», tirées de l'histoire de Süleymān Ier par Djelālzāde Ṣāliḥ Efendi," *Archiv Orientální* 7, no. 1–2 (1935): 194.

voivode as well: if the entire army leaves the country to join the campaign against Hungary, then his realm will be left vulnerable to the attacks of the Szeklers/Székelys (Hungarian occupants of the Eastern Transylvanian border territory inhabiting the upper valleys of the Mureş and Olt rivers). In order to prevent such an attack, Neagoe's proposal was that the sultan commanded the Moldavians, who were also subject to tribute, to attack the Szeklers. Endorsing Neagoe's request, Mehmed added that such a move would not only prevent an invasion in the Wallachian domain, but would prevent the Szeklers from joining the Transylvanian army. The entreaty proffered by Mehmed and Neagoe, which found favor with Süleyman, led to an imperial directive for Stephen IV the Younger of Moldavia (r. 1517–1527) to mobilize against the Szeklers. Despite the Moldavian voivode's non-compliance with the sultan's persistent commands—attributable to his engagements in fending off Tatar incursions threatening Moldavia[126]—the prevailing conditions unambiguously underscore Mehmed Beg's pivotal role in shaping the political landscape of the region, demonstrating his significant impact over its transformative dynamics. On the one hand, his authority with the kindred Wallachian ruler, a man with ambivalent loyalties both to Mehmed Beg and the neighboring Christian powers, was so great that Neagoe could not disobey him in not participating in the military campaign against Transylvania.[127] On the other hand, Mehmed Beg was capable to secure the Wallachian ruler's loyalty by safeguarding the latter's domains from the plunder of the raiding troops under his command. This must have been the reason for Mehmed to specifically ask at the end of his

[126] In a petition to sultan Süleyman (TKSMA, E. 6519) Stephen the Younger explained the reasons for his non-compliance with the sultanic orders. The document is published in Romanian translation and facsimile by Tahsin Gemil, "Din relațiile moldo-otomane în primul sfert al secolului al XVI-lea. Pe marginea a două documente din arhivele de la Istanbul [From the Moldavian-Ottoman Relations in the First Quarter of the 16th Century. On the Side of Two Documents from the Istanbul Archives]," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol"* 9 (1972): 143–44. It is published only in Romanian translation in Mehmed, *Documente turcești privind istoria României*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474* [*Turkish Documents Regarding the History of Romania*, Vol. 1*: 1455–1474*], 14–15 (doc. 13). Cf. Cristea, "The Ottoman Campaign against Belgrade (1521): The Wallachian and Moldavian Response to the Sultan's Orders," 48–52.

[127] Neagoe Basarab maintained good relationship with Hungary. According to the Wallachian-Hungarian treaty of 1517 the two polities promised each other military support if necessary, while Neagoe was ready to provide military support against the Ottomans if the chances to stand against them are good, if, however, the Ottomans outnumber them in military strength, he would only supply the necessary information about the movement of the Ottoman forces. Tocilescu, *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Țara Românească și Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346–1603* [*534 Slavic-Romanian Historical Documents from Wallachia and Moldavia Regarding the Connections with Transylvania 1346–1603*], 261–264 (doc. 271). Much in accord with this agreement, in a letter to the Brașov/Kronstadt burghers from 1520 Neagoe declared that he is ready to summon an army of 40,000 men to take part in an eventual crusade against the Ottomans. A report of the Wallachian informant Neacşu Cîmpulung sent to the Saxon town's *burgermeister* in the wake of the preparation of the Belgrade campaign in 1521 conveys that Neagoe feared Mehmed Beg more than his Transylvanian neighbors. Cristea, "The Ottoman Campaign against Belgrade (1521): The Wallachian and Moldavian Response to the Sultan's Orders," 43, 47.

letter for the issuance of a sultanic decree that would empower him to punish anyone under his command who would endeavor to enslave people and loot cattle in Wallachia.[128]

The assurances of Mehmed Beg must have eased Neagoe's concerns and the voivode submitted his military forces (lead by his most trusted men, because he himself was already severely ill, while his heir apparent son was too young to lead the army) to the leadership of the former.[129] Marching from Wallachia, the joint army's assaults on Transylvania had the necessary effect to weaken the defensive power of the Hungarians, who, forced to fight on several fronts, could not prevent the taking of Šabac/Szabács/Böğürdelen and Nándorfehérvár/Belgrade.[130] The success of Mehmed Beg's incursions in Transylvania in the course of the massive 1521 campaign must have emboldened him to initiate a larger operation on the next year, which did not materialize, although rumors of intense preparations were widely circulating in Hungary.[131]

Mehmed, nonetheless, remained intricately bound to the regional politics, where his military movements intertwined with the intensified succession strifes in Wallachia after the death of Neagoe Basarab, who passed away in mid-September 1521, shortly after the Hungarian campaign of Süleyman ended with the successful conquest of Belgrade (August 29, 1521). The Wallachian in-fights following the voivode's death exemplified one of the highest points of contestation between the regional powers' aspirations to secure their footprint in Wallachia, transforming it into a real battleground between the pretenders and their external supporters. This period also marked a distinctive chapter in the history of the regional power balance that was ultimately tilted in favor of the Ottomans, resulting from the Ottoman military successes

[128] BOA, TSMA. e. 996/30; Mehmed, *Documente turceşti privind istoria României*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474* [*Turkish Documents Regarding the History of Romania*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474*], 14. It is plausible that precisely the looting of Mehmed Beg's troops, which were to pass through Wallachia en route to Transylvania, were the greatest fear of Neagoe that the Neacşu Cîmpulung alluded to in his report to the Braşov mayor. It is also viable that the Wallachian voivode asked in exchange for his participation in the 1521 campaign for Mehmed's guarantee that plunder will be avoided. This mutual agreement between them could have been the reason for Mehmed Beg's unusual request. For the destructive nature of the plundering expeditions of the *uc begleri* families in the Balkans, see Oliver Jens Schmitt and Mariya Kiprovska, "Ottoman Raiders (*Akıncı*s) as a Driving Force of Early Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and the Slavery-Based Economy," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 65 (2022): 497–582.

[129] Ovidiu Cristea is on the opinion that Wallachian troops did not join the 1521 campaign. Cristea, "The Ottoman Campaign against Belgrade (1521): The Wallachian and Moldavian Response to the Sultan's Orders," 48. As far as his assumption possibly holds true as concerns the siege of Belgrade, evidence suggests that the joint Ottoman-Wallachian army indeed invaded Transylvania. In a letter to Süleyman, written shortly after the taking of Böğürdelen/Šabac (in the first days of July 1521), Mehmed Beg confirms that his troops, together with these of Wallachia, are heading in the direction of Sava, which the Ottoman army was trying to cross. BOA, TSMA. e. 750/47 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 5872/1].

[130] Some contemporary sources attest that voivod János Szapolyai could not come on time to the site of the besieged Belgrade, because he was detained in Transylvania by the attacks of a considerable Ottoman army from Wallachia. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526*, 394.

[131] Pálosfalvi, 398–99.

against Hungary and from the growing authority of the frontier lords in the area. The chronology of the events—as well as all of the pretenders' identities and the competing political factions—during this tumultuous time are hard to be ascertained; yet, historical records attest unanimously to the determination of Mehmed Beg to instate yet again his own protégés and fight against the other pretenders after the end of Neagoe's uninterrupted 9-years' long beneficial rule. It was not long after Mehmed secured Süleyman's authorization of the rulership of Neagoe's son Teodosie[132] when a group of exiled boyars in Moldavia and their counterparts in Wallachia (especially the boyars of Buzău and some others from the region of Oltenia) plotted against him and succeeded in enthroning the pretender Vlad/Radu (Dragomir) the Monk (Călugărul, r. 1521).[133] Even if unable to take part in the initial clashes near Târgovişte and prevent the killing of his ally Preda Craiovescu (brother of the deceased Neagoe and uncle of the newly enthroned Teodosie), Mehmed Beg, nevertheless, swiftly invaded Wallachia, stormed the capital and captured the usurper, who was taken to the Danubian Beg's domains across the river, where he was executed.[134] Possibly, it is in connection to these precarious events that Mehmed transferred Teodosie, together with his treasury and relatives, to Nikopolis/Niğbolu.[135] Several sources even report that Mehmed Beg requested from Süleyman I the

[132] According to Kemalpaşazade, Süleyman received the news of the passing of Neagoe in Semendire while returning from the successful siege of Belgrade. On the request of the Wallachian boyars to approve the enthronement of his son Teodosie, Süleyman asked Mehmed Beg to present him the prince in order to settle the amount of the tribute and confirm his voivodeship. Kemalpaşazade Ahmed, *Tevârîh-i âl-i 'Osman. X. Defter*, ed. Şerafettin Severcan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996), 112–113. In his eulogy of Süleyman's rulership and conquests, Şah Kasım Tebrizi presents a slightly different narrative. According to him, a messenger of the *sancakbegi* of Niğbolu, together with an envoy of the ruler of Wallachia, arrived at Semendire, where the campaign troops were resting on the way back from Belgrade, and brought the news of the Wallachian ruler's passing away. Since the Wallachian elders and governors considered the son of the deceased ruler as a worthy successor to his father, they asked for the sultan's favor to hand over the sovereignty of the province to him, hence allowing him to join the ranks of the other tribute-paying rulers. The sultan expressed his willingness to fulfil the request if the heir presents himself in front of him and shows the appropriate obedience and maturity. See the Turkish translation of Şah Kasım's Persian chronicle by Ayşe Gül Fidan, "Kenzü'l-cevāhiri's-seniyye fī fütūḥāti's-Süleymāniyye (İnceleme – Metin – Çeviri)" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Kırıkkale; Ankara, Kırıkkale and Ankara Universities, 2020), 326. On the short rule of Teodosie, characterized with incessant fights for the throne, see Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 147–150.

[133] Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 150–52; Radu Cârciumaru, "The Reign of Teodosie and the 1521 Fights for the Wallachian Throne: Short Considerations," *Annales d'Université Valahia Targovişte* 15, no. 1 (2013): 83–88.

[134] The person who beheaded the prince, as related by the seventeenth-century chronicle of Radu Popescu, was the equerry (head officer in charge of the royal stables) Radu Bădica, a son of Radu IV the Great, half-brother of Radu of Afumați, and a cousin of Neagoe Basarab, who would usurp the throne for himself for a short while from November 1523 until January 1524. Cf. Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 152; Cârciumaru, "The Reign of Teodosie and the 1521 Fights for the Wallachian Throne: Short Considerations"; Feneşan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508-1532)," 149.

[135] Several sources attest to the taking of Teodosie to Niğbolu during December 1521, which made some scholars eager to accept that this move was a clear indication that Mehmed Beg wanted the Wallachian seat for himself

Wallachian throne for himself, and that by installing his people as administrators in Wallachia, he transformed the principality into an Ottoman *sancak*.[136] While this claim remains to be explored, it is beyond doubt that Mehmed's increased presence in Wallachia caused mounting concerns both amongst the Wallachian nobles' anti-Ottoman factions and amid the Transylvanian authorities, who acted accordingly to defend their own interests.

To counter the influence of Mehmed Beg over the Wallachian political arena by installing his puppet voivode, the boyars were quick to elect Radu of Afumați after Teodosie's unexpected death at the beginning of 1522.[137] Suffering defeats at several military confrontations with Mehmed, however, Radu was forced to flee to Transylvania, which led to the introduction of another influential regional actor in the struggle over dominance of the infrastructurally weak Wallachian lordship.[138] Trying to counter the influence of his opponent and to reestablish Hungarian overlordship over Wallachia, but also to defend his own territories against the raids of

rather than a standard procedure for affirmation of Teodosie's rulership and recalculation of the Wallachian tribute. See Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 149–150. An undated letter of Mehmed Beg to Süleyman, which must have been written around the same time, confirms that Teodosie, together with his sisters, was transferred by Mehmed Beg from Holovnik to Niğbolu. The letter also attests that the relocation was done in accordance with a previously received request by Süleyman that the new voivode be sent to the Ottoman court. Accordingly, after informing the sultan that Teodosie is already in Niğbolu, Mehmed further asked whether he should sent Teodosie immediately to the court, or should he wait for the collection of the tribute (*harac*). See BOA, TSMA, e. 1177/41 with a seal of the sender at the back side of the letter: Mehmed b. Ali b. Mihal, el-fakir.

[136] In a letter addressed to the vice-voivode of Transylvania (25 October 1521), the castellan of Făgăraș claimed that after deposing and capturing Vlad/Radu, Mehmed Beg became the actual ruler of Wallachia. Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxin de Hurmuzaki* [*Documents Related to the History of the Romanians Collected by Eudoxin de Hurmuzaki*], vol. XV, Part 1: *1358–1600* (Bucharest: Academie Române, 1911), 255 (doc. 465). Cf. Viorel Panaite, *Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Its Tribute-Payers from the North of the Danube. Second Revised Edition* (Brill, 2019), 116, 274–75; Viorel Panaite, "Power Relationships in the Ottoman Empire. Sultans and the Tribute-Paying Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia (16th-18th Centuries)," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 37/38, no. 1–2 (1999 2000): 61–62, fn. 591, where he cites a Moldavian missionary to the king of Poland at the end of 1522, which also corroborates the statement of the Wallachian chronicle of Radu Popescu that the royal institution in Wallachia was destroyed and Mehmed Beg was ruling the country. Feneșan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508-1532)," 152–153 (fns. 96, 97) does not agree with Gemil's thesis that Wallachia was annexed by the Ottomans in 1521/2, but thinks that it might well be the case that Mehmed Beg was acting as a tutor of prince Teodosie, while defending the thesis that Teodosie was underage and probably this was the reason for his passing to Nikopolis under the protection of Mehmed Beg and then on to Istanbul (fns. 101, 102). Cf. Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 150–152; Ilie, "Neagoe Basarab and the Succession to the Throne of Wallachia," 48–52.

[137] Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 152–55.

[138] For a comprehensive assessment of the weak infrastructural power of the late medieval Wallachian realm see Marian Coman, "Land, Lordship and the Making of Wallachia," *Петербургские Славянские и Балканские Исследования* 1 (2012): 79–94; Marian Coman, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV–XVI)* [*Power and Territory. Medieval Wallachia (14th–16th Centuries)*] (Iași: Polirom, 2013).

the Danubian lord,[139] the then Transylvanian voivode John/János Szapolyai (1510–1526) and future king of Hungary (r. 1526–1540) entered in a fierce contest with Mehmed Beg to instate his own protégé. The alliance between the expelled Radu of Afumați and John Szapolyai resulted not only in the solid military and financial backing by the latter for the Wallachian voivode, but in several full-fledged military campaigns of Szapolyai against Mehmed Beg in the Wallachian territories during the summer and autumn of 1522.[140] The altered success during these clashes determined the winner for the contested rulership: when Mehmed's army suffered defeats, Radu of Afumați was effectively invested to the voivodeship, while Mehmed Beg's victories resulted in Radu's retreat to Transylvania and, subsequently, in the termination of his rule.[141] Assessing these quickly changing overthrows, Constantin Rezachevici even suggested that Mehmed Beg occupied the Wallachian throne for himself twice in the month-intervals of 1522 when Radu was forced to leave Wallachia and seek shelter in Transylvania.[142] Although the known sources do not specify Mehmed Beg-backed pretender during these clashes, and, therefore, no exclusive evidence could be brought either to reject or accept Rezachevici's hypothesis, it seems likely that Mehmed was trying to expel the Hungarian-supported voivode and free the princely seat for another fitting claimant, namely the future Vladislav III, who was in Ottoman custody prior to being instated to the throne for a short while in April 1523 (accompanied by sizable Ottoman troops).[143] In any case, the fights of Radu of Afumați for the Wallachian throne, bolstered by the Transylvanian voivode, marked the apex of what Marian Coman labeled eloquently a "transitional period" in the history of the Wallachian in-fights.[144] This phase, which Coman timed with the years 1510–1530, was a clear reverberation of the shifting balance of power in the region with a marked preponderance of the Ottoman factor over the Hungarian one, in which Radu of Afumați's enthronement in 1524 marked the last successful

[139] Southern Transylvanian Saxon towns were menaced by Mehmed Beg's troops already at the beginning of 1522. The frontier lord also demanded that they pay him taxes and present him with gifts. Szapolyai responded with a trade blockade of Transylvanian weapons for Wallachia and ordered the towns to stay ready to defend themselves, while he was summoning troops. Norbert C. Tóth, "Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda 1522. évi havasalföldi hadjáratai: Havasalföld korlátozott függetlenségének biztosítása [Transylvanian Voivode János Szapolyai's Campaigns in Wallachia in 1522: Securing the Limited Independence of Wallachia]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 125, no. 4 (2012): 987–91.
[140] Tóth, 996–1007; Norbert C. Tóth, "The Anti-Ottoman Struggles of Voivode John Szapolyai of Transylvania (1510–1526)," in *A Forgotten Hungarian Royal Dynasty: The Szapolyais*, ed. Pál Fodor and Szabolcs Varga (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities, 2020), 122–24; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, 400–401.
[141] Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 152–155; 156–157; 158–159.
[142] Rezachevici, 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries]:155–156; 157–158.
[143] Rezachevici, 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries]:160–162.
[144] According to Coman this period lasted from 1510 to 1530. See Coman, "The Battle for the Throne: Wallachian Pretenders and Ottoman Troops (Early 15th c. – Early 17th c.)," 68–69.

enthronement of a Hungarian-backed pretender. The next phase, between 1530 and the 1590s, certainly resulting from the fall of the Hungarian kingdom, was already markedly characterized with a stricter Ottoman grip on Wallachian, in which the claimants to the throne resided in Ottoman territories before usurping the throne and negotiated with the Ottoman authorities more frequently than before.[145]

Intricately involved in the Wallachian in-fighting and a long-time supporter of several pretenders that established him as one of the most influential regional power brokers, Mehmed Beg was likewise involved in the subsequent struggles for the Wallachian throne that shook the country after the end of Radu of Afumați's reign. Certainly, Vlad the Drowned (Înecatul, r. 1530–1532) deposed his predecessor voivode Moise (r. 1529–1530) with the help of Mehmed Beg and his troops.[146] The last instance of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's direct involvement in the Wallachian power struggles seems to have occurred in 1535 when he supported the efforts of Radu Paisie (r. 1535–1545, with interruptions) to become prince of Wallachia, who, according to his own testimony before Nicolaus Olahus, was enthroned by Mehmed Pasha.[147] Radu Paisie succeeded in reigning for ten years (with small interruptions) until 1545, when Mircea the Shepherd seized power. It is worth mentioning that while fleeing from Mircea, Radu crossed over into Ottoman territories and spent some time in the domains of his patron Mehmed Beg, possibly in an attempt to mobilize the Mihaloğlus' forces to help him regain the throne. The ex-voivode indeed regarded the estates of Mehmed Beg as a safe place since a few years before (in 1543), he sent his treasury for safekeeping in the "Nikopolis tower,"[148] which at that time must have been already under the governorate of another Mihaloğlu family member, possibly one of Mehmed Beg's sons, since Mehmed Beg died in Bosnia sometime in 1536.[149]

It remains a desideratum for further inquiry to examine the role of the descendants of Mehmed Beg, who continued to hold hereditarily the leadership over the Danubian Ottoman provinces, in the Wallachian political scene. Even the examples briefly sketched above, however, unambiguously show that the Ottoman frontier lords were powerful socio-political actors

[145] Coman, 69–70.
[146] Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 183–185; Feneşan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508–1532)," 150.
[147] Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [*Critical Chronology of the Lords of Wallachia and Moldavia*], 1: *Secolele xiv-xvi* [14th–16th Centuries], 192–197; Păun, "Calling for Justice and Protection: Sixteenth–Century Wallachian and Moldavian Tributaries as Petitioners to the Imperial Stirrup," 106–7.
[148] Coman, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele XIV–XVI)* [*Power and Territory. Medieval Wallachia (14th–16th Centuries)*], 283; Păun, "Calling for Justice and Protection: Sixteenth–Century Wallachian and Moldavian Tributaries as Petitioners to the Imperial Stirrup," 109.
[149] Behija Zlatar, *Gazi Husrev-beg* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, 2010), 52–53.

who transcended imperial, religious, and ethnic boundaries when interfering in the never lasting fights for the Wallachian throne. They were not only a commanding force that violently deposed (and in very many cases decapitated) the ruling lord, but also the ones who brought relative stability in the otherwise volatile political Wallachian life. It seems more than a coincidence that several of the Mihaloğlu-backed pretenders succeeded in holding the throne for an unprecedentedly long periods of time. Since the clan of Mihal became an active bidder in the Wallachian power struggles at the last quarter of the fifteenth century three of their protégés, backed or personified by their political and familial allies from the boyar Craiovescu clan, preserved their rulership uninterrupted for a total period of more than a third of a century that arguably constituted a distinct phase of a Mihaloğlu endorsed stability in Wallachian rulership: Vlad the Monk (Călugărul, r. 1481–1495), succeeded by his son Radu the Great (cel Mare, r. 1495–1508), and Neagoe Basarab (Craiovescu, r. 1510–1521). This political stability certainly did not depend only on the influence of the Mihaloğlu lords, as their rulership was determined by other factors, such as the voivodes' personal capabilities to silence and weaken their opponents through confiscation of their assets or expulsion from the country, as well as failure on the part of the Hungarian or Moldavian rulers to raise sufficient support for a powerful pretender. It is tempting to suggest, however, that the weakness of the other traditional brokers in the Wallachian political arena was endorsed by the military strength of the Danubian begs who were eagerly placing their military contingents at the disposal of their protected voivodes against their enemies.

Conclusion

The examples analyzed in this chapter contribute new perspectives to the existing scholarship on the Ottoman-European border districts. This body of work emphasizes the unique modus vivendi, characterized by a distinctive "frontier diplomacy," in the context of which otherwise belligerent frontier administrators engaged in cohabitation, negotiation, and cooperation. These interactions, it is maintained, were particularly evident in matters concerning trade agreements, population movements, ransoming of captives, resolution of local disputes, and joint efforts against mutually recognized external threats, whereas the frontier officials enjoyed relative autonomy in resolving these matters.[150] Yet, scholars commonly attribute the semi-independence

[150] Szymon Brzeziński and Áron Zarnóczki, eds., *A Divided Hungary in Europe: Exchanges, Networks and Representations, 1541–1699*, Vol. 2: *Diplomacy, Information Flow and Cultural Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015); Güneş Işıksel, *La diplomatie ottomane sous le règne de Selîm II: Paramètres et périmètres de l'Empire ottoman dans le troisième quart du XVIe siècle* (Paris - Louvain - Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2016);

of Ottoman frontier officials to practicality and efficiency reasons, whereby it was the central Ottoman government that granted this authority to border governors due to the challenges it faced in logistics and communication. The agency of the frontier elites, hence, still remains overshadowed by the primacy of the Ottoman court in Istanbul, which is thought to have retained central position in information gathering and resolving major frontier disputes.[151] Marshalling evidence about the capacity of the Mihaloğlu family to organize its own information gathering network, along with its ability to use it for its political ends, this chapter suggests a more multidimensional and symbiotic approach to evaluating the relationship between the "imperial center" and the "peripheries," in which the primacy of neither can be assumed. Hence, the cases discussed in the present chapter offer the opportunity to evaluate more critically the still pervasive historiographical tendency to treat "center" and "periphery"—and "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces for that matter—as binary and opposed categories. In contrast, the events and processes in which members of the Mihaloğlu family were key protagonists showcase interdependence between the imperial center and the frontier district governors, not only when it came to domestic governance but inter-state diplomacy as well.

More importantly, however, the evidence presented above exposes the Mihaloğlu family's brokerage across multiple divides and reveals an extensive network of dependencies—with diverse kinship, political, and patronage ties—that were intricately interwoven in the Ottoman political landscape and extended beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman state, having profound implications for political events and governmental practices at both sub- and supra-state levels. These networks were not segmented horizontally, as Barkey's hub-and-spoke model proposed, and were not strictly controlled by the Ottoman dynastic authority. Instead, it appears that these networks were merely sanctioned by the imperial center, suggesting a nuanced dynamic of power and influence that was not solely dependent on the Ottoman ruler.[152]

Güneş Işıksel, "Managing Cohabitation and Conflict: Frontier Diplomacy in the Dalmatian Frontier, 1540–1646," in *State and Society Before and After Establishment of Ottoman Rule*, ed. Srđan Rudić and Selim Aslantaş (Belgrade: Belgrade Historical Institute, 2017), 257–82; Güneş Işıksel, "Hierarchy and Friendship: Ottoman Practices of Diplomatic Culture and Communication (1290s–1600)," *The Medieval History Journal* 22, no. 2 (2019): 278–97; Domagoj Madunić, "Frontier Elites of the Ottoman Empire during the War for Crete (1645–1669): The Case of Ali-Pasha Čengić," in *Europe and the Ottoman World. Exchanges and Conflicts (Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Radu G. Păun (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2013), 47–82.

[151] Emrah Safa Gürkan, *Sultanın Korsanları: Osmanlı Akdenizi'nde Gazâ, Yağma ve Esaret, 1500-1700* (İstanbul: Kronik, 2017).

[152] This awareness clearly transpires in a recent study by Megan K. Williams, "Diplomatic Safe Conducts across Sixteenth-Century Habsburg-Ottoman Borders," in *Borders and Mobility Control in and between Empires and Nation-States*, ed. Jovan Pešalj et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2023), 33–65, in which the author scrutinizes the negotiated safe-conduct of a 1527/8 Habsburg embassy to Süleyman I and singles out the agency of several Ottoman frontier lords. Williams warns against the usage of a block category of Ottoman "imperial policy," and calls for rethinking it in lines of negotiation between multiple actors within the Ottoman socio-political setting with various degrees of autonomy and factional interests. Examining the "vernacular diplomacy" along the Ottoman-

Recognizing these dynamics and the involvement of multiple socio-political actors with their own social, political, and economic interests, both on regional and supraregional levels, gives grounds to question the priority of the Ottoman dynasty in the power structure of the Empire as a whole as late as early 1500s, and calls for a deeper examination of the structural capacity of other social actors to hold sway over social arrangements within the Ottoman societal landscape.

Habsburg borderland, Robyn Dora Radway has also somewhat cautiously suggested that the actions of the local governors in Esztergom may have been part of a provincially initiated project to enhance their regional influence, rather than a centrally orchestrated plan by the Ottoman government. Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593," 205–18.

CHAPTER 2 | THE (NET)WORKINGS OF PROVINCIAL POWER

INTRODUCTION

The patrimonial governance model, which still dominates modern historiographical interpretations of Ottoman state-building, views the sultanic dynastic household and its corps of slave-servants (*kul*s)—instituted by Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) and ultimately perfected during the reign of Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566)—at the helm of all military, administrative, and bureaucratic functions within the state's governmental structure. While scholars generally recognize the role of the *ümera* (governing commanders) households—especially of the frontier lord's families in the Balkans—in the provincial administration for the period before the mid-fifteenth century, it is largely assumed that after this period these families' semi-autonomous governance was overpowered by the sultanic centralizing efforts. This supposedly entailed, among other developments, supplanting regional agents and their infrastructural capacity with centrally appointed military and administrative servants who owned their position to the will of and were personally dependent on the sultan. This historiographical paradigm, articulated by Halil İnalcık more than 70 years ago,[153] is so deeply rooted in scholarship that, despite multiple works pointing to new evidence, it still persists in scholarly interpretations of post-Mehmed II and pre-seventeenth-century Ottoman provincial governance.[154] It is only starting in the seventeenth century, the narrative goes, that the control of the dynastic household over the processes of social mobility within the Ottoman military-administrative hierarchy devolves. Accordingly, the distributive authority of the power holders outside the sultanic household in the face of *vezir*s, provincial governors, *ayan*s, and military households in the provinces is a subject we typically encounter in the studies on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[155]

[153] İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest."
[154] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power*; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*; Hasan Basri Karadeniz, *Osmanlılar ve Rumeli Uç Beyleri: Merkez ve Uç* (İstanbul: Yeditepe, 2015); Fodor, *The Business of State: Ottoman Finance Administration and Ruling Elites in Transition (1580s–1615)*.
[155] Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683–1703: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 4 (1974): 438–47; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*; Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change, 1590–1699"; Ehud Toledano, "The Emergence of Ottoman-Local Elites (1700–1900): A Framework for Research," in *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within*, ed. Ilan Pappé and Moshe Ma'oz (London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997); Dror Ze'evi, *An Ottoman Century: The District of Jerusalem in the 1600s* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Michael Nizri, *Ottoman High Politics and the* Ulema *Household* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Dina Rizk Khoury, "The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power-Holders: An Analysis of the Historiography," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133–56; Jane Hathaway, "Households in the Administration of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013): 127–49; Metin Kunt, "Devolution from the Centre

Offering evidence for the patronage networks of the provincial power holders who hailed from the Mihaloğlu family within the Ottoman socio-political landscape, this chapter aims to showcase that the latter was much more polycentric than traditionally acknowledged and that well before the seventeenth century the frontier lords' families had the capacity to hold sway over many of the social processes in the provinces.[156] These local dynamics did not depend on the sultanic patrimonialism but were subject to their own infrastructural forces dominated by the provincial elite personified by the powerful marcher lords. In order to demonstrate this, I will move away from the examination of the Mihaloğlu lineage and individual family members' agency, discussed in the previous chapter, and instead focus on the house of Mihal as a notable distributive power node in which multiple clientelistic dependencies and collective groupings converged. To that end, I will examine the composition of the larger military-administrative Mihaloğlu household and will argue that it was this entourage—loyal servants attached to their masters by way of asymmetrical patron-client bondage[157]—who formed the local governing apparatus and administered power in the provinces. Moreover, going beyond a single district and the patronage politics of this concentric dependency network, my aim will be also to uncover possible supra-regional and inter-familial interactions among the members of the provincial elite. Focusing on several matrimonial unions between Mihaloğlu family members and other such influential households, I will advance the idea that these marriage alliances aug-

to the Periphery: An Overview of Ottoman Provincial Administration," in *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents & Interactions*, ed. Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 30–48; Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*; Fodor, *The Business of State: Ottoman Finance Administration and Ruling Elites in Transition (1580s–1615)*; Muhammet Zahit Atçıl, "State and Government in the Mid-Sixteenth Century Ottoman Empire: The Grand Vizierates of Rüstem Pasha (1544–1561)" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago, 2015); Birol Gündoğdu, "The Political and Economic Transition of Ottoman Sovereignty from a Sole Monarchy to Numerous Elites, 1683–1750s," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 70, no. 1 (2017): 49–90; Cumhur Bekar, "The Rise of the Köprülü Family: The Reconfiguration of Vizierial Power in the Seventeenth Century" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Leiden, Leiden University, 2019).

[156] On several occasions Pál Fodor has already pointed out that the formation of "political households" was not a phenomenon of the seventeenth century. He has painstaking uncovered the workings of such political households' networks as early as mid-sixteenth century, which already suggests that they were not unheard of even prior to this era. Cf. Pál Fodor, "Who Should Obtain the Castle of Pankota (1565)? Interest Groups and Self-Promotion in the Mid-Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Political Establishment," *Turcica* 31 (1999): 67–86. Studies on several individual governors and their household personnel from before the mid-sixteenth century demonstrated that political households were a pertinent feature of even earlier periods. Some of these are referred to in the following footnotes.

[157] For the concept of asymmetrical dependency, advanced by the Cluster of Excellence at the Bonn Center for Dependency & Slavery Studies, mostly associated with the underrepresented groups in Ottoman society, especially slaves, see Jeannine Bischof, Stephan Conermann, and Marion Gymnich, eds., "Naming, Defining, Phrasing Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Introduction," in *Naming, Defining, Phrasing Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: A Textual Approach* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111210544; Julia Winnebeck et al., "The Analytical Concept of Asymmetrical Dependency," *Journal of Global Slavery* 8, no. 1 (2023): 1–59, https://doi.org/10.1163/2405836X-00801002.

mented the power of the individual stakeholders and facilitated the formation of a distinct echelon of Ottoman governors that dominated the social, administrative, and military hierarchy in the provinces long before the conventionally envisaged era of "decentralization" when locally autonomous provincial stakeholders are believed to have emerged.

THE HUB: THE HOUSEHOLD AS THE BUILDING BLOCK OF PROVINCIAL AUTHORITY

> Households were the building blocks of the Ottoman political edifice. Therefore the basic unit for the study of the sociology of political life is the household. In a dynastic empire the role of the ruler is rightly accorded central place, and the royal household is the keystone of the edifice. While paying due attention to this imposing keystone, we must not neglect humbler bricks in the walls: the sultan maintained a huge personal staff and retinue, but he also insisted that all his officers did the same, proportionate to their rank and allotted revenues.[158]

Metin Kunt's powerful statement that views the Ottoman socio-political establishment through a less institutionalized lens and encapsulates the results of his years-long research on both the sultanic and *ümera* (governors) households, has unfortunately found little response in studies concerning Ottoman provincial government prior the last quarter of the sixteenth century, and even less so in research on the frontier lords' families that has flourished during the last several decades. Kunt has convincingly demonstrated that well into the 1580s the most important avenue of entry into the military-administrative career in the provincial governance was a prior association (either sons or retainers) with a provincial officer's (*sancakbegi* or *beglerbegi*) household.[159] In spite of his caution against the assumption that provincial government positions were staffed mainly with palace-trained personnel (i.e. members of the extended sultanic household), scholars have rarely engaged in a more detailed and pointed investigation to understand the provincial governing practices and the role of the regional households in it prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

That is not to say that there exists a complete academic unawareness of the essential role an attachment to a provincial governor's house played in the social mobility of the latter's household members prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To be sure, studies on the life-stories of prominent individuals from the regional administration of several districts (especially from the Hungarian and Bosnian frontier regions) exposed that these protagonists

[158] Kunt, "Royal and Other Households," 103.
[159] Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*, especially Chapters 3 and 4. In Kunt's estimate, as high as 42 percent of the *sancakbegi*s during the 1520s were related to the district governors and hence were forming a far greater group than the palace-related *ümera*.

started their careers as close associates (progeny or dependents) of a governor. Hence, for example, Géza Dávid has elucidated the career paths of a descendant and a dependent of the prominent Yahyapaşazade family who dominated the northern border districts of Ottoman Hungary for several generations between the late fifteenth- and the second half of the sixteenth century. Derviş Beg, who was a son of Yahyapaşaoğlu Küçuk Bali Beg/Pasha, advanced swiftly in the official ladder within the Ottoman north-western frontier regions mainly owing to his lineage, but surely his personal prowess too. He started his career as a *timar*-holder and during his lifetime in the first half of the sixteenth century he advanced from a commander of the Danube fleet and several short-term district governor's positions, until he got his longest tenured post of governor of Mohács and Pécs.[160] Still, even more successful seems to have been the career path of Derviş Beg's contemporary Kasım, given that he was not a blood relative of a provincial governor but rather one of Yahyapaşaoğlu Mehmed Beg/Pasha's retainers. Kasım was a military officer (*voyvoda*) in the retinue of Mehmed Beg, who pursued a successful career in the provincial administration as a district governor of several *sancak*s that finally culminated in the post of Buda *beglerbegisi*, in which he succeeded his patron.[161] The same successful career advancement in the first half of the sixteenth century enjoyed one of the *voyvoda*s of the Bosnian *sancakbegi* Hüsrev Beg, Murad, who, being a long-time faithful servant, steward of the household staff (*kethüda*), military officer (*voyvoda*), and administrator of his master's pious endowment (*mütevelli*), was promoted to a district governor (*sancakbegi*) of several districts owing to a large extent to his clientelistic ties to his influential patron.[162] Occasionally, on the basis of various archival materials, researchers were lucky to track the possessions and posts

[160] Géza Dávid, "A Life on the Marches: The Career of Derviş *Bey*," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 4 (2001): 411–26. It is highly probable that the *kethüda* of the Herzegovian district governor Bali Beg, his deputy Derviş, who is known from the Ragusan sources as a correspondent with Dubrovnik (1541) and King Ferdinand (1543), is identical to the protagonist of Dávid's study. Cf. Aleksa Ivić, "Neue cyrillische Urkunden aus den Wiener Archiven," *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 30 (1909): 205–14, esp. 208–209; Toma Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 12-13/1962-1963 (1965): 101, 104.
[161] Géza Dávid, "An Ottoman Military Career on the Hungarian Borders: Kasım *Voyvoda*, *Bey*, and Pasha," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe: The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, ed. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 265–97.
[162] Ćiro Truhelka, "Gazi Husrefbeg, njegov život i njegovo doba [Gazi Husref Beg, His Life and His Era]," *Glasnik zemaljskog muzeja u Bosni i Hercegovini* 24, no. 1 (1912): 91–233; Zlatar, *Gazi Husrev-beg*, 147–60; Behija Zlatar, "Murad-beg Tardić," in *IV. Uluslararası Güney-Doğu Avrupa Türkolojisi Sempozyumu Bildirileri / Referati sa IV. Medjunarodnog Turkološkog Simpozijuma Jugoistočne Evrope / Proceedings of the IVth International South-East Europe Turkology Symposium / 03-07. XII. 2007, Zagreb*, ed. Nimetullah Hafız (Prizren: BALTAM, 2011), 387–92; Kristijan Juran, "O podrijetlu i šibenskoj rodbini kliškog sandžakbega Murat-beg Gajdića [About the Origin and Sibenik Relatives of the District-Governor of Klis Murat Beg Gajdić]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 16 (2016): 231–39; Géza Dávid, "The *Sancakbegi*s of Pozsega (Požega, Pojega) in the 16th Century," in *Life on the Ottoman Border: Essays in Honour of Nenad Moačanin*, ed. Vjeran Kursar (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences FF Press, 2022), 31–60, esp. 33–37.

of other retainers of the provincial governors who were less successful, yet well imbedded in the regional socio-economic and military-administrative landscape,[163] or even to enumerate the total number of retainers of a given governor and their specific service in their patron's household.[164]

Although prior research on the composition of a district/provincial governor's household and retainers has been sparse for the period before the seventeenth century, it has nevertheless illuminated that, in many instances, the governors' military retinues often constituted the core of the provincial military forces, ranging from the lowest- to the highest-ranking prebend-holders. Such findings provide insights into the inner workings of Ottoman provincial governance, which apparently relied heavily on a network of personal attachments and congruent loyalties that operated somewhat independently from the central sultanic authority and its own-grown cadres. Arguably, such dependencies were an inherent feature of the Ottoman governing model since the state's inception, but the lack of consistent paper trail prior to the sixteenth century makes it difficult to trace how it evolved over time. Despite this, there are ample reasons to believe that group dependencies, protectionism, and patronage (*intisab*), were already well-established relationships that formed around influential individuals and their households even before this period.

As a matter of fact, the earliest surviving Ottoman tax registers bear testimony to such a dependency network that prevailed in the marcher districts under the traditional leadership of the big frontier lords' families of the fifteenth century, when most military prebends were in the hands of the frontier lords' personal retinues. It suffices to recall that a substantial number

[163] Géza Dávid's scrupulous study on Kasım *voyvoda* revealed that the former retainer of Yahyapaşaoğlu Mehmed Beg formed a household of his own with his retinue holding large portion of the *dirlik*- and *çiftlik*-revenues in several districts under their patron's consecutive governance. Dávid, "An Ottoman Military Career on the Hungarian Borders: Kasım *Voyvoda*, *Bey*, and Pasha."

[164] On the composition of the military-administrative household of the Bosnian governor Hüsrev Beg (comprised of 1040 men) during the second quarter of the sixteenth century see Ahmed S. Aličić, "Popis bosanske vojske pred bitku na Mohaču 1526. godine [List of the Bosnian Army Before the Battle of Mohács in 1526]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 25/1975 (1976): 171–202; Zlatar, *Gazi Husrev-beg*, 147–60. For a list of 265 of the closest entourage and retinue servants (*kul*) of the first Bosnian *beglerbegi* Ferhad Pasha from 1574 see Elma Korić, "Pratnja Bosanskog sandžakbega, Ferhad-bega Sokolovića [Retinue of the Bosnian District-Governor Ferhad Beg Sokolović]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 61/2011 (2012): 351–68; Elma Korić, *Životni put prvog beglerbega Bosne: Ferhad-paša Sokolović (1530.–1590.)* [*Life Path of the First Provinical Governor of Bosnia: Ferhad Pasha Sokolović (1530–1590)*] (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut, 2015), 230–51. For a more general assessment of the composition of the Herzegovian district-governor's and the Bosnian *beglerbegi*'s courts, see the classic studies of Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]"; Hazim Šabanović, "Bosanski divan: Organizacija i uređenje centralne zemaljske uprave u Bosni pod turskom vlašću do kraja XVII stoljeća [Bosnian Council: Organization and Arrangement of the Central Government Administration in Bosnia under Turkish Rule until the End of the 17th Century]," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 18-19/1968-1969 (1973): 9–45. For a more recent assessment in English see Vesna Miović, "Beylerbey of Bosnia and Sancakbey of Herzegovina in the Diplomacy of the Dubrovnik Republic," *Dubrovnik Annals* 9 (2005): 37–69.

of the *dirlik*-holders in Albania, recorded in 1431, were men of the district-governor Evrenosoğlu Ali Beg.[165] Other registers from the first reigns of Murad II (1421–1444) and that of his son Mehmed II (1444–1446) also list some of the dependents of the district-governors from the frontier lords' families.[166] The most illustrative example for the extent of such a household as recorded shortly after the conquest of Constantinople (1453) is the one of İshakoğlu İsa Beg, when all but a few of the *dirlik*-holders in the historical regions of Kosovo and northwestern Macedonia were his own servants.[167] Even though they were exclusively recorded as İsa Beg's *gulam*s (slaves), *hizmetkar*s (servants), or *te'allukat* (associates, dependents), some of these personal retainers were additionally noted down with the specific offices they held and particular duties they performed within their patron's household. Hence, one finds his two *kethüda*s (household stewards, chamberlains),[168] *kapıcı-başı* (chief gatekeeper) and *kapıcı*s (gatekeepers), *silahdar*s (arms-bearers), *rikabdar*s (stirrup-holders), *hazinedar*s (treasurers), and *kilari* (keeper of the larder), to name the most distinguished ones, who seem to have formed İsa Beg's outer household section (*birun*). These were also the ones who received the largest prebends in the province and, along with the other servants of İsa Beg whose household offices are not explicitly recorded—with a more strict military-administrative service,—formed the backbone of the provincial military and administrative organization, while serving as timariots, *subaşı*s, *dizdar*s, *mustahfiz*es, etc.[169]

As much as the example of İshakoğlu İsa Beg's dependents as recorded in 1455 is illuminating about his clientelage (*intisab*) and household dependency network as a point of entry to the

[165] Designated in the sources as *merd*, *merdüm*, *gulam* of Ali Beg or simply as *gulam-i mir* (most certainly a slave of the *beg*). Halil İnalcık, *Hicrî 835 Tarihli Sûret-i Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954).

[166] Uğur Altuğ, "II. Murad Dönemine Ait Tahrir Defterlerinin Yayına Hazırlanması ve Bu Malzemeye Göre Tımar Sistemi, Demografi, Yerleşme ve Topoğrafya Üzerinde Araştırmalar" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Ankara, Gazi Üniversitesi, 2010); Halil İnalcık, Evgeni Radushev, and Uğur Altuğ, *1445 Tarihli Paşa Livâsı İcmal Defteri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013); Feridun M. Emecen, "Defter-i Köhne: Pirlepe-Kırçova Kesiminin En Eski Timar Defteri (1445-1455)," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 43 (2014): 341–474; Evgeni Radushev and Uğur Altuğ, *1422–1423 Tarihli Köprülü, Kastorya ve Koluna Vilâyetleri Mufassal Defteri: Metin, İndeks ve Tıpkıbasım* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2016).

[167] A small number of İsa Beg's father's servants are still to be seen as prebend-holders as well, attesting to the long-lasting effect the service in a provincial household had on the career trajectories of its members. Hazim Šabanović, *Krajište Isa-bega Ishakoviča: zbirni katastarski popis iz 1455 godine* [*The Border District of Isa Beg Ishaković: a Collective Cadastral Registration from 1455*] (Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut, 1964). The data from this particular registration concerning the *dirlik*-holdings in the region was recently summarized in English by Ema Miljković, "The Characteristics of the Timar System in Rumelia: The Timar System in the Border Region of Isa-Beg Ishaković (15th Century Case Study)," *Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi / Journal of Ottoman Legacy Studies* 6, no. 15 (2019): 353–61.

[168] Besides *kethüda*, one of them, Ali Beg, is also recorded as a *çukadar* (chief servant handling court affairs). Simultaneously, he also served as a *subaşı* of Üsküb/Skopje and as such held the second highest *hass*-income in the whole province after that of his patron, the district-governor İshakoğlu İsa Beg.

[169] Šabanović, *Krajište Isa-bega Ishakoviča*.

provincial military-administrative apparatus, the rather sporadic recordings of members of other such extensive households as the prebend-holders in other Ottoman regions later on led scholars to assume that the frontier lords' regional power was successfully taken over by the centrally appointed sultanic cadres. It is, hence, believed, that the relatively semi-independent status of the frontier lords—especially their prerogative to distribute provincial *timar*s to their own retinues—was successfully curtailed by the sultans. This process allegedly started already in the reign of Murad II (r. 1421–1444 and 1446–1451) and was near completed during the time of Mehmed II.[170] As a measure to strengthen the centralizing impetus of the evolving territorial empire, not only did the district-governors begin to be appointed directly from the center, but the *timar*-holders associated with the frontier lords' families were gradually and systematically replaced with sultanic-appointed cavalry as well.[171] Hence, the *timar* system, "the basic building block of Ottoman provincial administration"[172] and the *timarization* of the land (and by extension, the bureaucratic practices of registering the provincial revenues in *tahrir* registers as the basic tool of sultanic surveillance) are presently largely conceived of as the hallmarks of Ottoman centralization and the basic device of state control countering the centrifugal forces of the Balkan dynasties and their regional power bases.[173] This generally held opinion, however, should be regarded with caution and is in need of revision in light of new evidence.

Although recent research has convincingly shown that the *timar* system indeed saw internal transformations over time,[174] the relationship of the institution and its beneficiaries are

[170] İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest"; Halil İnalcık, "Mehmed II," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam (Second Edition)*, 1991; Halil İnalcık, "Murad II," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2006).
[171] Halil İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13–14.
[172] As labeled by İnalcık, 14.
[173] Halil İnalcık, "Autonomous Enclaves in Islamic States: Temlîks, Soyurgals, Yurdluk-Ocaklıks, Mâlikâne-Mukâta'as and Awqâf," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 112–34; Ágoston, "The Ottomans: From Frontier Principality to Empire"; Kaya Şahin, "Managing the Empire: Institutionalization and Bureaucratic Consciousness," in *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World*, by Kaya Şahin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 214–42; Şahin, "From Frontier Principality to Early Modern Empire: Limits and Capabilities of Ottoman Governance"; Karen Barkey, "The Ottoman Empire (1299–1923): The Bureaucratization of Patrimonial Authority," in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 102–26; Muhsin Soyudoğan, "The Fall of Icarus: The Paradox of the Ottoman Centralization and the Abstraction of Timars," *Turkish Historical Review* 8 (2017): 174–200.
[174] Muhsin Soyudoğan, "Reassessing the Timar System: The Case Study of Vidin (1455-1693)" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Ankara, Bilkent University, 2012); Soyudoğan, "The Fall of Icarus: The Paradox of the Ottoman Centralization and the Abstraction of Timars"; Darling, "The Development of Ottoman Governmental Institutions in the Fourteenth Century: A Reconstruction"; Linda T. Darling, "Historicizing the Ottoman *Timar* System: Identities of *Timar*-Holders, Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries," *Turkish Historical Review* 8 (2017): 145–73.

rarely correlated with the local governors. This, certainly, is not a purposeful oversight. Rather, this historiographical shortcoming is conditioned by the nature of the source materials. Various types of Ottoman *defter*s, which record the provincial *timar*-holders and their *dirlik*-holding revenues, as well as the changes in the revenue-possessing individual over time, only rarely, if at all, mention the affiliation of a given individual with the district-governor under whose command he was serving. Moreover, considering the high mobility of the provincial governors and the fief-holding cavalry, who frequently changed appointments—and geographies, for that matter—it is truly a challenging task to trace these interrelationships, even if they were recorded.[175] Such a general observation will have to wait until Ottomanists construct an empire-wide database of all provincial military-administrative appointees that could possibly make these connections more visible.[176] Until then, one is compelled to rely, especially for the pre-mid-sixteenth-century period, on the sporadic information found in the provincial registers to partially reveal the local power-holders' associated power networks.

One source, nonetheless, allows us to grasp the full extent of the household patronage networks presided over by certain district governors in a specific time, amongst whom we also find a Mihaloğlu family member, hence, a representative of the frontier lords' families. The source in question is a muster roll (*yoklama defteri*) of the Rumelian forces assembled for an Ottoman campaign during the first half of the sixteenth century.[177] Based on a comparison of the names of the district governors who were mentioned in this particular register with those known from the provincial governors' appointment registers (*sancak tevcih defterleri*) of the

[175] Géza Dávid's case studies on prominent individuals and their followings in Ottoman Hungary deserve special mention, as they showcase the potential of such a micro-historical approach for grasping the essence of the provincial administration and the role of the kinship and subordinate groups' relationships in it. Dávid, "An Ottoman Military Career on the Hungarian Borders: Kasım *Voyvoda, Bey*, and Pasha"; Dávid, "A Life on the Marches: The Career of Derviş *Bey*"; Géza Dávid, "Macaristan'da Yönetici Osmanlı Aileleri," *OTAM Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 38 (2015): 13–30.

[176] Commendable efforts in this direction are already made by a team of Hungarian researchers, led by Éva Sz. Simon, for the parts of Ottoman Hungary, available at https://adatbazisokonline.mnl.gov.hu/adatbazis/oszman/. Cf. Éva Sz. Simon et al., "Databases of Cadastral Surveys (*Tapu Defteri*s) of Ottoman Hungary and Its Frontier Zones (16-17th C.)," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 37 (2020): 259–72.

[177] Topkapı Palace Museum Archives (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, TSMA), Defter No. 2204/1. It is digitally available in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı – Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA): BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

1520s,[178] I previously presumed that it was compiled around the mid-1520s.[179] Examining another fragment of the same registration for the district of Bosnia, Ahmed S. Aličić assumed earlier that it belonged to the roll call for the Mohács campaign of 1526.[180] Recently, Muhsin Soyudoğan has most convincingly argued that it should be dated to the beginning of the 1530s. He has discovered 14 fragments pertaining to this ledger, and basing his analysis both on the content of the assembled pieces and on comparison with contemporaneous summary registers (*icmal defterleri*) of a number of overlapping districts, he has concluded that the roll call represents the mustering for the so-called German campaign (*Alaman seferi*) of Süleyman I that took place in 1532 and ended with the Ottoman siege of Kőszeg/Güns.[181]

Although preserved only in fragments and currently disorderly bound, the register in question is particularly noteworthy because of the detailed character of the information it encloses, which could serve for future observations on a variety of topics.[182] It is, hence, among others, a first-hand source for studying the composition of the provincial fief-holding army, from the top ranking district governors to the lowest-ranking timariots, along with their subordinates. Above and beyond, it bears witness to the size and composition of the military-administrative households of the district governors, and allows tracking the way such households were initially formed, how they evolved over time, and how they functioned. Thus, unlike the provincial governors' appointment (*sancak tevcih*) registers from the first half of the sixteenth century, which disclose information only on the name of the district-governor, the place of his

[178] Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, "H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği," *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 15, no. 1–4 (1954 1953): 251–329; Gökbilgin, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devri Başlarında Rumeli Eyaleti, Livaları, Şehir ve Kasabaları"; Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*, 101–16; Enver Çakar, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Kanun-nâmesine Göre 1522 Yılında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İdarî Taksimatı," *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 12, no. 1 (2002): 261–82.

[179] Mariya Kiprovska, "Agents of Conquest: Frontier Lords' Extended Households as Actors in the Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 59 (2021): 79–104.

[180] Aličić, "Popis bosanske vojske pred bitku na Mohaču 1526. godine [List of the Bosnian Army Before the Battle of Mohács in 1526]." His observations were based on TS.MA.d. 4175.

[181] All fragments are kept in the Topkapı Palace Archive. See Muhsin Soyudoğan, "Cebelülerin Toplumsal Kökenleri Üzerine," *Alınteri Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5, no. 2 (2021): 139–69, esp. 142–144. For the 1532 campaign diary see M. Akif Erdoğru, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın 1532 Tarihli Alman Seferi Ruznâmesi," *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 29, no. 1 (2014): 167–87; Sâlih Çelebi, *Tarih-i sefer-i zafer-rehber-i Alaman: Kanunî Sultan Süleyman'ın Alaman Seferi (1532)*, ed. Fatma Kaytaz (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2016). A comprehensive chronology of the battle based on the contemporary sources is presented by Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 196–207.

[182] The 1532 roll-call ledger is the oldest of the few extant detailed roll-calls containing data about the individual retainers of the *dirlik*-holders that makes it suitable for detailed observations about the provincial military-administrative apparatus, which is otherwise difficult to grasp from other sources. Soyudoğan, for example, has used its data mainly to uncover the social background of the armed retainers (*cebelü*) that each provincial *dirlik*-holder ought to arm for battle. Based on the category by which they were recorded and the geographic markers attached to their personal names, he has concluded that the backbone of the Rumelian cavalry was made up of Balkan peoples, especially Bosnians and Albanians, and a large number of people with slave-background. His observations led him to conclude that the pattern of recruitment and training of the Rumelian military retainers largely replicated the *devşirme* system. Soyudoğan, "Cebelülerin Toplumsal Kökenleri Üzerine."

appointment, and allotted revenue in a given year, the muster roll of the Rumelian forces from 1532 offers invaluable details on the supported retinue of the listed *dirlik*-holders as well.

At that time, the district-governorship of the Danubian border province of Niğbolu was in the hands of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg—whose involvement in the Wallachian political life was discussed in the previous chapter—which brought him an annual income of 656,000 *akçe*. In this capacity, except for leading his district's cavalry during sultanic campaigns, Mehmed Beg maintained a military administrative household of his own. The *yoklama* register, hence, enlists no less than 410 men from his own retinue, who, it seems, were paid directly by their patron and were not necessarily rewarded with revenue-raising fiefs in the district under his command.[183] This observation already suggests that before jumping to conclusions as to the diminished power of the frontier lords based on the very sporadic listing of their own retainers as holders of provincial revenues, it is more plausible to suggest that one is faced with a gradual change in the provincial administration: from a land-based reward, as was the case with the mid-fifteenth-century entourage of İshakoğlu İsa Beg in Kosovo and Macedonia, to a fiscal/cash reward as suggested by the muster roll of 1532.[184] Such a transformation must have been necessitated by the ever growing numbers of provincial cavalry (as well as the number of prominent military households), who could not all be allotted *timar*s simply because there were no sufficient revenue-raising plots in the provinces.[185] Such a plausible explanation finds confirmation in the case of the Mihaloğlu family's extended household traceable in the early 1530s.

As already mentioned, in the muster roll we find registered the retinue of the then Niğbolu district-governor Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, which was made up of 410 servants. These retainers were enlisted under one single heading: *gılmanan*. In the Ottoman context, the term *gulam* (pl. *gılman*) referred to a young slave who underwent specialized training in a prestigious *kapı*, or household.[186] The frontier lords, who were constantly engaged in warfare along the Ottoman

[183] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, ff. 69[b]–70[b]: *yekün-i merdümān-i müşārün-ileyh: 410*.
[184] Such a transition from a land-based to a fiscal-based revenue was already observed for the *timar*-holdings, where the process seems to have started already in the 1480s and has been fully completed in the course of the next century. Cf. Soyudoğan, "The Fall of Icarus: The Paradox of the Ottoman Centralization and the Abstraction of Timars."
[185] The reproduction of the sultanic household with the princely ones that sprang from the former is one prominent example of the multiplication process. Kunt, "Royal and Other Households," 110–11. Similarly, the provincial governors' households became the reservoir of exponentially growing lesser households with their own subordinates. It is possibly this growth of provincial households that led to the grouping of smaller districts into larger territorial provincial units during the second half of the 16th century, by way of which members of the governors' wider households could be rewarded with provincial resources. Such a correlation was already observed by Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, "Changes in the Structure and Strength of the Timariot Army from the Early Sixteenth to the End of the Seventeenth Century," *Eurasian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2005): 157–88; Dávid, "Macaristan'da Yönetici Osmanlı Aileleri."
[186] Halil İnalcık, "Ghulām, IV: Ottoman Empire," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 1085–91.

borders, such as the Mihal family, could efficiently fill their military households with the necessary manpower. They managed to gather numerous slaves and war captives,[187] whom they subsequently trained in various roles within their courts, thereby establishing and sustaining a substantial force of elite soldiers and devoted subjects. The training regimen for these *kapı-kulları* (household servitors) of the frontier lords likely reflected the educational and military training experienced by the sultanic slaves in the imperial Ottoman palace—initially in the inner service (*enderun* section), followed by the outer service (*birun* section), and finally receiving provincial office and a respective *dirlik* revenue grant.[188] This notion is supported by information found in the 1532 register, which lists the names of the dependents of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, often noting their place of origin and their specific roles or duties within their patron's household. In addition to the armed servants (*cebelü*) who provided military service, specific regiments essential to Mehmed Beg's household retinue and palace pages could be clearly identified, although they were not categorized under distinct headings. The detailed entries for each person allow for the identification of the following military entourage and other outer court employees in Mehmed Beg's retinue (See Fig. 1).

- 18 *voyvoda*s (commanders of a military division)
- 2 *ser-bevvabin*s (heads of the gate-keepers)
- 1 *kethüda-i bevvabin* (commander of the gate-keepers of the beg's palace)
- 5 *katib*s (secretaries, scribes)
- 8 *çavuş*es (envoys to deliver official messages and orders, court heralds)
- 1 *ser-kavafin* (chief of the shoe makers)
- 6 *kavaf*s (shoe makers)
- 1 *emir-ahur* (lord of the stables)
- 1 *kethüda-i ahur* (chief of the stables)
- 1 *silahdar* (arms-bearer and the beg's personal life-guard)
- 1 *ser-habbazin* (head of the cooks)
- 4 *habbaz*es (bakers)
- 1 *ser-hayyatin* (chief of the tailors)
- 7 *hayyat*s (tailors)
- 1 *ser-mehteran-i hayme* (chief of the personnel in charge of the campaign tents, tent pitchers)
- 21 *mehter*s (staff responsible for the campaign tents)
- 2 *kilari*s (keepers of the larder)
- 5 *harbende*s (pack animals' grooms)
- 1 *ser-bazdaran* (chief of raptor breeders)
- 9 *bazdar*s (raptor breeders)

[187] The slave-hunting as a distinct phase during the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans and the role of the frontier lords in this process, which entailed accumulation of great many numbers of slaves by these protagonists, is discussed by Schmitt and Kiprovska, "Ottoman Raiders (*Akıncı*s) as a Driving Force of Early Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and the Slavery-Based Economy."

[188] For the composition of the sultanic household see the still authoritative study of İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1945). An assessment of the sultanic household from a less institutionalized lens was more recently presented by Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800.*

· 1 *cerrah* (physician)
· 257 *cebelü*s (armed retainers)

Fig. 1: Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's household retinue in 1532. Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

An examination of the courtly staff and military retinue of Mehmed Beg reveals that his entourage and extended family were organized similarly to the sultanic household and palace staff, showcasing identical groups of functional service personnel.[189] This arrangement implies that the frontier lords likely modeled their power centers and residences after sultanic palaces. For example, the presence of gatekeepers indicates that the mansion was enclosed by walls, with access to its interior strictly controlled through these monitored entrances. Evidence supporting this is found in the remaining sections of the walls around the Mihaloğlu "castle" in Plevne (mod. Pleven, Bulgaria), which was a primary stronghold and dwelling in the Danubian plain for one branch of the Mihaloğlu family.[190] These remnants, still visible today, were known as the "saray" (palace) until the 1930s.[191] It is quite probable that the mansion was initially constructed by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg in the second half of the fifteenth century when he commissioned other buildings that contributed to the development of Plevne.[192] By the mid-seventeenth century, Evliya Çelebi reported that the *saray* was a fortified enclosure with a multi-storied palace

[189] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilâtı*. For a people-centered view on the organization and structure of the Ottoman court administrative apparatus see Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800* (Chapter 6), esp. 158–162 and Table 6.1 on 161–162; as well as 168–170 and Tables 6.4–6.8 on 171–174, where one finds the same regiments and specialized personnel as in the household of Mehmed Beg. While there is a clear trend toward examining Ottoman bureaucratic practices from a provincial perspective and exploring the role of local stakeholders, the dominant view remains that local governors, along with their small bureaucratic staffs, were merely officials operating within a centrally structured "division of labor." Their primary function was to report on the status of military personnel in their respective regions to their superiors. See, for example, Abdulhadi Uysal, "Erken Dönem Osmanlı Timar Bürokrasisi ve Ruznamçe Defterleri (1481-1531)" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Istanbul, İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi, 2024), 39–40. Zekai Mete's meticulously detailed study, primarily based on centrally drafted Ottoman registers, has laid the groundwork for uncovering the paperwork generated by provincial governors' bureaucratic chancellery, with a particular focus on Menteşe. However, the study remains largely state-centric, thus downplaying the role of district governors and their court personnel at the provincial level. Zekai Mete, "Osmanlı Taşrasında Bürokratik Muâmelât: Sancakbeyi Belge ve Defterleri," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 19 (1992): 181–221.

[190] Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland: The Architectural Patronage of the Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family," 207, 217–18; Mariya Kiprovska, "Plunder and Appropriation at the Borderland: Representation, Legitimacy, and Ideological Use of Spolia by Members of the Ottoman Frontier Nobility," in *Spolia Reincarnated – Afterlives of Objects, Materials, and Spaces in Anatolia from Antiquity to the Ottoman Era*, ed. Ivana Jevtić and Suzan Yalman (Istanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınlari, 2018), 66–68. The existence of another palace of the family in its Harmankaya domain in Anatolia is also attested in the Ottoman fiscal records of the region. See Mariya Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland," in *Defterology: Festschrift in Honor of Heath Lowry*, ed. Selim Kuru and Baki Tezcan (Special issue of Journal of Turkish Studies 40, 2013), 262–63.

[191] [Yurdan Trifonov] Юрдан Трифонов, *История на града Плевен до Освободителната война* [*History of Pleven until the War of Liberation*] (София: Държавна печатница, 1933), 62–63.

[192] For the development of Plevne as modeled by the architectural patronage of several family members see the next chapter.

within, where the Mihaloğulları resided and from where they governed the area.[193] While it is unclear if the interior was divided into successive courtyards like the Topkapı Sarayı in Istanbul, it is plausible to suggest, based on Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's household composition, that the palace in Plevne included various specialized structures. These likely comprised the palace kitchens and bakeries managed by the head cook (*ser-habbazin*), cellars and storehouses overseen by the larder keeper (*kilari*), an armory run by the chief sword bearer (*silahdar*), stables managed by the master of the stables (*emir-ahur*), facilities for raising and training birds of prey under the guidance of a chief falconer (*ser-bazdaran*), tailoring workshops indicated by the presence of tent-makers and tailors (*mehteran, hayyatin*), a scribes' chamber occupied by several scribes (*katib*), and undoubtedly a distinct council hall (*divan-hane*) where military decisions were made and recorded, involving high-ranking military officers (*voyvoda*s), envoys (*çavuş*es), and court secretaries (*katib*s). It likely also housed dormitories for all courtiers. Although Evliya Çelebi primarily described the palace as a fortification in his mid-seventeenth-century account, his reference to a "many-storied palace" presumably encompasses all these structures.[194]

The assumption that Mihaloğlu retainers received both educational and military training at the palace in Plevne is further supported by details found in the register under scrutiny. Examining the retinue of certain *zeamet*-holders (large fief holders) from the Mihaloğlu lineage reveals a noteworthy point: many of their retainers, documented as hailing from Plevne, likely completed their training at the Plevne palace. These individuals were integral to the wider Mihaloğlu military household and subsequently formed the core of smaller, less established or less experienced military households within the family. This is evident when observing the households of two sons of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg. His son Hızır, holding a *zeamet* in the Niğbolu district with an income of 70,000 akçe, maintained a retinue of 100 men, with over half originating from Plevne.[195] Similarly, half of the retinue of another son, Ahmed Beg, who held a *zeamet* in Niğbolu, yielding an annual income of 25,000 akçe, likewise came from Plevne (See Fig. 2).[196]

While the proximity of the Plevne palace-center to the fiefs in the district of Niğbolu might have influenced the composition of their holder's households, another example from the

[193] Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi. 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, ed. S. Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 95.
[194] Ibidem.
[195] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 71[a].
[196] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 72[b].

region of Semendire illustrates how the offspring of a frontier lords' family formed his extended family. Mahmud b. Mehmed Beg b. İhtimani held a significant *timar*, yielding an annual income of 15,380 akçe (Fig. 2).[197] İhtiman, a town to the south-east of Sofia, was the place of residence of another branch of the Mihaloğlu family, whose members are referred to in the sources as "İhtimani" (marking the place of their seat of power and family domain) to distinguish them from the Plevne family line.[198] At the time, Mahmud Beg supported a household of 36 people, 12 of whom were specifically listed as İhtimani, noting them as originating from Ihtiman. Clearly, the core of his military household was composed of individuals from his father's courtly retinue, who accompanied their young lord to his new posting in the district of Semendire.

fief-holding, its holder and allotted revenue	number of supported retainers	origin of the retainers' bulk
zeamet-i be-nam-i Hızır Beg bin Mehmed Beg bin Mihal Beg hasıl: 70 000 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 100	Plevne: 57
zeamet-i be-nam-i Ahmed Beg bin Mehmed Beg bin Ali Beg hasıl: 25 000 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 18	Plevne: 9
timar-i Mahmud bin Mehmed Beg bin İhtimani hasıl: 15 380 [akçe]	cebelüyan: 36	İhtiman: 12

Fig. 2: Number and place of origin of some of the Mihaloğlu family members' retinue. Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

These three cases highlight the manner in which progeny of the frontier lords established their own military-administrative houses: at first, the core of their new household was formed exclusively by graduates of their fathers' courts; later, this initial retinue was expanded with their own recruits who were further trained into the newly formed households. Additionally, these examples show notable parallels to the formation of the Ottoman princely household. As it is known, before the seventeenth century, an Ottoman prince (*şehzade*) would depart the sultanic household to take up a gubernatorial office in an Anatolian district.[199] As the prince left for his provincial appointment, he was accompanied by several palace servants from the sultanic house

[197] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 45[a].
[198] For the establishment of the family in Ihtiman and the town's further development see Machiel Kiel, "Four Provincial Imarets in the Balkans and the Sources about Them," in *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer (Istanbul: EREN, 2007), 97–120, 106–109; Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler", 239–240; Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland: The Architectural Patronage of the Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family", 198–202. See also the relevant section in the next chapter.
[199] For an overview of the Ottoman princehood institution see Haldun Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Şehzadelik Kurumu* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2004).

to establish his own retinue. Over time, this household would expand as the prince recruited and trained his own followers. Upon ascending to the throne, he would integrate his established household back into the royal court.[200] This practice, mirrored by hereditary raider commanders' families, must be considered, amongst others, as one of the key factors in the enduring success and longevity of their dynasties.

In addition to the formation of their patrons' households, the names of the retinues of the frontier lords provide compelling evidence to support the opinion that these leaders initially recruited members of their households from former Christians, a good portion of whom might well have been slaves captured during military campaigns in the Balkans and beyond. For example, a significant portion of the household attendants of the Niğbolu *sancakbegi*, Mehmed Beg, were specifically identified with names that include geographic or ethnic identifiers such as Bosna (33), Arnavud (23), Hersek (12), Eflak (4), Belgrad (2), Macar (1), Erdel (1), and Rus (1). These labels clearly denote their place of origin before they joined the palace in Plevne for training. The pattern is also evident in the households of some of his sons, where individuals are similarly identified as originating from Bosna and Eflak, or were ethnically identified as Arnavud, Hırvat, and Macar. While all retainers of Mehmed Beg were categorized as elite slaves (*gulam*), it is plausible that these designations also indicate the regions targeted by the frontier lords during their military raids, from which they sourced the majority of their retainers and household members. Most of these recruits, likely slaves taken during military raids, were integrated into the households of the frontier begs. Subsequently, after undergoing specialized military and educational training, they either served as palace servitors or became members of their patrons' elite military retinue. In the 1532 pay-roll registration these individuals are identified solely by their Muslim names, which obscures any details of their backgrounds prior to their integration into the Mihaloğlu household. However, it is reasonable to speculate that their ranks might have included sons of local magnates from areas under the control of the frontier lords, or individuals taken as hostages from neighboring noble courts. Additionally, there could have been high-profile voluntary converts among them—former courtiers and members of the retinue from the frontier nobility across the border—who chose to defect and align themselves with the noble house of Mehmed Beg.[201]

[200] Kunt, "Royal and Other Households."

[201] Movement of higher and lesser nobility for military and official service across the border between the neighboring royal and noble courts was not uncommon. On the contrary, such movements from Serbia and Croatia to the north of the Danube in Banat, Transylvania and in the service of the Hungarian king and nobles were rather frequent. See, for example, Krstić, "'Which Realm Will You Opt For?' – The Serbian Nobility between the Ottomans and the Hungarians in the 15th Century"; [Aleksandar Krstić] Александар Крстић, "Поседи Јакшића у Славонији и Срему [Estates of the Jakšić Family in Slavonia and Srem]," *Историјски часопис* 70 (2021):

In this context, it is worth recalling the testament of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg's spy in the Hungarian court of Matthias Corvinus, which was referred to in the previous chapter. Besides transmitting highly valuable first-hand information of the happenings in the Hungarian court in the aftermath of Dmitar Jakšić's murder in 1486 and the intentions of the king concerning possible attacks on Ottoman territories, in his spy report to his Ottoman patron Vuk Koluçegovik/Kolaković also revealed the nature of his own dependency bond to Ali Beg.[202] At the time he was passing on the news from Corvinus's court, Vuk testified that an unspecified number of his brothers were in the service of the Mihaloğlu court. Considering the linguistic skills of Vuk Koluçegovik/Kolaković, who, besides his native Slavic/Serbian, must have been fluent at least in Latin and Hungarian too—as these languages were simultaneously used in court correspondence, to which Vuk had access and probably drafted himself,[203]—it is plausible to suggest that his brothers in service of Ali Beg's court might well have possessed similar linguistic competences and were hence working as court clerks as well – either scribes and secretaries (*katib*), translators (*tercüman, dragoman*), or envoys (*çavuş*), or possibly all these combined. It is not inconceivable to suggest that one such individual in Ali Beg's chancellery could well have been his envoy and messenger during the 1483 peace negotiations with his counterpart in Hungarian service, Vuk Grgurević, discussed in the previous chapter. The latter supposition also suggests that at least some individuals from the retinue of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg (possibly amongst the five scribes, *katib*, or the eight messengers, *çavuş*) as recorded in 1532 might well have been learned ex-Christians of mid- to high social status who, given their linguistic proficiency, found appropriate occupation as household servants and clerks, part of the Slavic chancellery of the

177–213; Aleksandar Krstić and Adrian Magina, "The Belmužević Family: The Fate of a Noble Family in South East Europe During the Turbulent Period of the Ottoman Conquest (The 15th and First Half of the 16th Centuries)," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 59 (2021): 105–23; Neven Isailović, "Croatian Noble Refugees in Late 15th and 16th Century Banat and Transylvania – Preliminary Findings," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 59 (2021): 125–55; Michael Ursinus, "Serving King and Sultan: Pavao Grgurić and His Role on the Hungaro-Ottoman Frontier in Southern Bosnia, c. 1463–1477," in *Life on the Ottoman Border: Essays in Honour of Nenad Moačanin*, ed. Vjeran Kursar (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu - FF Press, 2022), 19–30.

[202] BOA, TSMA.e. 672/8 [former shelf-mark: TKSMA, E. 4088].

[203] An eloquent example of the multilingual courtly environment is the preserved correspondence exchanged between the Habsburg and Ottoman courts, as well as between regional provincial statesmen within both imperial domains. This correspondence included Latin, South Slavic, Ottoman, and eventually, exclusively Hungarian. See the insightful discussion on official and "vernacular" (i.e., regional-level) diplomatic practices and linguistic choices in correspondence by Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593," chap. 3: The Regional Diplomacy of Archdukes and Pashas, 134–188. For several vivid examples of multilingualism in the chancelleries of Ottoman governors in the Danube region, see Robyn Dora Radway, "Multilingualism at the Ottoman Courts of the Danube Bend," in *Die Sprachen der Frühen Neuzeit: Europäische und globale Perspektiven*, ed. Mark Häberlein and Andreas Flurschütz da Cruz (Köln: Böhlau, 2024), 47–60.

governor's court.[204] Others, may have acquired the expertise in Islamic chancellery practices and besides being proficient in Ottoman, must have been well versed also in Arabic and Persian before entering the household of Mehmed Beg, and have hence subsequently taken care of the Islamic part of his chancellery. What is more, it is highly probable that Persian émigrés who floated Ottoman lands at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, besides the sultanic court and the Ottoman princely provincial courts in Anatolia, were also employed in service of the provincial governor's chancelleries. The provincial law codes of the districts of Gelibolu, Niğbolu, and Semendire from the 1510s, written in Persian and Arabic and embracing particular Timurid vocabulary, certainly point to such a probability and merit further investigation.[205]

Concerning the high linguistic profile of the Mihaloğlus' court employees of former Christian background, it is worth citing the better known life-trajectory of one of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's scribes and poets, whom he "inherited" from his father's court, namely Suzi Çelebi.[206] Born to a former Christian family as Mehmed b. Mahmud b. Abdullah[207] sometime between the mid-1450s and mid-1460s,[208] and known by his penname (*mahlas*) Suzi, he started his education in his native Prizren (Kosovo).[209] Later he entered the entourage of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg and, possibly after finishing his *medrese* education at his patron's *medrese* in Plevne,

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[204] Incorporating specialized personnel in the provincial chancelleries must have been a common practice, which is unfortunately farely poorly researched, as the historiographical emphasis is mostly on the imperial courtly chancelleries. For an example of an ex-Christian scribe who served at the courts of several consecutive Ottoman governors in Buda, see Ferenc Szakály, "A Hungarian Spahi in the 16th Century: The Mysterious 'Andreya Litteratus' of Esztergom," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47, no. 1–2 (1994): 181–96. Other examples are discussed by Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593," 157–59.

[205] In Markiewicz's view, the employment of such a vocabulary speaks for the existence of distinct bureaucratic subcultures within Ottoman administration. Christopher Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 275–78.

[206] Mustafa İsen, "Sûzî," in *Türk Edebiyatı İsimler Sözlüğü*, April 13, 2014, https://teis.yesevi.edu.tr/madde-detay/suzi-mdbir; Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 197–202; [Aleksej Olesnicki] Алексеј Олесницки, "Сузи Челеби из Призрена турски песник-историк XV– XVI в.: Прилог биографији [Suzi Čelebi from Prizren, Turkish Poet-Historian of the 15th–16th Centuries: A Contribution to His Biography]," *Гласник скопског научног друштва* 13 (1934): 69–82; Meliha Y. Sarıkaya, "Sûzî Çelebi," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010), 4–5.

[207] Based on several official Ottoman documents confirming the landed possessions of Suzi's pious endowment for his mosque in Prizren, as well as the endowment deed (*vakfiye*) itself, which Aleksej Olesnicki had the chance to examine in Prizren, he was able to reconstruct the name of the poet, known by his penname Suzi, i.e. Mevlana Mehmed b. Mahmud b. Abdullah. [Olesnicki] Олесницки, "Сузи Челеби из Призрена турски песник-историк XV– XVI в.," 77–78. Some of these documents, along with a full transliteration and Turkish translation of the *vakfiye*, Suzi's tomb inscription, and several other funerary inscriptions from the cemetery around the mosque, were later published by Raif Vırmiça, *Suzi ve Vakıf Eserleri* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002).

[208] Suggested by [Olesnicki] Олесницки, "Сузи Челеби из Призрена турски песник-историк XV– XVI в.," 71.

[209] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 197–98.

pursued a career as a scribe both in Ali Beg's and his son Mehmed Beg's courts.[210] Afterwards, he returned to his native Prizren (in the early 1510s but before 1513 when he composed the endowment charter for the pious foundation he found in support of the buildings he built in Prizren) to become the *imam* and *müezzin* of the mosque (*mescid*), and the instructor (*muallim*) of the teacher training school (*muallimhane*) he erected in the town,[211] positions he held until his death in 1524.[212] Except for his scribal service in the Mihaloğlus' provincial court, Suzi was reportedly a member of the Nakşibendi order of dervishes[213] and is best known for his poetic talents, since he penned the versified *gazavatname* of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, which presently remains the only known poem (*mesnevi*) celebrating the *gaza* activities of a Balkan frontier lord.[214]

Unfortunately, the author of the text does not leave any autobiographical notes that could add details to the nature of his service in the court of Ali Beg, nor does he reveal his own personal attachment besides a few indirect hints on the basis of which one could draw the inference that he was an eye witness of some of the events he described. Additionally, he seems to have gathered information on other events he depicted in the *gazavatname*—as he himself implies—from other people of his master's entourage who have witnessed them before he joined his patron's household.[215] On one occasion, when opening the *gazavatname*'s love story

[210] All sixteenth-century compilers of biographies of Ottoman poets (*tezkire-i şu'ara*)—penned by Sehi, Latifi, Aşık Çelebi, (Kınalızade) Hasan Çelebi, and Beyani—provide details about Suzi Çelebi's life, though with varying degrees of detail. However, they all highlight his relationship with Mihaloğlu Ali and Mehmed Beg, in whose courts he served as a scribe. Cf. Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 197–98 and İsen, "Sûzî."

[211] The mosque and the school shared a two story building: the ground floor housed the *muallimhane* and the second floor was reserved for the *mescid*. A partial transcription (without the names of the witnesses at the court procedure registering the endowment deed) and Serbian translation of the 1513 *vakfiye* was first published by [Olesnicki] Олесницки, "Сузи Челеби из Призрена турски песник-историк XV– XVI в.," 78-79. See also the transcription of the entire text and its Turkish translation by Vırmiça, *Suzi ve Vakıf Eserleri*, 40–50.

[212] The date of his death is inscribed on his tombstone in the mausoleum next to his mosque. [Olesnicki] Олесницки, "Сузи Челеби из Призрена турски песник-историк XV–XVI в.," 71; Vırmiça, *Suzi ve Vakıf Eserleri*, 77–85.

[213] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 197. Based on a close reading of Suzi's *gazavatname*, Ezgi Dikici suggested that he was affiliated with the Mevlevi order rather than (or in addition to) the Nakşibendi. Ayşe Ezgi Dikici, "Painting an Icon of the Ideal *Gāzi*: An Exploration of the Cultural Meanings of the Love Affair Episode in Sūzī Chelebi's *Gazavātnāme* of Mihaloğlu Ali Bey" (Unpublished MA thesis, Budapest, Central European University, Medieval Studies Department, 2007), 11; Dikici, "Christian Imagery in an Ottoman Poem: The 'Icons' of Muslim Holy Warriors in Sūzī's *Ġazavātnāme*."

[214] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*. Mustafa İsen, "Akıncı Gazavatnâmeleri ve Sûzî'nin Mihaloğlu Ali Bey Gazavatnamesi," in *Sûzî Çelebi: Araştırma-İnceleme*, ed. Osman Baymak (Prizren: Balkan Aydınları Yayınları, 1998), 9–14; Mustafa İsen, "Akıncılığın Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatına Katkıları," *Türkiye Günlüğü* 49 (1998): 80–86. Reprinted as Mustafa İsen, "Akıncılığın Türk Kültür ve Edebiyatına Katkıları," in *Varayım Gideyim Urumeli'ne: Türk Edebiyatı'nın Balkan Boyutu*, by Mustafa İsen (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2009), 56–69.

[215] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 199–201.

episode between Mihaloğlu Ali Beg and Meryem, the daughter of a wealthy Wallachian noble—which occupies almost one third of the presently preserved poem—Suzi states that he has heard it from the *müsellem katibi* of Ali Beg who witnessed the love affair.[216] This reference implies that at least some of the scribes at Suzi's patron's court were in charge of keeping count of, if not conscripting and corresponding with, the military contingents (in this case, the mounted *müsellem* troops) under Ali Beg's command. Possibly, the *katib*s in the Mihaloğlus' provincial court, similarly to the ones in service to the sultanic chancery, combined several duties and varied according to the nature of their work. It is, hence, plausible to suggest that some dealt primarily with the official correspondence (with the sultanic court, foreign governors of bordering territories, other Ottoman governors of lesser and higher rank, issuing orders to subordinate military commanders, etc.) and were keeping record of the district-governor's council (*divan*) decisions, while others were mostly handling the financial matters (supervising and keeping record of the district treasury's expenditures and revenues, but also the personal treasury of the district-governors). Undoubtedly, there were scribes, as the *müsellem katibi* referred to by Suzi, who were in charge of enlisting the military contingents of the household troops and who kept track of any changes that appeared in their ranks. Most certainly, there were at least several scribes who accompanied the frontier lords on the battlefield while on campaign, in charge of the (multilingual) correspondence and keeping record of the military contingents respectively, as well as taking an account of the spoils of war looted during the incursions, a fifth of which was collected in favor of the central treasury.[217] Considering all these plausible scribal duties, it is hardly surprising that we find a total of six *katib*s (five of whom were directly paid by their master and one who held a revenue-raising fief) in Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's household recorded in the muster roll (*yoklama defteri*) of 1532. As a matter of fact, one of them must have compiled the part of the roll-call ledger for the district of Niğbolu, as different hands are clearly discernible for the different districts, suggesting that they were compiled by a scribe in service of the respective district-governor.[218]

[216] Levend, 315, couplet 1185.
[217] On the *pençik* and the officials who were in charge of collecting it (*pençikçi*) see most recently Pál Fodor, "On the Administration of the Ottoman 'One-Fifth Tax' on Prisoners of War (15th to 17th Century)," in "Buyurdum Ki…." – *The Whole World of Ottomanica and Beyond: Studies in Honour of Claudia Römer*, ed. Hülya Çelik, Yavuz Köse, and Gisela Procházka-Eisl (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2023), 355–82.
[218] The biggest fragment of the whole ledger, BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, enclosing the entire district of Niğbolu too, lists the following Rumelian *sancak*s: Ağriboz (Euboea), Silistre (Silistra), Ohri (Ohrid), Vulçitrın (Vučitrn), Gelibolu (Gallipoli), Semendire (Smederevo), Niğbolu (Nikopol), Mora (Morea), Vidin, İskenderye (Shkodër), Yanya (Ioannina), Köstendil (Kyustendil), Çingene, aka. the administrative district of Gypsies around Vize and Kırkkilise (Kırklareli), Avlonya (Vlorë), and İlbasan (Elbasan). The registration of the military forces for each one of them was clearly made by a different person, as the handwritings feature different styles.

For want of additional information about the identities or the career paths of such bureaucratic personnel in service of Mehmed Beg's military-administrative household, it is hard to make any further assumptions. Yet, on the basis of the scarce data and in comparison with the career paths of other more prominent individuals, who reached higher offices and left more autobiographical notes in their works,[219] it seems reasonable to suggest that the varied duties of the scribal personnel in the Mihaloğlus' service bear witness to the fundamental role the household chancery played for supporting highly trained and specialized personnel that contributed to the overall provincial administration. Serving as a *katib* in the Mihaloğlu household offered training and further practice in different branches of the scribal service that required diverse literary, diplomatic, and calligraphic skills to be used either for issuing strictly financial-administrative documents (of the *defterdar* department) or more prose-oriented epistolographical papers (dealt with by the *nişancı* office) and literary compositions. Each scribal service in the provincial chancery of the family must have secured a good social standing of the respective officials. Besides being paid directly from the treasury of their masters, some scribes—presumably the more distinguished and senior ones—also received provincial fief-holdings, as attested by a scribe *timar*-holder (katib Caʿfer) in the district of Niğbolu, for example, who was explicitly identified as a dependent of Mehmed Beg in the 1532 register (see Fig. 3 below).

Additionally, the secretarial service might well have served as a springboard for further social advancement. The currently known fragments of Suzi Çelebi's career, though incomplete, provide a good example of the latter scenario. After receiving his initial training in his native Prizren, he expanded his skills in the service of the Mihaloğlu household. There, through further possible training and long-term employment as a scribe—likely involving extensive letter writing both from the provincial court and during campaigns—he not only gained expertise in the *inşa* style but also mastered poetry. He composed a *gazavatname* for his patron, a work of poetry that was esteemed higher than prose and elevated him to the highest ranks of Ottoman literary society. Despite its relatively simple style compared to the more sophisticated linguistic styles of other contemporary poets, Suzi's achievement was recognized by all sixteenth-century

[219] See, for example, the career path of Taliki-zade whose work as a scribe, initially in the princely household of the future sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595) and later in the latter's imperial chancery in the capital, included various duties. Christine Woodhead, "From Scribe to Litterateur: The Career of a Sixteenth-century Ottoman *Kātib*," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. Bulletin* 9, no. 1 (1982): 55–74. For different rewards for his service see Erhan Afyoncu, "Talîkîzâde Mehmed Subhî'nin Hayatı Hakkında Notlar," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 21 (2001): 285–306. Idris-i Bitlisi's secretarial, diplomatic, and literary production also merits mention in this respect. Cf. Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty*.

biographers of poets, who included an entry on him in their biographical dictionaries.[220] Although he held a high standing in poetic circles, he chose a rather modest provincial lifestyle, becoming a benefactor and instructor at a school for teachers (*muallimhane*) in his native Prizren. To support the school, he endowed a plot of land that had been granted to him by Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520).[221]

Further research might reveal the advancement of other Ottoman littérateurs who began their careers as secretaries in the Mihaloğlus' households. It seems plausible to suggest that at least some of these individuals may have received part of their education in institutions patronized by the Mihaloğulları.[222] Administering the frontier lords' vast estates, managing the military forces they led, and handling their correspondence with other stakeholders would have required a learned group of officials. The fact that six people were engaged in scribal service in Mehmed Beg's court in 1532 suggests that the provincial governor needed skilled personnel to manage the household and provincial administrations and valued them for their capabilities. It is not coincidental that the *katib*s are listed third after the *voyvoda*s and the supervisors of the gatekeepers (*ser-i bevvabin* and *kethüda-i bevvabin*), followed by a fairly large cohort of envoys and heralds (*çavuş*). The elevated position of the scribes in the district governors' households is also confirmed by Ragusan sources. Judging, for instance, by the value of the gifts sent to the Herzegovinian governors and their retinue by the Dubrovnik authorities in the course of the sixteenth century, Toma Popović has ranked the most prestigious offices in the provincial court as follows: the *sancakbegi*s received the most lavish gifts, they were followed by their *kethüda*s and *divan yazıcı*s who were usually presented with equal amounts of gifts, while slightly lower amounts of presents were sent to the governors' *kapıcıbaşı*s, *çaşnigirbaşı*s, and *emin*s.[223] Due to the important work they performed as chief secretaries of the district-governor's chancery**,** the *divan yazıcı*s appeared as very confidential close associates of their patrons. Hence, for

[220] See, for example, the entries on Suzi in the biographical dictionaries of Sehi Beg, Latifi, Aşık Çelebi, (Kınalızade) Hasan Çelebi, and Beyani. Sehī Beg, *Heşt Bihişt: Sehī Beg Tezkiresi: : An Analysis of the First Biographical Work on Ottoman Poets With a Critical Edition Based on Ms. Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya, O. 3544*, ed. Günay Kut (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1978); Latîfî, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şu'arâ ve Tabsıratü'n-Nuzamâ: İnceleme, Metin*, ed. Rıdvan Canım (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2000); ʿĀşıḳ Çelebi, Pir Mehmed b. ʿAli, *Meşâ'irü'ş-Şu'arâ: İnceleme, Metin*, ed. Filiz Kılıç, 2 vols. (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2010); Kınalızâde Hasan Çelebi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şu'arâ*, ed. Aysun Sungurhan (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü, 2017), https://ekitap.ktb.gov.tr/Eklenti/55834,kinalizade-hasan-celebipdf.pdf?0; Mustafa bin Carullah Beyânî, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şuarâ*, ed. İbrahim Kutluk (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997).

[221] For the property ownership transfer deed (*temlikname*) see [Olesnicki] Олесницки, "Сузи Челеби из Призрена турски песник-историк XV– XVI в.," 76 and Vırmiça, *Suzi ve Vakıf Eserleri*, 103–108, 253–256.

[222] On these institutions and their personnel see the following chapter.

[223] Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 95–97.

instance, while a *sancakbegi* of Hersek in 1525, Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg appointed his unnamed chief secretary as his *kethüda* (household steward), an office of prime importance in an Ottoman provincial governor's court.[224] It is very likely that this individual was identical to the *kethüda* Behter (corrupted version of Behadır?), who appears as a deputy representative of Mehmed Beg while he was away from his Herzegovinian seat the following year (1526).[225] Furthermore, he might well be identified as the Bachadero (possibly Behadır) who brought the news of the appointment of Mehmed Beg with the post of Herzegovinian district-governor to the Ragusan authorities in June 1523, extending the goodwill and hopes of his patron for good

[224] Popović, 109. The *kethüda*s are unanimously singled out by foreign sources as the most important dignitaries in the governor's entourage. Hence, the Ragusan archival records, which preserve information about the dealings of Dubrovnik with the appointed Ottoman district-governors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, attest that the governors' *kethüda*s were responsible for the financial matters of the governor's courtly household, but also often served as deputies of the district-governors. They were the ones who were sent in advance to the district-governor's seat prior to their master's arrival to his new appointment and were in charge of the communication with Dubrovnik. The Ragusan sources also often distinguish between a head *kehaya/kahya* (Slavic corrupted version of the Turkish *kethüda*) and a second *kehaya/kahya*, especially when the value of the gifts sent to them was discussed. Cf. Popović, 102–6; Šabanović, "Bosanski divan: Organizacija i uređenje centralne zemaljske uprave u Bosni pod turskom vlašću do kraja XVII stoljeća [Bosnian Council: Organization and Arrangement of the Central Government Administration in Bosnia under Turkish Rule until the End of the 17th Century]," 33. The *kethüda*s also figure in the preserved letters (mostly in Slavic) as important dignitaries in the Ottoman provincial government with whom correspondence was exchanged. See the published sources in the collections of Franz Ritter von Miklosich, *Monumenta serbica spectantia historiam Serbiae, Bosnae, Ragusii* (Viennae: apud Guilelmum Braumüller, 1858); Šime Ljubić, "Rukoviet jugoslavenskih listina [Yugoslav Charter Handbook]," *Starine Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 10 (1877): 1–43; Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive [Turco-Slavic Documents from the Dubrovnik Archive]." A useful and systematized list of 470 Slavic/Cyrillic letters exchanged with various Ottoman border officials, among whom *kethüda*s (Sl. *ćehaja*) of district governors, on the linguistic characteristics and orthography of which Lejla Nakaš identified different regional chancelleries and traced linguistic changes over time, could be found in Nakaš, *Jezik i grafija krajišničkih pisama* [*Language and Graphics of the Border Region Letters*], 431–53. Provincial governors' *kethüda*s are also often mentioned in non-Slavic local correspondence between Ottoman and Hungarian governors. See, for example, the multilingual correspondence in the following: Gustav Bayerle, *Ottoman Diplomacy in Hungary: Letters from the Pashas of Buda, 1590–1593* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1972); Claudia Römer, *Osmanische Festungsbesatzungen in Ungarn zur Zeit Murads III: dargestellt anhand von Petitionen zur Stellenvergabe* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995); Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Claudia Römer, *Osmanische Beamtenschreiben und Privatbriefe der Zeit Süleymāns des Prächtigen aus dem Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv zu Wien* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007); Gábor Kármán, *The Correspondence of the Beylerbeys of Buda 1617–1630* (Budapest; Szeged: Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History; University of Szeged, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2022). A provincial governor's *kethüda* was also most often (along with their *çavuş*es, *kapıcıbaşı*s, and *voyvoda*s) the person who personally received and delivered the correspondence, mainly orders, from the sultanic chancery to the local governors. See, for instance, the various instances in the first preserved imperial register of important affairs (*mühimme defteri*) where the provincial governors' stewards are mentioned by name: Halil Sahillioğlu and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, eds., *Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi H.951–952 Tarihli ve E-12321 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2002). For the position, role, and career advancement of the provincial governor's *kethüda*s during and after the seventeenth century, but considered mostly from an Istanbulite perspective and hence as mediators between the central government and the provincial governors, see Michael Nizri, "The Position of Steward to the Ottoman Provincial Governor as a Stepping-Stone to Regional Influence," *The International Journal of Turkish Studies* 22, no. 1–2 (2016): 17–30; Michael Nizri, "Rethinking Center-Periphery Communication in the Ottoman Empire: The *Kapı-Kethüdası*," *The International Journal of Turkish Studies* 59, no. 3 (2016): 473–98.

[225] Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 100.

friendship with Dubrovnik. In the latter case he identified himself as the *sancakbegi*'s *voyvoda*, i.e. one of his subordinate military commanders. If the individual mentioned in these three instances between 1523 and 1526 is identical, it would appear that prominent retinue, including scribes, from Mehmed Beg's entourage combined different duties, which were not exclusively tied to one office: in this case, the military officer (*voyvoda*) Behadır could serve as a chief secretary of the chancery (*divan yazıcısı*) and a household steward (*kethüda*). The latter hypothesis also implies that besides their martial skills, the military officers under Mehmed Beg's command were proficient in handling diplomatic, financial, and chancery affairs and must have been well educated and learned people, who possibly passed through a specialized training to acquire the necessary skills for each of the duties they performed either simultaneously or consecutively, which in turn would open up the prospects for their further social advancement. It remains unclear whether the two *kethüda*s of Mehmed Beg enlisted in the 1532 registration, namely the *kethüda-i ahur* Hasan and the *kethüda-i bevvabin* Kasım, combined other duties except for supervising the stables and the gatekeepers respectively, yet, judging from the example of the steward Behadır from only several years prior, this could indeed have been the case.[226]

While little remains known regarding the training process within the district-governors' households, the 1532 muster roll register presents eloquent evidence of the wide prospects that service in such a household offered for provincial office-seekers – from the lower-ranking craftsmen to the highest military-administrative personnel. The *yoklama defteri* under scrutiny, hence, enlists a total of 18 individuals who served in the capacity of military officers (*voyvoda*) under the leadership of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg. The most widely accepted view in scholarly literature holds that the office of *voyvoda* in Ottoman provincial administration had exclusively state bureaucratic functions and was mainly charged with collecting and overseeing the imperial revenues of a specific locality in a provincial region.[227] This assumption, however, does not correspond to evidence both in Ottoman provincial administrative documents and in the narra-

[226] The Ragusan sources also often distinguish between a head *kehaya/kahya* (Slavic corrupted version of the Turkish *kethüda*) and a second *kehaya/kahya*, especially when the value of the gifts sent to them was discussed. Cf. Popović, 102–6; Šabanović, "Bosanski divan: Organizacija i uređenje centralne zemaljske uprave u Bosni pod turskom vlašću do kraja XVII stoljeća [Bosnian Council: Organization and Arrangement of the Central Government Administration in Bosnia under Turkish Rule until the End of the 17th Century]," 33. It is conceivable that the two stewards in Mehmed Beg's household represent the hence ranked stewards from the Ragusan sources.

[227] Gustav Bayerle, *Pashas, Begs, and Effendis: A Historical Dictionary of Titles and Terms in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1997), 157; Soyudoğan, "Reassessing the Timar System: The Case Study of Vidin (1455-1693)," 60, 64, 188, 215–18.

tive sources, where the *voyvoda*s clearly designate a military officer in a district/provincial governor's entourage who were rewarded with estates in the districts under their patron's administrative control.[228] They appear, moreover, as big fief holders (of either large *timar*s or *zeamet*s) and were, hence, charged with the administration of smaller district units, *nahiye*s, managing the revenues of a town and its immediate surroundings, and acted therefore as *subaşı*s (military officers and heads of an administrative divisions) and fortress commanders (*dizdar*s), reminiscent of a castellan in a medieval European usage.[229] Unfortunately, little could be ascertained as to the origins and administrative functions of the *voyvoda*s in Mehmed Beg's retinue, as they are only enlisted with their personal names. It is plausible to suggest, however, that one of the two Kasıms amongst their ranks, was the Kasım Voyvoda who was mentioned in contemporary narrative sources. Apparently, he accompanied his patron during the "German campaign" of 1532 and commanded a large contingent of raiders (*akıncı*), but ambushed in a narrow mountain pass, was defeated by the Hungarian army and lost his life in the battle.[230] The other *voyvoda*s, however, remain anonymous as concerns their roles on the battlefield. Some analogies, however, could be drown from other circumstantial evidence about the military officers in the retinue of Mehmed Beg's father, Mihaloğlu Ali Beg.

In the *gazavatname* of Ali Beg, Suzi Çelebi makes specific mention of four such individuals, whom he distinguishes as elite fighters (*pehlivan*) amongst the beg's numerous servants and glorifies their military deeds. These four persons he specifies by name are: Kara Halil, Yunus, Cerrah Yusuf, and Şami, the former two of whom lost their lives heroically in battles

[228] See the exemplary study of Géza Dávid, where, besides the main protagonist of his story, Kasım *voyvoda*, he has traced the posts and possessions of several of the *voyvoda*s who served in the latter's retinue when he advanced to the post of a *sancakbegi* himself. Dávid, "An Ottoman Military Career on the Hungarian Borders: Kasım *Voyvoda*, *Bey*, and Pasha."

[229] The obscure nature of military-administrative posts in the early Ottoman state, is further complicated by the interchangeable usage of terms such as *serasker, çeribaşı, subaşı,* and *zaim* in the administrative documents. For a short discussion about the use of some of these see, for instance, Oktay Özel, "The Transformation of Provincial Administration in Anatolia: Observations on Amasya from 15th to 17th Centuries," in *The Ottoman Empire: Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes.' (Contributions in Honour of Colin Imber),* ed. Eugenia Kermeli and Oktay Özel (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2006), 51–73, esp. 63–64; Ayşe Kayapınar, *Le* sancak *ottoman de Vidin du XVe à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Istanbul: Les éditions Isis, 2011), 284–87, 294–300; Soyudoğan, "Reassessing the Timar System: The Case Study of Vidin (1455-1693)," 147–53. The Ragusan correspondence with Ottoman frontier officials from the fifteenth century clearly distinguish between the governors of the province and their *voyvoda*s. See the relevant letters in the collection of [Stojanović] Стојановић, *Старе српске повеље и писма*, vol. I: *Дубровник и суседи његови* [*Old Serbian Charters and Letters*, Book I: *Dubrovnik and Its Neighbours*]. A recent assessment on the *voyvoda*s' office as presented in some of these letters is offered by Ivanović, "Cyrillic Correspondence Between the Commune of Ragusa and Ottomans from 1396 to 1458." His lead was followed later by Adrian Gheorghe, *The Metamorphoses of Power: Violence, Warlords,* Akıncıs *and the Early Ottomans (1300–1450)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2022).

[230] Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân (Osmanlı Tarihi 699–968/1299–1561)*, ed. Göker İnan (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2019), 359; Davut Erkan, "Matrâkçı Nasûh'un Süleymân-Nâmesi (1520–1537)" (Unpublished MA Thesis, İstanbul, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2005), 181.

(*şehid oldu*), while the latter two were still unmatched in their bravery.[231] With exceptional praise Suzi speaks of Şami, who was known for his valor in the fights against the "infidels," whose morning he turned into a night (*şam*), hence his nickname Şami.[232] Leaving aside the romantic features of Suzi's portrayal of these heroes, at least three of them could be ascertained as real historical figures from the entourage of Ali Beg who are attested in documentary sources as well. Hence, for example, amongst the witnesses who were present at the court procedure registering the endowment deed of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, drawn between 4 and 13 August, 1496,[233] we find traces of two of them. Cerrah Yusuf, i.e. the physician, son of (*ibn-i*) Abdullah (pointing to his Christian descent) was among the 24 individuals who certified the procedure with their presence. He could further be identified with the former slave (*ʿatik*) of Ali Beg, Yusuf b. Abdullah, who resided in the village of Gorna Griviçe, part of his benefactor's private estates (*mülk*) that were not endowed to the pious foundation.[234] Parts of the same village were later held in private property by three daughters of Ali Beg's elite slave (*gulam*) Yusuf, which further bears witness to the elevated position he held in his patron's household.[235]

Another witness who certified the foundation of the pious endowment was the *subaşı* Ali, who was the son of Kara Halil, the valiant fighter under Ali Beg's command, mentioned already as a martyr by Suzi.[236] The position of the martyred father, however, was obviously taken by his son Ali, who continued to serve under Ali Beg and held similarly high position, administering a *subaşılık* of an unspecified location. Similarly, traces of the distinguished commander

[231] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 249–50, couplets 276–295.
[232] Levend, 250, couplets 288–289.
[233] A copy of the original Arabic *vakfiye* is kept in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi in Istanbul: BOA, Hariciye Nezareti (HR), Siyasi (SYS), dosya 310, gömlek 1, vesika No 51, fols. 1–8. The witnesses are enlisted on fol. 6. While serving as a *müderris* at the Plevne *medrese*, the sixteenth-century poet Zaifi translated the Arabic endowment deed into Ottoman at the request of Ali Beg's grandson Hızır Beg. He included the translation he made in his *Külliyāt-ı Ẓaʿīfī* but does not list the witnesses. Cf. ms. Topkapı Palace Library, R. 822, fols. 181a–184a; Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Département des Manuscrits, Supplément turc 572, fols. 316v–319r (https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc939018). My observations rest on the Arabic copy of the endowment deed and on Zaifi's translation from the BnF manuscript.
[234] BOA, HR. SYS. 310/1, No 51, fol. 3; BnF, Supplément turc 572, fol. 317v.
[235] BOA, Tapu Tahrir Defteri (TT) 382 (from 1555/6), 763–765. For details on the inheritance of the endowment of Ali Beg and the private properties of his closest family members and dependents see Chapter 3.
[236] Besides mentioning by name the celebrated warriors under Ali Beg's command, Kara Halil is the only one whose military actions Suzi Çelebi describes at one occasion. Kara Halil, together with Ali Beg's equally celebrated brother İskender Beg, accompanied Ali Beg in 1460, when he led his army against Hungary and captured Michael Szilágyi, Matthias Corvinus's uncle, former regent of Hungary and a distinguished defender on the then Danubian frontier. Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 307, couplets 1071–1072. On the historical battle and Suzi's description of it see Aleksej Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilagyi i srbska despotija: akcija Szilagyijeva za oslobođenje Smedereva od Turaka i njegov poraz od Ali-bega Mihaloglije kod Bazjaša 8. studenoga 1460 [Michael Szilágyi and the Serbian Despotate: Szilágyi's Action for the Liberation of Smederevo from the Turks and His Defeat by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg at Bazjaš on November 8, 1460]," *Rad Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 276, no. 125 (1943): 1–182.

Şami from Suzi's epic poem, could be found in his patron's endowment deed. Hence, it is credible to suggest that behind Suzi's Şami hides Ali Beg's former slave (*ʿatik*) Şamlı Hızır b. Abdullah who resided in the village of Dolna Diseviçe at the time the endowment deed was drawn (1496).[237] Parts of the same village were later held in private property by two sons of Şamlı Hızır, the *gulam* of Ali Beg.[238] In addition, certain Mustafa Hızır Beg, whose name appears as a patron in the door panel to the antehall of Seyyid Battal Gazi's tomb (dated 1500–1501) in his shrine complex near Eskişehir in Western Anatolia—heavily patronized by Ali Beg and his sons at the turn of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century—, might well have been the same Şamlı Hızır in the entourage of Ali Beg. Besides the possibility that the mentioned Mustafa Hızır Beg from Seyyid Battal Gazi's door panel was the eldest son of Ali Beg,[239] Zeynep Yürekli has suggested that this Hızır Beg could in fact be the one mentioned in the *vakfiye* as a freed slave of his patron.[240] Whatever the case, both freedmen, Cerrah Yusuf and Şamlı Hızır, must have been esteemed members of the extended Mihaloğlu household and were ones of the most celebrated military commanders under their patron's lead in numerous battles (as praised in Suzi's poem) and rewarded therefore with private landed properties by their patrons. Whether they held *subaşılık*s like Kara Halil's son Ali remains an open question, but it is highly credible if we are to make an analogy with the military retinue of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg in 1532 who seem to have held large portion of the fief holdings in the district under his governorship.

Despite the lack of clear details regarding the origins of these retainers, it is possible to trace the advancement of some of them. Once they graduated from the palace of the frontier lord, the most distinguished ones were awarded revenue grants (*timar*s) within their master's governing districts. This allowed them to establish smaller military households and become integral to the military and administrative framework of their respective regions. In 1532, several members of the extended Mihaloğlu household can be clearly identified as *timar*-holders in the *sancak* of Niğbolu. Among them, three timariots are noted as associates (*merdüm*) of the

[237] BOA, HR. SYS. 310/1, No 51, fol. 2; BnF, Supplément turc 572, fol. 317v.
[238] BOA, TT 382 (from 1555/6), 761–762. See further details in the next chapter.
[239] Hızır Beg, the son of the *vakıf* endower, ranks first amongst the witnesses of his father's *vakfiye*. Another three sons of Ali Beg also signed as witnesses of their father's pious endowment foundation document: Hasan Beg, Mehmed Beg, and Ahmed Çelebi. BOA, HR. SYS. 310/1, No 51, fol. 6. Additionally, Hızır Beg is mentioned in the text of the title deed as a resident of the village Yablaniçe, while Hasan Beg was living in the village Gorna Diseviçe. BOA, HR. SYS. 310/1, No 51, fol. 2; BnF, Supplément turc 572, fol. 317^{v}. The village Yablaniçe appears in the registration of 1530 as being held in private property (with three more villages) by Hızır Beg's son Çalış Beg (*mülk-i Çalış Beg bin Hızır Beg bin Ali Beg*). BOA, TT 370 (from 1530), 518.
[240] Yürekli bases her assumption on the observation that, in contrast to the Mihaloğlu family members' inscriptions in the complex, Mustafa Hızır Beg's father's name was not revealed in his door panel writing. Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire*, 88–90, 162 (Appendix 1, SG 3).

sancakbegi Mehmed Beg, with one explicitly listed as his scribe (*katib*).[241] Additionally, four more *sipahi*s are identified as part of the retinue of Mihaloğlu family members: three were men (*merdüm*) in Mustafa Beg's entourage and one was an attendant (*merdüm*) in Hasan Beg's household, both of whom were brothers of the then district-governor Mehmed Beg (See Fig. 3 below).[242]

Fief-holdings of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's household retinue members (*merdüm*):	
timar-i Yunus Çelebi, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 9 501 [akçe]
timar-i katib Caʿfer, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 9 071 [akçe]
timar-i Kasım, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 5 289 [akçe]

Fief-holdings of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's brothers' households retinue members (*merdüm*):	
timar-i Alagöz, merdüm-i Mustafa Beg	hasıl: 10 771 [akçe]
timar-i Hüsrev Divane, merdüm-i Mustafa Beg	hasıl: 7 708 [akçe]
timar-i İdris voyvoda, merdüm-i Mustafa Beg	hasıl: 17 000 [akçe]
timar-i Mehmed, merdüm-i Hasan Beg	hasıl: 6 250 [akçe]

Fig. 3: Fief-holders from the Mihaloğlu family household retinue members.
Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

Although the number of *sipahi*s, as recorded in 1532, from the military household of the district-governor might appear modest compared to the scenario half a century earlier—where nearly all *timar*-holders in the province of Üsküp were servants of the Paşa Yiğit clan,[243]—the impact of the Mihaloğlu family members' entourage in the Niğbolu district's military forces remains significant. Adding together the large retinue of the *sancakbegi*, which totaled 410 men, with the supported military escorts of five additional Mihaloğlu family members holding *zeamet*s in the province (including three of his sons and two of his cousins), as well as the *timar*-holding men connected to the dynasty (*merdüm*s of Mehmed Beg and two of his brothers), it becomes evident that the extensive Mihaloğlu household and its affiliates supported at least 589 retainers (See Fig. 4 below). This group constituted nearly 40% (37.58%) of the total military strength of the province, which was comprised of 1,567 soldiers.[244] If one considers that some of the *timariot*s with unspecified or unidentifiable affiliations might also have been close associates of the Mihaloğulları, these numbers could potentially be even higher. Nonetheless, even these figures highlight the significant influence and dominant authority that the Mihaloğlu family wielded in the Danubian frontier district of Niğbolu during the early 1530s.

[241] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 75[a], 75[b], 77[a].
[242] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 75[b], 76[a], 76[b].
[243] Šabanović, *Krajište Isa-bega Ishakoviča*.
[244] BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204, f. 82[a].

fief-holder	allotted revenue	number of supported retainers
zeʿamet-i be-nam-i Hızır Beg bin Mehmed Beg bin Mihal Beg	hasıl: 70 000 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 100
zeʿamet-i be-nam-i Ahmed Beg bin Mehmed Beg bin ʿAli Beg	hasıl: 25 000 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 18
zeʿamet-i be-nam-i ʿAli Beg [bin] Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 25 000 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 10
zeʿamet-i be-nam-i Seyyidi bin Bali Beg	hasıl: 22 598 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 8
zeʿamet-i be-nam-i Çalış bin Hızır Beg bin Mihal – mahlul	hasıl: 26 137 [akçe]	---[245]
timar-i Yunus Çelebi, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 9 501 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 7
timar-i katib Caʿfer, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 9 071 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 10
timar-i Kasım, merdüm-i Mehmed Beg	hasıl: 5 289 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 6
timar-i Alagöz, merdüm-i Mustafa Beg	hasıl: 10 771 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 2
timar-i Hüsrev Divane, merdüm-i Mustafa Beg	hasıl: 7 708 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 5
timar-i İdris voyvoda, merdüm-i Mustafa Beg	hasıl: 17 000 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 10
timar-i Mehmed, merdüm-i Hasan Beg	hasıl: 6 250 [akçe]	cebelüyan-i mezbur: 3

Fig. 4: Military retinue supported by members and associates of the Mihaloğlu family. Source: BOA, TS. MA.d. 2204.

Overall, the information from the 1532 register concerning Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's personal retainers provides a glimpse into the extended households of the marcher lords. The examples from the province of Niğbolu and its district-governor, hence, demonstrate that these frontier lords maintained large entourages that staffed their noble courts and contributed to the military-administrative framework of the regions under their governance.

Further on, additional observations suggest that their households not only mirrored the structure of the Ottoman imperial and princely households in composition and size but also underscored their integral roles within all levels of the Ottoman socio-political hierarchy in the provinces. The number of the retainers of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, moreover, were comparable to the households of Ottoman princes of that era: both prince Süleyman (the future Süleyman

[245] Since the revenue-raising fief was vacant at the time of the registration (*mahlul*), there were no retainers listed. Çalış Beg should be regarded as the previous *zeamet* holder, as it is possible that he was either dead at that time or had received another fief-holding somewhere else. The former hypothesis seems more likely, as during the synoptic registration of Niğbolu district from the 1530 Çalış Beg's *mülk*s in the region of Plevne are enlisted still in his possession, while afterwards shares of his private lands passed on to his nephew Mehmed Beg and the latter's children and grandchildren. More details about the familial properties' inheritance pattern are presented in Chapter 3.

I) in 1511 and his son Mehmed in 1540 managed households of around 500 men.[246] Similar to the Ottoman princes, frontier lords leveraged their leadership in conquests to acquire slaves, including potentially those from local nobility, to populate their households. These individuals were nurtured, educated, and assimilated within the lords' courts, emerging as loyal servants, adept courtiers, and premier military retainers. Additionally, once graduated from their patron's household, these individuals could even advance to significant roles within the imperial court, as evidenced by associates of Balkan raider commanders within Selim I's royal retinue in 1512.[247]

More importantly, however, these provincial palace graduates formed a crucial reservoir for staffing military and administrative positions in the provinces, akin to how imperial palace graduates populated similar roles across the Ottoman Empire. Even the cursory examination of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg's household, as presented in the 1532 registration, already shows that the Ottoman border magnates, the governors of the frontiers, became focal power nodes, orchestrating vast networks that intertwined social, military, administrative, political, and cultural threads. Future research will surely reveal further details as to the workings of this complicated matrix of relationships, yet, it should be evident by now that the attachment to a beg's household, not only to the house of the sultan, paved the way for upward social mobility on a provincial level and was not controlled solely by the capital, as the "hub-and-spoke" imperial model of social relationships, proposed by Barkey, maintains. Indeed, several documents produced by Mihaloğlu family members shed light on the actual practice of the promotion process of the dynasty's military retainers, which must have applied for other provincial powerholders and their retinue as well.

The first is the letter of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg to the newly enthroned sultan Süleyman I in connection to the preparation of the Transylvanian campaign that ended with the conquest of Belgrade/Nándorfehérvár (1521), and which was discussed in the previous chapter.[248] Along with the extensive report on the situation in Wallachia and the participation of Neagoe Basarab's troops in the operation, at the end of his letter Mehmed Beg made his own demands

[246] Metin Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth (Perchance to Return)," in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World. A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, ed. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 69.
[247] H. Erdem Çıpa, "Bir Defterin Anlattıkları: I. Selim döneminin (1512–1520) İlk Mevacib Defteri," in *Filiz Çağman'a Armağan*, ed. Ayşe Erdoğdu, Zeynep Atbaş, and Aysel Çötelioğlu (İstanbul: Lale Yayıncılık, 2018), 207–10.
[248] BOA, TSMA. e. 996/30 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 11691]. Published in Romanian translation in Mehmed, *Documente turceşti privind istoria României*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474* [*Turkish Documents Regarding the History of Romania*, Vol. 1: *1455–1474*], 12–14 (doc. 12).

to Süleyman. Fully aware of the principal part he played in the 1521 campaign, the Danubian warlord requested an additional ruling that guaranteed the appropriate reward for his troops. Hence, he demanded that Süleyman issues an order assuring that the leaders of the military operation would be rewarded with *sancak*s, the *timariot*s would be granted *subaşılık*s, and the valiant warriors would receive *timar*s. Unless there were commands to this effect, Mehmed Beg cautioned, no one's service could be assured, and the army could not be controlled.[249] It is probably as an aftermath of the conquest of Belgrade that a register of provincial governors' appointment was compiled. There, we find Mehmed Beg as the new governor of Niğbolu, suggesting that in the aftermath of his successful actions during the Transylvanian campaign in 1521 he climbed the ladder to a district-governor of the most strategic Danubian border district.[250] Although presently I possess no information as to how his retinue was rewarded and what posts they obtained, other three sources from half a century later suggest that they were given appropriate revenue-holdings in the provinces.

These documents represent *dirlik* reward requests that were sent by two Mihaloğlu brothers to the central administration in the aftermath of the clashes with the troops of the Moldavian voivode John III the Terrible (Ion cel Cumplit) or the Brave (cel Viteaz) (r. 1572–1574), who, allied with Cossack forces, revolted against the Ottomans.[251] It is in connection to one of the minor battles in the course of 1573 that the then governor of Vidin Mihaloğlu Mustafa Beg sent one such request, on June 19, 1573.[252] The document, which is essentially a small register issued by his chancellery, has two distinct parts, written by two different scribes: the beginning of the document, formatted as a letter (*mektub*), presents in summary the request (*arz*) of the governor, followed by another *defter*-like part which lists name by name the retinue for whom the *dirlik* bestowals were requested with the respective amount of the revenue-holding.[253] The

[249] Ibidem.
[250] TKSMA D.9772 (dated to 1520/1): *liva-i Niğbolu: Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg tasarrufunda – 457,000 akçe*. Barkan, "H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği," 303.
[251] Ion ascended to the Moldavian throne in 1572 with Ottoman military support, which was prompted by voivode Bogdan Lăpuşneanu's (r. 1568–1572) rapprochement with Poland. Ion's subsequent defiance against the Ottoman rule, largely resulting from internal opposition and external threats and his ensuing search for support from the Polish nobility, led to heightened tensions with the Ottomans. On Ion's relations with the Ottoman sultan see Yusuf Heper, "Osmanlı Devleti ve Eflak-Boğdan İlişkileri (1574–1634)" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Uşak University, 2020), 88–115.
[252] BOA, A.NŞT 1/56 (from 8 Safer 981 H. / 19.06.1573).
[253] The three documents described below belong to the category that Zekai Mete has termed "yayarlık" or "yoldaşlık" registers. Mete speculated about the contents of these registers based on references in *defter*s drafted by the sultanic administration, as he was unaware of any surviving originals. Mete, "Osmanlı Taşrasında Bürokratik Muâmelât: Sancakbeyi Belge ve Defterleri," 206–8. I will refrain from classifying these documents under a specific category, as they might simultaneously be referred to as *arz*, *mektub*, *defter*, *mühürlü tezkire*, etc., although in fact they all follow a similar structure and use formulaic expressions. Typically, the first part (*mektub*) begins with the phrase "[so-and-so] *beg'in kullarının mühürlü defteridir*," and—after summarizing the

brief specifies that during an incursion against the insurgent troops of the Moldavian voivode Iovan, the governor of Vidin and his warriors have successfully killed more than 1,000 infidels, bringing back prisoners and informants, for which he requested appropriate rewards. He, hence, recommended 16 timariots, 3 sipahis, 1 privately paid fighter, 19 other fief-less (*dirliksiz*) men from his own retinue (*kendü adamlarından*), and another 24 fief-less valiant warriors (*gureba*). Special request was made for his deputy (*kethüda*) Hüseyin as he was particularly beneficial in bringing to the Gate lots of captured informants (*dil*). Among the enlisted people of his retinue in the second part of the document, one finds two more of his deputies, *kethüda* İbrahim and *kethüda* Yusuf, and his standard-bearer (*sancakdar*) Hasan.

The other two documents are identical in composition and were sent to the central administration by the said Mustafa Beg and his brother Hızır Beg after the debacle of the Moldavian voivode in the next year. During 1574, in response to the voivode's threats along the Danube, Selim II (r. 1566–1574) mobilized forces from various regions, including the Tatar Khanate of Devlet I Giray (r. 1551–1577), and the voivodes of Wallachia, Alexandru II Mircea (r. 1568–1574, 1574–1577), and Transylvania, Ștefan Báthory (r. 1571–1576). On June 10, 1574, the allied Ottoman, Tatar and Wallachian troops, clashed with the Moldavian forces near Lake Cahul/Cahului, where the Moldavian army was severely defeated and John the Terrible was captured and executed. Following the battle, Peter the Lame (Petru Șchiopul, r. 1574–1577, 1578–1579, 1583–1591) was placed as the new Ottoman-supported voivode on the Moldavian throne.[254] As becomes apparent from the ensuing *dirlik*-bestowal requests, the campaign was also joined by at least two Mihaloğlu brothers – Mustafa Beg and Hızır Beg, who at this point in time were district-governors of Vidin and Vılçitrın (mod. Vushtrri, Kosovo) respectively.[255] This second request of Mustafa Beg from June 22, 1574 promoted even more of his people, certainly as a result of their ultimate success in the battle, when they defeated the military unit (*tabur*) led by the "vezir" of the Moldavian voivode, taking into possession 7 canons as well.[256] Hence, recommendations were made that a total of 79 individuals who accompanied him and

specific reasons for the request, such as participation in a military campaign—concludes with "*istihdam itdügi kulları inayet ricasına arz eder*." The second part of the documents (*defter*) begins with the formulaic phrase "*defter oldur ki*" and concludes with "*zikr olunur*," followed by the precise date of its composition. Besides the three documents that were sent to the central administration by the Mihaloğlu family members, the collection A.NŞT of BOA also contains several other such documents: A.NŞT 1/42 (by the second *defterdar* Mehmed); A.NŞT 1/56 (from the *beglerbegi* of Budin); A.NŞT 1/66 (from the *sancakbegi* of Silistre Davud Beg); A.NŞT 1/72 (from the *sancakbegi* of Ohri Hüseyin Beg).

[254] On the Moldavian voivodes' relations with the Ottomans and the battle of Cahul see Heper, "Osmanlı Devleti ve Eflak-Boğdan İlişkileri (1574–1634)," 88–115.

[255] For their governorships see the next section below.

[256] BOA, A.NŞT 1/31 (from 21 Safer 982 H. / 22.06.1574).

showed extraordinary bravery receive an increase of their previous revenue-holdings or be given a *dirlik* if they did not yet possess one. They included 6 *zeamet*-holders, 30 sipahi, and 43 additional courageous warriors (*garib yiğitleri*). Beside these, special endorsement was advanced for Mustafa Beg's own son Muhammed, whom his father Mustafa Beg and the then Wallachian voivode Alexandru II Mircea recommended for a *timar*-bestowal worth 14,300 *akçe*. Among the aforementioned *zeamet*-holders was again Mustafa Beg's deputy, the *kethüda* Hüseyin, who was recommended for a *zeamet*-bestowal in İzladi (worth 20,000 *akçe*) and a *timar* in Hezargrad (worth 17,496 *akçe*).[257]

In the aftermath of the major Moldavian campaign, similarly to his brother, the *akıncı begi* Mihaloğlu Hızır Beg also sent a *dirlik*-reward request to the central administration. Emphasizing their role and bravery in the campaign, he recommended for *dirlik* increases and initial bestowals 38 individuals who accompanied him in 1574.[258] Amongst these were his brother Cafer (with a *zeamet* worth 20,000 *akçe* in Niğbolu), his brother Ali (with a *timar* worth 10,000 akçe in Vılçitrın), and his other brother Ali (with a *timar* worth 12,000 akçe also in Vılçitrın). In addition to his brothers, Hızır Beg recommended the following people: his *voyvoda* Ali (with a timar worth 4,000 akçe); the long-time servant of his father Süleyman Beg, certain Cafer, who was currently serving as Hızır Beg's own deputy (*kethüda*); his head of the doorkeepers (*kapıcı başı*) Hasan-oğlu Hüseyin; 5 privately paid fighters who were recommended for a pay-increase, along with 28 other valiant soldiers who were recommended for a minimum timar-grant, 4 *akıncı* officers (*toviça*) (with *çiftlik*s), and 1 son of a *toviça* (with *eşkün timar*), as well as two people of the Moldavian ruler-to-be Peter VI the Lame (Petru Șchiopul, r. 1574–1577): Divane Kurd and Divane Mustafa. Additionally, among the people enlisted by name in the second part of the document, we find Hızır Beg's two other *voyvoda*s (Muhtar and Ömer), his standard-bearer (*sancakdar*) Yusuf, his accountant (*vekil-i harc*) Hüseyin b. Doğan, his campaign tents' manager (*çadırcı*) Pervane, two of his envoys and heralds (*çavuş*) Hüseyin and Ali, and his secretary (*katib*) Ahmed.[259]

[257] The *dirlik*-bestowals were approved by the central defterhane on August 13, 1574. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 25, order no. 2150.

[258] BOA, A.NŞT 1/64 (dating from Evasıt-i Safer 982 H. / 12–21.06.1574).

[259] On July 9, 1574 some of the requested *dirlik*s for the dependents of Hızır Beg, including his brothers Cafer, and the two Alis, his *voyvoda* Ali, his *kethüda* Cafer, the head of his gatekeepers Hasan-oğlu Hüseyin, and other associates, were approved by the *deftehane* in Istanbul. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 25, order no. 1859. Divane Durmuş's and Sinan *voyvoda*'s *dirlik*-bestowals were approved on July 16, 1574. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 25, order no. 1883 and BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 25, order no. 1885. Divane Kurt ve Divane Mustafa's *dirlik*s were approved on July 15 and 18, 1574, and on October 3, 1574. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 25, orders no. 1871, 1945, 2529.

The cited documents are revealing on several counts. First and foremost, they bear witness to the composition of the select retinue and closest military entourage of the Mihaloğlu family members, who constituted a large portion of the provincial military force holding revenue grants as *timar*-holders as late as the second half of the sixteenth century. They, hence, represent a cautious reminder that the identities of the provincial *timar*-holding Ottoman cavalry are crucial for unraveling the dependency networks that prevailed on the ground and should be taken into account before jumping to conclusions as to the prevalence of the sultanic cadres in the provincial army. Second, they showcase the advancement procedure of the provincial cavalry household forces, which were presided by and dependent on their patrons, in this case the Mihaloğlu family members. These patrons were responsible for their retinues' well-being and, besides leading them in successful battles, which no doubt increased their financial gains, initiated a procedure for their appropriate rewards in the provinces, adequate to their service and corresponding to the Ottoman military hierarchy. Last, but not least, a detailed look at the documents presented above, hints at a much larger network of regional dependencies that goes beyond the confines of the Ottoman Empire proper. The reward recommendation for Muhammed, the son of Mustafa Beg, a young cousin of the Mihaloğlu family, whose advancement was supported not only by his father but also by the Wallachian voivode, highlights connections that go far beyond the formal Ottoman-Wallachian ruler-to-ruler relationship. This case opens new avenues for research that could identify various individuals who linked the two political entities on either side of the Danube through what Robyn Dora Radway has termed "vernacular diplomacy."[260] Similarly, the two men of the Moldavian voivode-to-be Peter the Lame, Divane Kurd and Divane Mustafa, who were rewarded with revenues in Ottoman territories practically as part of the retinue of the Mihaloğlu clan, not only point to the backstage workings of the depositions and enthronements of the Moldavian voivodes, in which the lower-ranking retainers with their own incentive for social advancement become obvious, but also begs for additional research that would potentially reveal more on the ground-level networking mechanisms of these political events. What is more, it appears that the provincial governors' households, and

[260] Going beyond the official diplomatic channels that typically focus on ambassadorial missions, Radway convincingly argues that diplomacy should not be separated from the multi-leveled, regionally based sphere of interactions she terms "vernacular diplomacy." This form of diplomacy operated alongside, and sometimes in opposition to, the official imperial diplomacy between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans during the sixteenth century. A significant aspect of this vernacular diplomacy was the extensive correspondence between the provincial governors of Buda and Habsburg officials, which not only reveals the lived realities of interaction and exchange in the borderlands but also highlights shared tastes and the appropriation of material culture, reflecting a common world of values and practices. Radway, "Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593."

specifically these of the frontier lords, were not exclusive entities, but were rather porous in nature, sharing personnel and forming intra-dynastic relationships, a phenomenon that underscores a distinct provincial development with its own network dynamics.

The Web: Building Ottoman Elite

The fragmentary evidence about the formation of an elite frontier lord's household makes it plausible to suggest that besides being inheritable from father to son in keeping with the principles of dynastic succession, which certainly secured the longevity of the family line and the durability of the dynastic name, a Balkan frontier lord's dynastic household could spring into existence through service in another dynasty's courtly entourage. For instance, as it has been recently argued by Levent Kayapınar, it seems that the Turahanoğlu family, which entrenched itself in Thessaly since the Ottoman conquest of the region at the end of the fourteenth century, was initially intricately connected with the house of Evrenos that had established its dominance in Macedonia and along the Via Egnatia route.[261] While the question still remains as to whether the eponymous founder of the family, Turahan Beg, was the son of the conqueror of Üsküb (Skopje), Paşa Yiğid Beg, or of a certain namesake of his (possibly with Saruhanid background), it appears that Turahan Beg started his career in Evrenos Beg's household as his *emir-i ahor* (chief of the stables).[262] Together with Evrenos Beg, Turahan appears as the leader of the military conquest of the regions of Thessaly where he subsequently established his power-bases in the cities of Yenişehir (Larissa) and Tırhala (Trikala).[263]

Similarly, as seen from the career path of one of the most successful Mihaloğlu family members of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, a member of an already established frontier lord's family, such as the Mihaloğlu, could advance his position owing to his service in another governor's household. It appears that Ali Beg progressed from a subordinate of Hasanbegoğlu İsa Beg, the governor of the bordering district of Vidin on the Lower Danube,[264] to become a district governor in his own right and a successor to his patron's

[261] For Evrenos Beg's exploits in Macedonia and his family's establishment in the region see Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*, 16–64.
[262] Kayapınar, "Teselya Bölgesinin Fatihi Turahan Bey Ailesi ve XV.–XVI. Yüzyıllardaki Hayır Kurumları", here 186–189.
[263] Machiel Kiel, "Das türkische Thessalien: etabliertes Geschichtsbild versus osmanische Quellen. Ein Beitrag zur Entmythologisierung der Geschichte Griechenlands," in *Die Kultur Griechenlands in Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Bericht über das Kolloquium der Südosteuropa-Kommission, 28. – 31. Oktober 1992*, ed. Reinhard Lauer and Peter Schreiner (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 109–96; Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453."
[264] On Hasanbegoğlu İsa Beg's governorship in Vidin, see Kayapınar, *Le* sancak *ottoman de Vidin du XV^e à la fin du XVI^e siècle*, 273, 275–76; [Dušanka Bojanić-Lukač] Душанка Боянич-Лукач, *Видин и видинският*

post. In his epic poem, Suzi Çelebi details Ali Beg's first major incursions across the Danube that occurred in the course of the years 1459–1460 and which earned him his reputation as a courageous and skillful leader in his own right and elevated him to the rank of a *sancakbegi* at the frontier. Suzi presents these events as an initiation process in which the experienced district governor of Vidin Hasanbegoğlu İsa Bey took Ali Beg under his wing and assigned him to military raids into Transylvania (Erdel).[265] It is in the course of one such incursion in 1460 that, together with his brother İskender Beg and his most distinguished warrior Kara Halil, Ali Beg defeated the well-mounted army of Ban Michael Szilágyi, whom he took captive and sent to Mehmed II along with sixteen other captured Hungarian nobles. This victory secured him the *sancakbeglik* of Vidin—a post he took over from his patron İsa Beg—and elevated him to a frontier district-head who could lead raids in his own right and under his own banner.[266] Suzi Çelebi's narration corroborates nicely with the archival evidence from the first Ottoman detailed register (*mufassal tahrir defteri*) of the region (*vilayet* and *subaşılık*) of Braniçova/Braničevo. It appears that this register was compiled independently from that of the district of Vidin, to which Braniçova was administratively dependent at that time, under the supervision of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg in 1467/8, while he was already the governor-general (*mir-i liva*) of the *sancak* of Vidin.[267] Nevertheless, the fact that he supervised the compilation of the

санџжак през 15–16 век [*Vidin and Vidin District during the 15th-16th Centuries*] (София: Наука и изкуство, 1975), 91; [Olga Zirojević] Олга Зиројевић, "Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу [The *Sancakbeg* of Smederevo Mihaloğlu Ali Beg]," *Зборник Матице српске за историју* 3 (1971): 19–20. Little remains known about the origins of İsa Beg, apart from him being unanimously depicted in the narrative sources as one of the most prominent Ottoman border governors on the Lower Danube, who led numerous incursions into Hungarian-held territories across the river. Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilagyi i srbska despotija: akcija Szilagyijeva za oslobođenje Smedereva od Turaka i njegov poraz od Ali-bega Mihaloglije kod Bazjaša 8. studenoga 1460 [Michael Szilágyi and the Serbian Despotate: Szilágyi's Action for the Liberation of Smederevo from the Turks and His Defeat by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg at Bazjaš on November 8, 1460]," 73–76. In 1479, the year of his death at the battle of Kenyérmező (Romanian: Câmpul Pâinii, Hungarian: Kenyérmező, German: Brodfeld, Turkish: Ekmekoltağı – a region in southwest Transylvania between Orăștie (Szászváros) and Sebeș (Szászsebes), an anonymous German account of a Transylvanian Saxon describes him as a Pasha, who was a close advisor of the sultan. Cf. Ferenc Szakály and Pál Fodor, "A kenyérmezei csata (1479. október 13.)," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 111, no. 2 (1998): 309–50. I am using the Turkish translation of the original Hungarian article: Ferenc Szakály and Pál Fodor, "A kenyérmezei csata (1479. október 13.) – Kenyérmező Muharebesi (13 Ekim 1479)," *History Studies: International Journal of History* 3, no. 3 (2011): 449–91, esp. 462, 487.

[265] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 263–265, couplets 460–490. Cf. Schmitt and Kiprovska, "Ottoman Raiders (*Akıncı*s) as a Driving Force of Early Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and the Slavery-Based Economy," 529–30.

[266] Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 299–313, couplets 963–1160; İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. Defter (Tenkidli transkripsiyon)*, ed. Şerafettin Turan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 167–172; Schmitt and Kiprovska, "Ottoman Raiders (*Akıncı*s) as a Driving Force of Early Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans and the Slavery-Based Economy," 531–32; Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilagyi i srbska despotija: akcija Szilagyijeva za oslobođenje Smedereva od Turaka i njegov poraz od Ali-bega Mihaloglije kod Bazjaša 8. studenoga 1460 [Michael Szilágyi and the Serbian Despotate: Szilágyi's Action for the Liberation of Smederevo from the Turks and His Defeat by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg at Bazjaš on November 8, 1460]," 67–76.

[267] See BOA, MAD 5, 8–64. Cf. [Branislav Đurđev] Бранислав Ђурђев, "Исписи из дефтера за Браничево из XV века [Excerpts from the Ledger for Braničevo from the 15th Century]," *Историјски гласник* 3–4 (1951):

defter, that his *hass* incomes as a district-governor were situated in the *subaşılık* of Braniçova, and that he was in possession of a large plot of land (*çiftlik*) in that region, suggest that he held this particular sub-district in his capacity as Hasanbegoğlu İsa Beg's *voyvoda/subaşı* before becoming the district-governor of Vidin.[268] From that time onwards, Ali Beg was to hold the governorships of several bordering regions on the Danube that gave him the prospect of conducting raids across the river and rise to one of the main political actors of his time, involved in broader political and military strategies beyond local governance, as exposed in the previous chapter. Moreover, thanks to his position in the region, he was able to form a large household, which gave birth to several generations of skilled administrators and military commanders within the Ottoman socio-political landscape—a success that was not replicated by all his contemporaneous kin.

The example of Ali Beg's career path that sprang from the ranks of another grandee's family retinue was not unique to the house of Mihal. There are two more known individuals who could be identified amongst the dependents of other prominent political households of the time. One of them is certain Mihaloğlu İsmail Beg, who was referred to in a document drawn in mid-1451 that certified the borders of a village granted as private property to the grand vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha by Mehmed II.[269] İsmail Beg is mentioned amongst the people who had to inspect the borders of the village Kriçime (mod. Krichim near Plovdiv, Bulgaria), and more specifically as a distinguished representative of the Rumelian *beglerbegi* Karaca Pasha, whom the latter sent for the task. Except for his association to the Rumelian commander in chief, the nature of İsmail Beg's relationship to Karaca Pasha remains unclear. Yet, the official designations preceding his name, pride of the noble and the most illustrious ones (*iftiharü'l-emasil ve'l-emacid* or *mefharü'l-emasil ve'l-emacid*),[270] attest to his high standing in the *beglerbegi*'s household. Furthermore, although mentioned only as a man of Karaca Pasha (*emirü'l-ümera-i beglerbegi ademisi*),[271] judging from the other representatives sent to inspect the borders of the

93–99; Momčilo Stojaković, *Braničevski tefter. Poimenični popis pokrajine Braničevo iz 1467. godine* [*Braničevo Register: Name list of Braničevo Province from 1467*] (Beograd: Istorijski Institut, 1987); Halil İnalcık, Evgeni Radushev, and Uğur Altuğ, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed Döneminde Tuna Boyunda Osmanlı Düzeni. Niğbolu, Vidin ve Braniçeva Tahrir Defterleri. Metin ve İndeks* (Budapest: Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 165–374.

[268] On the estates of Ali Beg in Braničevo see [Aleksandar Krstić] Александар Крстић, "Читлук Али-бега Михалоглуа у Ждрелу [Mihaloğlu Ali Beg's Estate in Ždrelo]," *Браничевски гласник* 1, no. 1 (2002): 39–56.

[269] BOA, TSMA, e. 745/77 [old shelf number: TKSMA, E. 5488]. The document is published by Halil İnalcık in facsimile and transliteration in his İnalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, 219–22 (appendix IX and photo 8).

[270] BOA, TSMA, e. 745/77, line 7: "Paşa hazretlerinden gelen iftiharü'l-emasil ve'l-emacid Mihal Beg-oğlu İsma'il Beg"; line 46/47: "bu Kriçime'nin sunuru tamam olur deyu mefharü'l-emasil ve'l-emacid Mihal oğlu mezkür İsma'il Beg huzurunda…" İnalcık, 219–22.

[271] BOA, TSMA, e. 745/77, 26: "emirü'l-ümera-i beglerbegi ademisi İsma'il Beg"; İnalcık, 222.

village, who were *timar*-holders and *çavuş*es of other dignitaries, it could be conjectured that İsmail Beg was a confidant of the Pasha who took care of varied administrative affairs of his patron's wider household. Indeed, just around the time the document certifying the borders (*sinurname*) of Çandarlı Halil Pasha's village was compiled, we find Mihaloğlu İsmail Beg as a fief-holder not far to the west of Kriçime. In a fragment of a detailed register from the early 1450 for the area around Sofia and Samako (mod. Samokov, Bulgaria), İsmail Beg, son of Mihal Beg was the *timar*-holder of the village Pasaril and four more agricultural plots of land (*mezra'a*).[272] Presently, it remains unclear what happened with İsmail Beg after the death of his patron during the siege of Belgrade in 1456,[273] whether and if his career advanced to a provincial governorate, to a higher post in another grandee's household, or possibly in the sultanic household. Nevertheless, building on his case, it seems safe to assume that family members of the house of Mihal were valued not only for their pedigree, but also for the administrative and military expertise that they could provide both to high ranking Ottoman grandees and to the sultan himself.

The latter point manifests itself in the presence of another contemporary of İsmail Beg (possibly his brother) whom we find amongst the distinguished persons attending the court of Mehmed II as part of his closest entourage in the newly built Topkapı palace in Istanbul. A roll of the *müteferrika* group at the court of Mehmed II in 1478 lists certain İshak Beg bin Mihal Beg ranking amongst the ones receiving the second highest salary grade (with daily allowance of 33 *akçe*s).[274] İshak Beg, hence, along with other representatives of elite families (mostly from Anatolia), was one of the senior statesmen and trusted advisers of Mehmed II, who, in Rhoads Murphey's words: "were hand-picked associates and strategic team members whom the sultans recognized and valued either for technical and intellectual skills or out of respect

[272] The register is published in [Nikolay Todorov and Boris Nedkov], Николай Тодоров, and Борис Недков, eds., *Турски извори за българската история*, Т. 2: *Документи от XV век* [*Turkish Sources for the Bulgarian History*, Vol 2: *Documents from 15th Century*] (София: Българска академия на науките, 1966), 53–103, here: fol. 23b. The village must be identified with the now vanished Gorni Pasarel, which was once located at the site of today's Pasarel Dam. The location of İsmail Beg's fief-possession, on the other hand, gives grounds to suggest that he was connected with the İhtiman branch of the family, whose landed estates were in the near vicinity of the village Pasaril. For more details on these domains and their history see the next chapter.

[273] On the footstone of his grave next to his mosque in Karacabey, Bursa, the inscription reads that Karaca Beg was martyred in mid-July 1456 at the siege of Belgrade. Enis Karakaya, "Karaca Bey Camii," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2019), 17–18.

[274] The payroll register of palace administrative personnel (*defter-i mevacib-i mülazimin-i Dergah-i Ali*) of Mehmed II's court covering the period from May to July 1478 was published by Ahmed Refik, "Fatih Devrine Ait Vesikalar," *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası (TOEM)* 8, no. 62 (1335): 5–22, İshak Beg on p. 6. The pay-list of 1478 was more recently used by Rhoads Murphey as a clear reflection of the practical principles of government. See Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*, 141–74 (Chapter 6).

for, as well as reliance on, their nobility of ancestry and social distinction."[275] Moreover, as convincingly argued by Murphey, these distinguished persons were also the ones who could rally wider social support for the sultan in their respective power bases, and are exemplary for the sultanic dynasty's reliance on the existing social power structure, serving at the same time as a fundamental link of the dynasty with the greater society outside the palace walls.[276] It appears, then, that it was a matter of successful co-optation and cooperation on both sides, which ultimately would maintain the sultan's position of preeminence but also recognize and maintain the infrastructural power of these individuals in the broader social landscape. The presence of İshak Beg, the son of Mihal Beg, among the court counsellors of Mehmed II, is a clear manifestation of the family's recognized high social standing and infrastructural authority in the Ottoman state but also of its cooperative effort in the building of the state infrastructure in more general terms. As indicative as İshak Beg's status is for this dual dependency relationship, until now I was not able to locate the power base of İshak Beg in the Ottoman territorial domains, nor could I trace any of his descendants.

Such an opportunity, however, presents itself with the family branches that sprang from some better known individuals from a provincial setting. They succeeded in forming extensive households, which became the springboard for several generations of provincial governors of strategic districts throughout the Ottoman imperial domains, forming a substantial part of what could be safely called an elite caste of local governors who run the provincial affairs. Contrary to the conventional historiographical view that Mehmed II's centralizing imperial project marginalized the frontier lords in favor of palace-grown elites, sources from Mehmed II's reign and afterward suggest that, at the same time, the Mihaloğlu family was consolidating its grip in the provinces and securing key regional governance positions.

As I have already touched upon above, we could trace the rising career of the most prominent person from the family, namely Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, from the reigns of Mehmed II and Bayezid II. He rose to prominence from a subordinate of another frontier lord to a district governor in his own right of a number of strategic *sancak*s along the Danube from 1460 onwards. Although it is impossible to trace all of his appointments, and those of any other family member—or any other provincial governor for that matter,—since there is no consistent documentary evidence for each year that would potentially reveal his movement as a provincial governor across Ottoman domains, it is still feasible to track several of his governorates over time and

[275] Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*, 155.
[276] Murphey, 157–58.

space. Moreover, from the collected data, which is not conclusive but is representative, it is also possible to track the provincial governorates held by other family members in a more or less consistent manner for the period from the last quarter of the fifteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. Hence, it could be discerned that multiple provincial positions were in the hands of family members from several family branches, who were able to secure not only the family line, but a leading position of their respective households in the Ottoman provincial administration across the imperial domains (See Figs. 5–8).

Tracking the family members' governorates, hence, allows observing the spread of provincial power of at least four Mihaloğlu generations over a number of Ottoman districts. My observations are based on a variety of sources: narrative sources, provincial governors' appointment registers (*sancak tevcih defterleri*), provincial tax registers (*tapu tahrir defterleri*), fief-holdings' daybook registers (*timar ruznamçe defterleri*), registers of sultanic gifts and allocations (*inamat defterleri*), sultanic orders from the registers of "important affairs" (*mühimme defterleri*), other correspondence between the district-governors and foreign or domestic statesmen (*mektub*), published Ragusan, Wallachian, or other documents which mention specifically the district-governors of a province at a specific time. My intention is not to track the governorate period of any given individual at a specific district, which could lead to misleading interpretations as to the duration of the office, but rather to follow the documentary trace and mark the instances when certain individual was explicitly mentioned as a district governor of a specific district. This approach, in my view, presents better the situation and allows filling the tenure gaps with new evidence, while avoiding assumptions, which could prove misleading. Moreover, I chose this method of marking the governorships based on the observation that the district governors apparently were much more mobile than traditionally thought, with governorate positions sometime being held for less than a couple of months, going to the extreme cases of some district-governors not even being able to reach their place of appointment before assuming another governorship.[277]

[277] The provincial tax registers, although valuable for the information they provide on the district-governor at the time of the compilation of the register, fail in providing details about the mobility of the district-governors, because of their rarity of compilation (once every 10, 20, or 30 years). The mobility of the governors could, to a certain degree, be grasped, for example, from the registry of gifts (*inamat*), such as the one from the last years of the reign of Bayezid II and the first years of Süleyman I's reign. Gök, "İnamat Defteri'ndeki Verilere Göre 16. Yüzyılın İlk Çeyreğinde Osmanlı Eyalet ve Sancak Yöneticileri." Additionally, the evidence from the Dubrovnik archives also testify that some governors could not even reach their place of appointment—certainly because in many cases it coincided with a military operation in which they took part—before they moved to their next appointment. Hodžić, "O hercegovačkim sandžakbegovima do osnivanja Bosanskog ejaleta 1580. godine [About the Herzegovinian *Sancakbegi*s Until the Establishment of the Bosnian Eyalet in 1580]."

Coming back to the Mihaloğlu family members, the collated data indicates that since the second half of the fifteenth century the two brothers Mihaloğlu Ali Beg and İskender Beg were mostly active on the northern Danubian Ottoman borders, governing most frequently, and often superseding each other, in the neighboring districts of Vidin, Semendire and Niğbolu; at several points in time, they both held governorate positions in central Anatolia; while İskender Beg also extended his governorship to Bosna.

Following the documentary trace, we first find Ali Beg as a governor of Vidin in 1460 (a position he took from his patron Hasanbegoğlu İsa Beg) after a successful campaign in Hungarian-held territories, which ended with the capture of a number of Hungarian nobles, amongst whom John Hunyadi's brother-in-law and Matthias Corvinus's uncle Michael Szilágyi.[278] In 1463 Ali Beg took the post of district-governor of Semendire from Minnetoğlu Mehmed Beg, the first governor of Semendire, who at that time was assigned the Bosnian *sancakbeglik* after the final fall of Bosnia in 1463.[279] Next, we find Ali Beg as a governor of Vidin on several occasions: he is specifically named *sancakbegi* of Vidin in 1466/7 when he compiled the register of the Braniçevo sub district and where his *hass* and private possessions were registered.[280] He held the same post during the second half of 1469,[281] at the end of 1470, at the end of 1471,

[278] Cf. Levend, *Ġazavāt-Nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-Nāmesi*, 299–313, couplets 963–1160; İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. Defter (Tenkidli transkripsiyon)*, 167–72; Olesnicki, "Mihajlo Szilagyi i srbska despotija: akcija Szilagyijeva za oslobođenje Smedereva od Turaka i njegov poraz od Ali-bega Mihaloglije kod Bazjaša 8. studenoga 1460 [Michael Szilágyi and the Serbian Despotate: Szilágyi's Action for the Liberation of Smederevo from the Turks and His Defeat by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg at Bazjaš on November 8, 1460]"; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, 202.

[279] İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. Defter (Tenkidli transkripsiyon)*, 234; Mehmed Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-Nümâ. Neşrî Tarihi*, ed. Faik Reşit Unat and Mehmed Köymen, vol. 2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1957), 767; Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 224; [Zirojević] Зирojевић, "Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу [The *Sancakbeg* of Smederevo Mihaloğlu Ali Beg]," 14; Hazim Šabanović, "O organizaciji turske uprave u Srbiji u XV i XVI vijeku [About the Organization of the Turkish Administration in Serbia in the 15th and 16th Centuries]," *Istorijski glasnik* 3–4 (1955): 61. About the governing positions of Minnetoğlu Mehmed Beg who exchanged offices with Ali Beg on several occasions see Boykov, "In Search of Vanished Ottoman Monuments in the Balkans: Minnetoğlu Mehmed Beg's Complex in Konuş Hisarı," 49–51. We find Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, most certainly as the governor of Semendire, waging an attack in the county of Szerém/Syrmia/Srem in the late spring or early summer of 1463. Cf. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389-1526*, 207–8 (fns. 102–103).

[280] BOA, MAD 5 (from 1467/8), 8–64 (*hasha-i Ali Beg, emir-i liva-i Vidin*). In this registration we also find Ali Beg's private property (a *timar* which was held as a *çiftlik*) in Braniçevo. BOA, MAD 5, 65–71 (*timar-i mezkür Ali Beg, be-resm-i çiftlik*). On his *çiftlik*, based primarily on the data from this tax register see [Krstić] Крстић, "Читлук Али-бега Михалоглуа у Ждрелу [Mihaloğlu Ali Beg's Estate in Ždrelo]"; Kayapınar, *Le* sancak *ottoman de Vidin du XV^e^ à la fin du XVI^e^ siècle*, 273–74, 276–77.

[281] Some marginal notes of the register NBKM, Oriental Department, OAK 265/27 (which is a fragment of the Vidin register BOA, MAD 18 (compiled shortly before 871 H. / 1466) testify that he was the *sancakbegi* of Vidin in the period 30.06.–10.07.1469, when he is specifically identified as the district governor: *timar-i Muheddin; bu mezkür anun sancak begi Ali Beg mektub gönderüb kullığı bırakar didiği içün Mihail adlu kâfir müşterek yazıldı; tahriren fi Evasıt-i Zi'l-hicce sene 873* (f. 2a).

and at the beginning of and in mid-1472.[282] It is probably immediately after this point when Ali Beg and his brothers İskender and Bali Beg started the preparation for the major campaign in Anatolia against the Akkoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan and his joint Karamanid forces to be launched in the spring of 1473. In accord with these preparations prior to the campaign itself, perhaps in the second half of 1472, Ali Beg was assigned the governorship of Sivas province, his brother İskender Beg the *sancakbeylik* of Kayseri, and their younger brother Bali Beg the *subaşılık* of Niksar.[283] The next governorship of Ali Beg that we find evidence of is that of Vidin sometime in 1475,[284] while in mid-1476 the same post was already taken by his brother İskender Beg.[285] Sometime later during the same year, in 1476, it is possible to identify İskender Beg as the newly appointed governor of Bosna,[286] while during 1476/7 we find his brother Ali Beg as the district-governor of Semendire,[287] a post he has taken over from Malkoçoğlu Bali

[282] In the register of Vidin BOA, MAD 18 (compiled shortly before 871 H. / 1466), there are several later marginal notes that suggest that Ali Beg was the *sancakbegi* of Vidin in the periods 4–13.11.1470, 3–13.11.1471, 22–31.01.1472, 10–20.03.1472, 21–30.03.1472, 17.06–17.07.1472, when a number of *timar*s were given to the respective fief-holders by way of Ali Beg's letter: *be-mektub-i Ali Beg* or *Ali Beg mektubi mücebince*. On Ali Beg's governorate in Vidin cf. Kayapınar, *Le* sancak *ottoman de Vidin du XV^e à la fin du XVI^e siècle*, 273–74, 276–77; [Zirojević] Зиројевић, "Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу [The *Sancakbeg* of Smederevo Mihaloğlu Ali Beg]," 14–15.

[283] While the contemporaneous sources attest to the participation of Ali Beg in the campaign against Uzun Hasan as the leader of the Rumelian *akıncı*s, only Kemalpaşazade specifies that the three brothers were assigned governorates for the purpose of preparing the campaign troops. İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VII. Defter (Tenkidli transkripsiyon)*, 331–32, 397. A comprehensive account of the Ottoman-Akkoyunlu conflict is presented by Selâhattin Tansel, *Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Siyasî ve Askerî Faaliyeti* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1953), 299–328, esp. 312-313. Cf. Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 208–18; Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelovic (1453–1474)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 175–80.

[284] BOA, MAD 18 (compiled shortly before 871 H. / 1466). A later marginal note to this register suggests that Ali Beg was the *sancakbegi* of Vidin on 28.05.1475, as one timar was given to a new fief-holder by way of Ali Beg's letter on that date: *be-mektub-i Ali Beg* (f. 19b).

[285] BOA, MAD 18 (compiled shortly before 871 H. / 1466). Two later marginal notes suggest that Iskender Beg was the *sancakbegi* of Vidin on 19.06.1476, since he was the one who granted two timars at that date (fs. 13b and 14b: *İskender Beg mektub mücebince*). Angiolelo reports that during the siege of Semendire of 1476, İskender Beg came to defend it in the capacity of district-govenror of Niğbolu. It is possible that he actually named the more famous Danubian port instead of Vidin. Ursu, *Donado da Lezze, Historia Turchesca (1300–1514)*, 95–96.

[286] Truhelka thinks that it might be Iskender Beg Mihajlović. In 1476 certain Skender Beg sent the imperial dragoman Mustafa to announce his appointment as Bosnian governor. Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," 342.

[287] In the Semendire district registration from 1476/7 he already appears as a district-governor. BOA, TT 16. The defter has no dating at the beginning, but the earliest marginal notes are from 882 H. (1477/78), making it plausible to conclude that the registration was conducted on the previous year, 881 H. (1476/77). See also Dušanka Bojanić, *Turski zakoni i zakonski popisi iz XV i XVI veka za Smederevsku, Kruševačku i Vidinsku oblast* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 1974), 12. A letter of Matthias Corvinus from 1476 also attests that Ali Beg was at that time the district-governor of Semendire, as he refers to him as the "…un gran bessa del Turco et ha lo guberno de Smedro et quasi de tutta la Servia…" [a great Pasha of the Turk and who rules Smedro and almost all of Servia]. [Vićentije Makušev] and Вићентије Макушев, *Историјски споменици Јужних Словена и околних народа из италијанских архива и библиотека*, књ. 2: *Ђенова, Мантова, Милано, Палермо, Турин* [*Historical Sources about South Slavs and Surrounding Peoples from Italian Archives and Libraries*. Book 2: *Genoa, Mantua, Milan, Palermo, Turin*] (Београд: Гласник Српског ученог друштва, 1882), 238. On the basis of his

Beg. At the beginning of 1478 İskender Beg was the governor of Bosna,[288] and it must be in this capacity that he participated, together with his brother Ali Beg, in the siege of Shkodër/Scutari (Ott. İskenderiye or İşkodra) during the same year.[289] Shortly before and during October 1479 we find Ali Beg as the governor of Niğbolu, from where he lounched the campaign in Transylvania, which ended with the major Ottoman defeat at the Kenyermező battle (13 October, 1479).[290] At an unknown time during the Hijri year 884 (1479/80), probably immediately after October 1479, İskender Beg was the district-governor of Niğbolu,[291] and at the end of 1481 he was reportedly the *sancakbegi* of Semendire.[292] During 1482–1483 Ali Beg must have been the governor of Semendire, in which capacity he was mediating the peace negotiations

military actions attested in various narratives, Olga Zirojević supposes that Ali Beg held the post of Semendire district governor for the whole period between 1475 and 1479 [Zirojević] Зирojевић, "Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу [The *Sancakbeg* of Smederevo Mihaloğlu Ali Beg]," 16–20. As much as this is a logical supposition, it remains undocumented. For the time being, his governorship in Semendire remains confirmed for 1476, when Ali Beg was the governor at the time of Matthias Corvinus's siege of Šabac in early 1476, raided the region of Temesvár in the spring of the same year, and communicated to Mehmed II the treat that the Hungarians would invade Smederevo during the winter, for which he reinforced the garrison and evacuated all children and women from Smederevo. Cf. Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, 243–59.

[288] With the family name Mihajlović Skenderbeg is first mentioned in the Ragusan sources as a *sancakbegi* of Bosna on January 21, 1478. The people of Dubrovnik sent him a gift of 50 ducats, fish and sweet fruit, which was customary for welcoming the new Ottoman governors. Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," 342–43.

[289] Ursu, *Donado da Lezze, Historia Turchesca (1300–1514)*, 103; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1481*, 237–39.

[290] In several letters from late October 1479 the Wallachian voivode Basarab IV the Young (cel Tânăr), also known as Ţepeluş (the little Impaler) (r. 1474; 1478–1480; 1480–1481; 1481–1482), informs the judge and the councilors of Kronstadt/Braşov about Ali Beg's movements while being stationed in Nikopolis, obviously in the context of the aftermath of the invasion of Transylvania undertaken by Ali Beg in October 1479, which ended with the Kenyermező battle (13 October, 1479). These letters testify, among other things, that Ali Beg was at that time in Niğbolu, for which Basarab accuses his enemies who were harbored and supported by the Kronstadt/Braşov authorities. The letters also convey Ali Beg's plans (possibly instigated by Basarab himself) of marching against and plundering Kronstadt, the discomfit of which Basarab credits solely himself as the protector of Christendom. See Tocilescu, *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Ţara Românească şi Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346–1603* [*534 Slavic-Romanian Historical Documents from Wallachia and Moldavia Regarding the Connections with Transylvania 1346–1603*], 111 (no. 118), 112 (no. 119), 117 (no. 122).

[291] In a synoptic register of the *sancak* of Niğbolu from 884 H. (1479/80), NBKM, Oriental Department, OAK 45/29, fols. 3a-4b, we find the *hass*es of the then governor İskender Beg: *hasha-i mir-i liva-i Niğbolu der tasarruf-i İskender Beg*. The register is also published in [Todorov and Nedkov] Тодоров, and Недков, *Турски извори за българската история*, Т. 2: *Документи от XV век* [*Turkish Sources for the Bulgarian History*, Vol 2: *Documents from 15th Century*], 161–297.

[292] In a letter from December 1481 Matthias Corvinus calls him *vojvoda de Zendero, nomine Zkender, qui se Dominum Servie scribiti* [the governor of Smederevo, named İskender, who calls himself lord of Serbia]. Quoted after [Zirojević] Зирojевић, "Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу [The *Sancakbeg* of Smederevo Mihaloğlu Ali Beg]," 21, fn. 95.

between Matthias Corvinus and Bayezid II.[293] In mid-1483 he was reappointed as the *sancak-begi* of Niğbolu.[294] In 1485 we find İskender Beg as the governor of Niğbolu,[295] while his brother Ali was in all probability at that time managing the district of Semendire, where he was attested as such during the autumn of 1486.[296] In the period between mid-1485 and mid-1486 İskender Beg was probably assigned again the governorship of Bosna,[297] where we lose track of him for several years until 1489. Then, he must have moved to Anatolia to engage in the

[293] Judging from the correspondence between Ali Beg and Vuk Grgurević during these peace negotiations conducted in the course of 1482–1483. See details in the previous chapter.

[294] In a letter from the Grand Logothete/Chancellor of Wallachia, jupan Staico, to the council of Kronstadt/Braşov from 1483 (23 June) the chancellor informs about the coming of the newly reappointed governor of Nikopol Mihaloğlu Ali Beg. Failing to specify the year, the letter was previously wrongly dated to 1492. I owe the proper dating of this specific letter to Daniel Mirea, for which I express my gratitude. Tocilescu, *534 documente istorice slavo-române din Ţara Românească şi Moldova privitoare la legăturile cu Ardealul 1346–1603 [534 Slavic-Romanian Historical Documents from Wallachia and Moldavia Regarding the Connections with Transylvania 1346–1603]*, 409 (no. 409).

[295] In two fragments of an (incomplete) sinoptic register of the district of Niğbolu from 1485 (NBKM, Oriental Department, Нк 12/9 and Цг 20/1), a large number of the *timar*s were granted with a diploma from İskender Pasha. The registers were published in Bulgarian translation by [Rumen Kovachev] Румен Ковачев, *Опис на Никополския санджак от 80-те години на XV в.* [*Inventory of the Nikopol District from the 1480s*] (София: Издателство на Народната библиотека „Св. св. Кирил и Методий“, 1997), 105–72. The editor is on the opinion that the said Pasha is in fact Mihaloğlu İskender Beg, who rose to the post of Rumelian *beglerbegi* and grand vizier. [Kovachev] Ковачев, 105 (fn. 105). Other historians are inclined to accept the opinion of Kissling that Mihaloğlu İskender Beg never rose to the position of *beglerbegi* or vizier and is not to be mistaken with İskender Pasha, the vizier of Bayezid II. See Hans Joachim Kissling, "Quelques problèmes concernant Iskender-Paša, vizir de Bâyezîd II," in *Sultan Bajezid II. und der Westen*, by Hans Joachim Kissling, vol. 2, Dissertationes orientales et balcanicae collectae (München: Trofenik, 1986), 130–37. Kissling's view, which has been endorsed by Hedda Reindl, is currently the most widely accepted. Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 240–61. Truhelka and Popović, on the other hand, unanimously accept that the İskender Pasha of Bosnia, and the Hasan Pasha of Herzegovina were of Mihaloğlu descent (see the refences in the following footnotes). For the time being I will restrain from expressing a firm stand on that matter, because the available sources to me were insufficient to resolve the raised issue. Yet, it is noteworthy to mention that the territories in which Mihaloğlu İskender Beg was categorically identified overlap with these ascribed to the activities and offices of İskender Pasha. The same holds true for Mihaloğlu (Alaeddin) Ali Beg and Hadım (Alaeddin) Ali Pasha, as well as Ali Beg's son Hasan Beg and Hasan Pasha. My identification of Hasan Pasha with Hasan Beg of the Mihaloğlus on the basis of the former's seal (discussed in the previous chapter), makes me think that this might well have been the case with other Pashas of Bayezid II's reign when clearly the Mihaloğlu family was credited with lots of power and seems to have been favored by Bayezid both on the battlefield and at the diplomatic table, for which Ali Beg and his relatives were awarded with large landholdings enjoying vast tax immunities. For these possessions see the following chapter.

[296] At the time of the Hungarian envoy Dmitar Jakšić's assassination in the autumn of 1486 in Smederevo, Ali Beg was the acting *sancakbegi* of Semendire. For details about the correspondence concerning this incident, see the previous chapter.

[297] On 22 August 1485 Skender Pasha announce to Dubrovnik his coming to Vrh Bosna. Truhelka also publishes 2 letters from Iskender Pasha. One from February 1486, in which he informs the Ragusans that an imperial order was delivered to him by the sultan's slave E/Ihtiman, according to which the Ragusan Marko Kozičić ought to be detained and turned over to Ihtiman in order to be brought to court in Vrh Bosna because he was indebted to Sarı Yakub with large amount of money. The other letter of Skender Pasha concerns his recommendation to the Ragusans of certain Eminbeg to sell lead in Dubrovnik. Around July 1486 he might have already left Vrh Bosna, because the envoys who ought to deliver the annual tribute of Dubrovnik to the Ottoman sultan were instructed to gift him humbly if he was already dismissed from office, or more graciously in case he was still the governor. Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," 345.

convoluted conflict between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, when he took the post of *sancakbegi* of Kayseri for the second time.[298] Joined with the Ottoman-backed pretender Shahbudaq, İskender Beg faught with the allied forces of the latter's cousin Ala al-Dawla and the Mamluks in the spring of 1489, but suffering a devastating defeat, he, along with one of his sons and a substantial number of his retainers, was taken captive and sent to the Cairene court of the Mamluk sultan Qaytbay, where he spent two years in captivity before being released in mid-1491.[299] At the end of 1494 we find Ali Beg residing in the district of Semendire, when his territories were plundered during a daring attack by Pál Kinizsi.[300] Although it is reasonable to suppose that he crossed the Danube into Hungary during several big raids in the later 1490s as the acting governor of Semendire, there is no documentary evidence for his *sancakbeglik* post. After that time, however, the traces of Ali Beg disappear. His brother İskender Beg is attested in the sources on the governing seat of Bosna once more in 1499, after which date he is likewise not mentioned as holding a provincial post.[301] From their known itinerant governing positions until the last years of the fifteenth century, however, it is apparent that the two brothers entrenched themselves in the bordering Ottoman districts, having spent most of their governorates along the Middle and Lower Danube, but also stretching their dominions to Eastern Anatolia and the

[298] During the Ottoman–Mamluk rivalry the shifting allegiances of a number of Dulkadirid pretenders played a pronounced role. To secure the Dulkadirid rulership for an allied potentate against Ala al-Dawla, who realigned with the Mamluks, the Ottomans decided to support his cousin Shahbudaq. To prepare in advance for the confrontation with the Mamluks, who reacted to the Ottomans intervention in the Dulkadir principality, İskender Beg was assigned the governorate of Kayseri as late as the spring of 1489, when he attacked the territories of Dulkadir with the pretender Shahbudaq. İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman. VIII. Defter (Transkripsiyon)*, ed. Ahmet Uğur (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), 115–17; Tansel, *Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Siyasî ve Askerî Faaliyeti*, 129–31; Refet Yinanç, *Dulkadir Beyliği* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989), 85–86; Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–1491* (Leiden; New York; Bonn: Brill, 1995), 195–96; Yaşar Alparslan, Mehmet Karataş, and Serdar Yakar, eds., *Dulkadir Beyliği Araştırmaları*, vol. 1 (Kahramanmaraş: UKDE, 2008), 38, 103; Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World*, 145.

[299] For İskender Beg's captivity in Mamluk lands and his successful release as a result of a diplomatic mission see Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–1491*, 212–13; Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World*, 150, 152–53.

[300] In the winter of 1494 Ban Pál Kinizsi made a raid in Serbia to counter the preparation of an incursion prepared by Ali Beg. The Hungarian court historian Antonio Bonfini reports that Pál Kinizsi attacked two fortifications of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, in one of which the family of Ali Beg, including his wife and children, was sheltered. Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades, Tomus IV., Pars I. (Decades IV. et Dimidia V.)*, ed. Iózsef Fógel, Béla Iványi, and László Juhász (Budapest: K.M. Egyetemi Nyomda, 1941), 245–47. Tamás Pálosfalvi dates this campaign to the winter of 1494, while Zirojević places it in 1492 and hence supposes that Ali Beg was the governor of Semendire between 1492 and 1494. [Zirojević] Зиројевић, "Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу [The *Sancakbeg* of Smederevo Mihaloğlu Ali Beg]," 22–23; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, 295.

[301] In the Dubrovnik protocols there is a note from 16 April 1499 that an envoy of Skender Pasha Mihailović announced his coming as the new Bosnian governor. The messenger received gifts from the Ragusan authorities for bringing the news. Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," 346.

newly conquered Western Balkans (See Fig. 5). For the 40-years period of active provincial governorship they have, hence, solidified the base for a successful career of their own progeny, who, as becomes apparent from the latter's governing positions, partially "inherited" their fathers' places of influence, but also extended them to new Ottoman border districts.

first generation district-governors (1460s–1500)			
Ali Beg		**İskender Beg**	
Vidin	1460/1	***Vidin***	1476
	1466/7	***Bosna***	1476
	1469		1478
	1470		1485–1486
	1471–1472		1499
	1475		
Sivas	1472	***Kayseri***	1472
			1489
Semendire	1463/4	***Semendire***	1481
	1467/8		
	1476/7		
	1482–1483		
	1486		
	1494		
Niğbolu	1479	***Niğbolu***	1479/80
	1483		1485

Fig. 5: Mihaloğlu district-governors from the 1460s to around 1500

From the appointments of the known progeny of the family it is possible to determine a second period of steady Mihaloğlu provincial governance, stretching for almost another 40 years, which was dominated by the sons of Ali Beg and İskender Beg. Moreover, this era saw the emergence of another Mihaloğlu member from a different branch of the family, who secured for himself several governing posts in the first two decades of the sixteenth century. As it will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, the three largest ancestral landed estates of the wider family, which became seats of three of its branches, were consolidated precisely during the reign of Bayezid II and it is in affiliation with these provincial seats that we see the second and the subsequent generations of Mihaloğlu district-governors, who in all likelihood were raised in the respective domains, while the prosperity of each estate essentially ensured an enduring line of governors.

As I already pointed out above, Ali Beg's endowment deed from 1496 was signed (as witnesses) by four of his sons: Hızır Beg, Hasan Beg, Mehmed Beg and Ahmed Çelebi. The hitherto drawn genealogies of the family, however, acknowledge one more son, Mustafa Beg.[302]

[302] Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahvâl-i Gazi Mihal*; Yaşar Gökçek, "Köse Mihal Oğulları" (Unpublished MA Thesis, İstanbul, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1950); M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Mihaloğulları," in *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul, 1960).

In my opinion, the difference in the number of Ali Beg's sons might well result from a confusion among historians concerning their names. It is quite plausible, I think, that Hızır and Mustafa were one and the same person, who could be identified with the Mustafa Hızır Beg, who left his name as one of the patrons of Seyyid Battal Gazi's convent in Anatolia.[303] My supposition also rests on the information from the documentary sources, in which I find traces of Hızır Beg (supposedly the oldest son of Ali Beg) only in the endowment deed of his father, while his son appears as an heir of several of his (Hızır Beg's) private properties around Plevne. On the contrary, Mustafa Beg could be traced in several records as a governor in the first decades of the sixteenth century but does not appear in the inheritance records of his father's domain in Plevne, which was otherwise carefully apportioned amongst the latter's progeny, including his daughters and trusted servants.[304] This makes me think that it is plausible that the oldest son of Ali Beg, Mustafa Hızır Beg, was noted in the records of the inheritable possessions only as Hızır Beg, and in the governing posts – as Mustafa Beg. If that were the case, then it is safe to state that all four living sons of Ali Beg[305] found their way in the Ottoman provincial administration for shorter or longer periods of time.

The first documentary trace of a provincial governing position of the second generation of Mihaloğlu governors comes during 1504, when we find the son of Ali Beg, Mustafa Beg, as the *sancakbegi* of Hersek[306] and his brother Hasan Beg also at the same post later that year.[307] Shortly after, still in 1504, Hasan Beg was already recorded as the district-governor of Vidin,[308] a post he held also in (or until) the spring of 1508.[309] Another son of Ali Beg, Mehmed Beg, was at an unspecified year in the period between 1505 and 1511 the governor of Vılçitrın.[310] At

[303] Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire*, 88–90, 162 (Appendix 1, SG 3).
[304] For details see the next chapter.
[305] I was able to find a trace of one more son of Ali Beg, certain Yakub Çelebi, who in 1479/80 is noted as the *zeamet*-holder of Lofça with an annual income of 25,437 akçe. Cf. NBKM, Oriental Department, OAK 45/29, fol. 49b. He must have been already dead at the time of the drawing of his father's endowment deed in 1496, as his name does not appear in it, nor has he inherrited any of the family properties.
[306] Behija Zlatar identified him in the Ragusan sources where he was mentioned as Mustafa Beg Alibegovič, which makes it possible to identify him as the son of Ali Beg. Behija Zlatar, "O nekim musulmanskim feudalnim porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI stoljeću [About Some Muslim Feudal Families in Bosnia in the 15th and 16th Centuries]," *Prilozi* 14, no. 14–15 (1978): 110 (fn. 205).
[307] He replaced Sinan Beg/Pasha on the post of Herzegovinian *sancakbegi* for a short while in 1504, as in June this year he received gifts from the sultan in his capacity of Herzegovinian governor. See AK, MCY 0.71, fol. 33/67. Hodžić, "O hercegovačkim sandžakbegovima do osnivanja Bosanskog ejaleta 1580. godine [About the Herzegovinian *Sancakbegi*s Until the Establishment of the Bosnian Eyalet in 1580]," 189, 191–92.
[308] On 17 Safer 910 (July 30, 1504) Hasan Beg received sultanic gifts in his capacity of *sancakbegi* of Vidin. See Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909-933/1503-1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 250.
[309] At this post he received sultanic gifts between 13 February and 13 March 1508. Gök, 692.
[310] In a note concerning the hereditary private lands (*mülk*) of the Mihaloğlu family around Harmankaya, included in a detailed register of several Anatolian districts from 1530 (BOA, TT 166), but referring to the period of Karagöz Pasha's Anatolian *beglerbeglik* (1505–1511), Mehmed Beg, son of Ali Beg is specifically noted as

the end of 1511 and the beginning of 1512 Hasan Beg, who was until that time the Rumelian *beglerbegi*,[311] was assigned again the governorship of Hersek, which he probably never assumed physically,[312] as at the very beginning of 1512 he was also named governor of Gelibolu.[313] At the same time, i.e. during the last phase of prince Selim's strife for the Ottoman throne, Hasan Beg's brother, Mehmed, must have held a post somewhere on the Lower Danube, since he interfered in the Wallachian succession struggles quite intensively at that time.[314] The only documentary evidence of his supposed provincial office, which I was able to find in the Ottoman sources, however, is of a *zaim* of Ziştovi port (mod. Svishtov), when his *dirlik* was augmented with 6,500 akçe in December 1512, which would mean that he had not risen to a district-governor on the Danube by that time, although the Wallachian sources implied that he

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the *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın. At the time, two of the ancestral *çiftlik*s (Durası çiftliği and Mehmed çiftliği) in Harmankya were unrightfully distributed to *timar*-holders, for which Mehmed Beg—the governor of Vılçitrın at that time—appealed to the then *beglerbegi* of Anatolia Karagöz Pasha and requested that the two *çiftlik*s, which his father Ali Beg has bought from Paşa Yiğid and later transferred in possession to his son Mehmed Beg, be returned into his possession. The request was complied with and the private property was restored to Mehmed Beg, with the stipulation that if any money has been taken meanwhile from this property by the *timar*-holders, it also had to be given back to their rightful owner. See BOA, TT 166, p. 64 and the transcription of the relevant part in Ömer Lûtfi Barkan and Enver Meriçli, *Hüdavendigâr Livâsı Tahrir Defterleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), 316–17.

[311] See the previous chapter.

[312] For the first time Hasan Beg (mentioned also either as Mihalbegović or Alibegović in the Ragusan sources) is mentioned on 23 December 1511, when his *voyvoda* Hüseyin (specified as the *voyvoda* of Rudin) announced the sancakbegi's appointment and that he himself will serve as the Beg's deputy until his coming to Herzegovina. On March 20, 1512 the *voyvoda* of Mostar recommended that a special gift be sent to Hasan Beg. On May 7, 1512 two envoys (Natal Saraković and Jaketa Gundulić) were selected for the mission to Hasan Beg, this time specifically mentioned as Alibegović. In the reports of the same Ragusan envoys from June 7, 1512, when they came back from their visit to Hasan Beg's court, they specifically named him Mihalbegović, which leaves little doubt as to the progeny of Hasan Beg. Meanwhile, on May 13, 1512, gifts were received in Dubrovnik from Hasan Beg sent through his unnamed gatekeeper (*kapıcıbaşı*). Cf. Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," 346–47. Ćiro Truhelka accepts that Hasan Beg was the governor of Herzegovina until early 1513, when according to him Hasan Beg died shortly after his return from Anatolia. This assumption, however, contradicts with the fact that the then Rumelian *beglerbegi* Hasan Beg/Pasha, died a year later at the battle of Çaldıran (August 23, 1514). Toma Popović, on the other hand, assumes that Hasan Beg, although mentioned in the Ragusan sources as the Herzegovinian district-governor, never came to his *sancak*. He bases his assumption on the fact that on May 7, 1512 the Ragusan authorities decided to present their gifts to the new *voyvoda* of Rudin, Hüseyin, who came to Dubrovnik on behalf of Hasan Beg to announce the latter's appointment and coming to Herzegovina as a district-governor, but a diplomatic mission was not sent to him, as he must have been prevented from coming due to Bayezid II death. On this basis, Toma Popović accepts that Hasan Beg was the appointed Herzegovinian governor only between December 1511 and May 1512, after which date his place was taken up by Mihaloğlu Kasım Beg. Popović hence corrects Truhelka's list of Herzegovinian governors and instead of Hasan Beg for the period of May 1512 – March 1513, lists Mihaloğlu Kasım Beg, citing the appropriate Ragusan sources. Popović, "Spisak Hercegovačkih namestnika u XVI veku [List of Herzegovinian Governors in the 16th Century]," 94; Hodžić, "O hercegovačkim sandžakbegovima do osnivanja Bosanskog ejaleta 1580. godine [About the Herzegovinian *Sancakbegi*s Until the Establishment of the Bosnian Eyalet in 1580]," 192.

[313] An entry in a gift register, dating from 21 Şevval 917 H. (January 21, 1512) specifies Hasan Pasha as the new governor of Gelibolu (*Hasan Paşa ki mîr-livâ-i Gelibolı şud*). See Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909-933/1503-1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 1397.

[314] See Chapter 1.

held a higher governmental post.[315] In the same period of Ottoman political turmoil or shortly after Selim's enthronement, the youngest son of Ali Beg, Ahmed Çelebi,[316] was managing a smaller *zeamet* in the district of Niğbolu.[317] As attested by the Ragusan sources, another family-branch member, namely Kasım Beg (of the İhtiman branch), took the post of Herzegovinian governor from his kin Alibeg-oğlu Hasan Pasha during the spring of 1512. It is probably from there that he joined prince Selim in his final march to Istanbul.[318] The next certain mention of a provincial governorate in the hands of a family member is that of the *sancakbeglik* of Tırhala, which was held by Mustafa Beg, the son of Plevneli Ali Beg, for several months in 1514, before his sudden death at the battle of Çaldıran in August the same year.[319]

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[315] His *dirlik* was recorded in a *timar ruznamçe* register, BOA, MAD 7 (from 917 H. / 10.04.1511-30.03.1512), comp. p. 183 (the original pagination is illegible). The *zeamet* of Mehmed Beg included the port town of Ziştovi, 16 villages and 2 plots of land (*mezra'a*). With the newly added income from the village of İzlat-i Trab (mod. Zlatitrap) in the sub district of Filibe, his *dirlik* income was augmented to 119,000 akçe. It would appear that this particular *zeamet* was a very recent acquisition of Mehmed Beg, as the same *dirlik*-holding was in the hands of the Rumelian *defterdar* Abdulkerim Beg earlier this year. In the previous registration of the district of Niğbolu, compiled during the fisrt 10 days of Muharrem 918 H. / 29 March – 7 April 1512, i.e. only a few weeks before Selim ascended the throne, we find Abdulkerim as the administrator of the *zeamet* of Ziştovi. See TKSMA, D. 167, fols. 4b–5a. It is plausible to suggest that after Selim's accession, the new sultan struck a deal with Mehmed Beg, assigning him resourses closer to his ancestral powerbase and to Wallachia respectively.

[316] It seems that the young Ahmed Beg was also amongst the Rumelian lords who supported prince Selim. He is specifically mentioned in a letter of certain Hüseyin, who, after Selim's enthronement, petitioned the sultan for a *dirlik* bestowal. Recounting his own military merits and obedient service at the time of Selim's strife in Rumelia, the said Hüseyin (most certainly in his capacity of a clerk) specifies that he wrote a letter to Mihaloğlu Ahmed Beg, demanding the latter's arrival at Aydos (mod. Aytos, Bulgaria), from where the summoned troops of Selim's supporters marched on to Kefe (mod. Feodosia, Ukraine) to the prince. See BOA, TSMA, e. 756/121 [former shelf mark: TKSMA, E. 6389/1]. I express my gratitude to Erdem Çıpa who shared with me his transliteration of the letter, which he currently prepares for publication.

[317] Ahmed Beg's *zeamet* was recorded in a *timar ruznamçe* register, BOA, MAD 7 (from 917 H. / 10.04.1511–30.03.1512), comp. p. 197 (the original pagination is illegible). The income was yielded from the taxes of the crossbowmen (*zenberekçi*) and the *martolos*es of the Niğbolu castle, and from these of the reserve (*zevaid*) *voynuk*s of the Niğbolu and Tırnovi districts, including the taxes collected from two small villages, as well as from the population living in the Holovnik (Kule) fortress across the Danube, and three more plots of arable land (*mezraa*). The total income of the *zeamet* was estimated to 18,000 akçe. Prior to this recording of his *dirlik* in the early 1510s, we find Ahmed Beg visiting the sultanic court in Istanbul, where he was presented with gifts from the sultan on June 19, 1504 and August 19, 1506, as recorded in the register of gifts (*inamat defteri*) from that period. See Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909-933/1503-1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 239, 513. No office was specified next to his name besides his clear identification as Ahmed Beg, son of Ali Beg, son of Mihal in both records.

[318] Kasım Beg Mihalbegović came to Herzegovina after Hasan Beg. Immediately after his coming, he had to leave for the battlefield (in all probability joining Selim at Akkirman where he summoned most of his supporters to march to İstanbul) and came back at the end of 1512. On the Rumelian military commanders, including İhtimanoğlu Kasım Beg, who sided with prince Selim at the end of his succession strife, see Çıpa, *The Making of Selim*, 81–101, fn. 134 on 298-99. Before Kasım Beg marched for the campaign in 1512, he asked from the Dubrovnik authorities to lend him 500 dukats, which they did. Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 93. It is believed that he passed away while on the post of Herzegovinian governor around February-March 1513. Popović, "Spisak Hercegovačkih namestnika u XVI veku [List of Herzegovinian Governors in the 16th Century]," 94; Hodžić, "O hercegovačkim sandžakbegovima do osnivanja Bosanskog ejaleta 1580. godine [About the Herzegovinian *Sancakbegi*s Until the Establishment of the Bosnian Eyalet in 1580]," 192. This information, however, contradicts the evidence of his continuing career in the following decades and must be disregarded as inaccurate.

[319] In the *ruznamçe* defter of 1511/12 Mihaloğlu Mustafa Beg is mentioned as the former *sancakbegi* of Tırhala. The record specifies that he took the post from Turahanoğlu Hasan Beg in 1514 but was killed in the Çaldıran

The Ottoman success at the battle of Çaldıran was a watershed in the history of the Ottoman dyansty and its growing dominion but it inflicted a considerable blow to the Mihaloğlu family, as two more of Mustafa Beg's brothers died at the battlefield, which ultimately reduced the overall governmental capacity of the Mihaloğlu dynasty. It is impossible to conclusively establish the extent of the loss of family members, but it appears that at least three of the traceable progeny lost their lives in 1514: Mustafa Beg, Hasan Pasha[320] and Ahmed Beg.[321] After this disaster for the family, the governors who hailed from the Plevneli branch were reduced to the only surviving son of Ali Beg, Mehmed Beg. In the course of the next year, 1515, the latter climbed to the post of district-governor of Vidin.[322] In the early 1520s, as attested by a provincial governors' appointment register (*sancak tevcih defteri*), probably compiled in 1521/2, we find four members of the family from the already established three branches of the dynasty in the governing positions: Plevneli (Alibeg-oğlu) Mehmed Beg in Niğbolu,[323] Pınarhisarlu

battle which took place in the same year. BOA. MAD 7, 285b (comp. p. 237). Cf. Muhittin Kul, "Tırhala Sancağı İdarecileri (1395-1600)," *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi / Academic Journal of History and Idea* 6, no. 1 (2019): 231, 243.

[320] The death of the Rumelian *beglerbegi* Hasan Pasha is unanimously recorded in the Ottoman narrative sources. For a comprehensive account of the battle on the basis of these sources, see Feridun Emecen and Erhan Afyoncu, *Savaşın Sultanları - I: Osmanlı Padişahlarının Meydan Muharebeleri* (İstanbul: Bilge, 2018), 337–73.

[321] After the death of Ahmed Beg at Çaldıran, his zeamet was divided into two equal parts and assigned to two *timar*iots on January 11, 1515. BOA, MAD 7, comp. p. 197. Apparently, the taxes from the reserve (*zevaid*) *voynuk*s were added to the sultanic hasses, as it becomes apparent from an entry in the registration of Niğbolu *sancağı* at that time. BOA, MAD 11 (from 1515/6), f. 13a.

[322] The tax register of the Vidin district (BOA, MAD 70) was compiled by the *sancakbegi* Mehmed Çelebi bin Ali Beg and the scribe Mehmed during the period 25 April – 24 May 1515. The governor's *hass*es yilded him an annual income amounting to 578,957 akçe. BOA, MAD 70, fols. 2b-6b.

[323] In the sancak tevcih defteri TKSMA D.9772: *liva-i Niğbolu: Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg tasarrufunda – 457,000 akçe*. Barkan, "H. 933-934 (M. 1527-1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği," 303.

(İskenderbeg-oğlu) Mahmud Beg in Çirmen (mod. Ormenio, Greece),[324] Pınarhisarlu (İskenderbeg-oğlu) Yahşi Beg in Tarsus,[325] and İhtimanlu Kasım Beg in Hums (Homs, Syria).[326] In 1522, Kasım Beg was already the governor of Niğbolu,[327] while Yahşi Beg assumed the governorship of Vidin in the same year.[328] At an uncertain date after this last appointment in Vidin—but prior to 1541—Yahşi Beg occupied the gubernatorial seat at Aintab.[329] In the Western Balkans, Plevneli (Alibeg-oğlu) Mehmed Beg (probably a governor of Niğbolu until that

[324] TKSMA D.9772: *liva-i Çirmen: Mihaloğlu Mahmud Beg tasarrufunda – 250,000 akçe*. Barkan, 304. Shortly before August 19, 1506 Mahmud Beg b. İskender Beg b. Mihal Beg came to Istanbul, where, at the time of his departure, he was presented with gifts from the sultan. See Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909-933/1503-1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 513.

[325] Yahşi Beg was probably the first *sancakbegi* of Tarsus after the Ottoman takeover in 1517. His first mention as a governor of the new Ottoman province dates to 1521/2 in the provincial appointment register (*sancak tevcih defteri*) TKSMA D.9772: *liva-yi Tarsus: Mihaloğlu Yahşi Beg tasarrufunda – 350,000 akçe*. Barkan, "H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği," 306. Subsequent Ottoman *tahrir defter*s attest that Yahşi Beg made an endowment for the tomb shrine of the Prophet Daniel in Tarsus, which was also endowed by the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghawri (r. 1501–1516). Cf. Oya Pancaroğlu, "Visible/Invisible: Sanctity, History and Topography in Tarsus," in *Eastern Mediterranean Port Cities: A Study of Mersin, Turkey—From Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Filiz Yenişehirlioğlu, Eyüp Özveren, and Tülin Selvi Ünlü (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 79–91. For his own endowment Yahşi Beg designated the incomes of a bath which he bought (*Mahmud bin Turgud hamamı*), an orange grove, six shops and a caravanserai bearing his name. Ali Sinan Bilgili, *Osmanlı Döneminde Tarsus Sancağı ve Tarsus Türkmenleri* (Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 43, 149–50. Yahşi Beg must be identified with the Mihaloğlu Yahşi Beg, son of İskender, who appears as a governor of the neighboring Aintab sometime prior 1541, when he is mentioned as the deceased Mihaloğlu, the governor of Aintab, in the court records of Aintab (Gaziantep). Cf. Leslie Peirce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2003), 37, 234–35.

[326] TKSMA D.9772: *liva-i Hums: İhtimanlu Kasım Beg tasarrufunda – 400,000 akçe*. Barkan, "H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait Bir Bütçe Örneği," 306. For the time being, it is unclear what is the exact lineage of Kasım Beg, but given his Eastern Anatolian appointment, it seems reasonable to suggest that he was a child of İsa Bali, son of Bali Beg İhtimani, who is attested in the earlier sources as a *zeamet*-holder in the two Rumelian districts, governed by the two brothers Ali Beg and İskender Beg, namely Semendire and Niğbolu. He is traceable first as a *timar* holder in the district of Braniçevo in the *defter* from 1476/7 (BOA, TT 16, 387), and then as the *zeamet*-holder of Gigen (with an income of 18,329 akçe) in the 1479/80 registration of Niğbolu (NBKM, Or.dep., OAK 45/29, f. 41a), while his brother Evrenos was a small *timar*-holder in the same district (f. 45a). In 1516 (BOA, TT 1007) İsa Bali was the *voyvoda* of Semendire and held the largest *zeamet* in the district. See Ema Miljković, "The Timar System in the Serbian Lands from 1450 to 1550: With a Special Survey on the Timar System in the Sanjak of Smederevo," *Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi (OMAD) / Journal of Ottoman Legacy Studies (JOLS)* 1, no. 1 (2014): 45. It is, hence, tempting to suggest that İsa Bali, son of Bali Beg İhtimani was in the retinue of İskender Beg and accompanied him in Eastern Anatolia during the Ottoman–Mamluk conflicts of the 1480s, when possibly he was taken captive along with his comander and relative İskender Beg. This line of thought leads to a more logical explanation as to Kasım Beg's appointment as a district-governor of the distant Hums – his father must have spent time in the region and perhaps, during his eventual captivity, made valuable connections too.

[327] Kasım Beg, the governor of Niğbolu in 1522, is mentioned as *Acemi Kasım Beg*, which in all probability refers to his previous appointment as a district-governor of Hums. If this were the case, he might safely be identified as İhtimanlu Kasım Beg. In 1522 the governorship of Niğbolu was granted to him with an income of 600,000 akçe. Çakar, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Kanun-nâmesine Göre 1522 Yılında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İdarî Taksimatı," 278.

[328] Beyazıt Kütüphanesi, Veliyüddin Efendi Kitaplığı, No. 1969: *Liva-i Vidin: benâm-ı Yahşi Bey veled-i Mihal (has – 383,000 akçe)*. Published by Çakar, 279.

[329] Since in 1521/2 Yahşi Beg was a district-governor of Tarsus, and in 1522 a *sancakbegi* of Vidin, his tenure in Aintab must be positioned sometime after these dates. Mihaloğlu Yahşi Beg, son of İskender appears as a governor of Aintab prior to 1541, when he is mentioned in the court records of Aintab (Gaziantep) already as the deceased governor of Aintab Mihaloğlu. Yahşi Beg was the benefactor of the Mihaliye college (*medrese*), which

time, considering his almost daily interventions in Wallachia in this period) became a district-governor of Hersek in mid-1523.[330] Mehmed Beg was not physically present at Hersek in 1525 and 1526, but he left his representative there, which suggests that he was the acting governor of Hersek during these years.[331] Most certainly related to the preparations for the forthcoming Mohács campaign, he transferred his governorship to Niğbolu shortly before the battle sometime in 1526.[332] At the same time, we find his cousin Yahşi Beg as the governor of Vidin, probably also preparing for the forthcoming campaign.[333] In the following year, 1527, the two cousins were holding their previous posts on the Danube.[334] In 1530 Mehmed Beg is attested in the sources yet again as the governor of Niğbolu.[335] In the second half of 1536 he resurfaces

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was the public institution with the largest budget in the city. Cf. Peirce, *Morality Tales*, 37, 234–35. His Aintab pious endowment deed dates to 25. 07 – 03.08.1522. The rather lavish foundation included the incomes of a mosque, a bath, a water mill, and a bakery in the town proper, as well as agricultural lands in the village of Ho(u)manos and in the large village of Sam, where he also constructed a Friday mosque. The *vakfiye* specifies the endower as Yahşi Beg bin İskender, which makes it possible to identify him as the son of Mihaloğlu İskender Beg, the brother of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg. See BOA, EV. VKF. 18/60. I am grateful to Kaan Harmankaya for bringing this document to my attention.

330 Bachadero (possibly Behadır), the *voyvoda* of the newly appointed *sancakbegi*, brought the news of the appointment of Mehmed Beg on the post of Herzegovinian district-governor to the Ragusan authorities in June 1523, extending the goodwill and hopes of his patron for good friendship with Dubrovnik. Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 90. In a marginal note in the summary register of Hersek from July 22, 1523, we find Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg already distributing *timar*s in the district. BOA, TT 91 (from 926 H. / 1520), 53. Published in facsimile in *91, 164, MAD 540 ve 173 Numaralı Hersek, Bosna ve İzvornik Livâları İcmâl Tahrîr Defterleri (926-939 / 1520-1533). II: Tıpkıbasım* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2006). In August 1523, a gift was sent from Ragusa to the wife of Mehmed Beg Alibegović, who was the daughter of the deceased Hersekoglu Ahmed Pasha and the granddaughter of Sultan Bayezid II through her mother. Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 92. As a relative of Ahmed Pasha, in 1523 Mehmed Beg asked the Ragusans that they pay him the provisions sent annually to the Herzegovinians. Popović, "Spisak Hercegovačkih namestnika u XVI veku [List of Herzegovinian Governors in the 16th Century]," 96.

331 In 1525 Mehmed Beg Mihalbegović assigned his court secretary (*divan-yazıcı*) as his deputy. Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 102. While Mehmed Beg was away from his Herzegovian seat in 1526, his *kethüda* Behter (Behadır?) appears as his deputy representative. Popović, 100. In 1526 the Ragusans announced to the deputy of Mehmed Beg Alibegović that the Montenegrins have failed in Konavle, and asked for help. Popović, 101. In marginal notes in the summary register of Hersek from March 28 and November 4, 1527 Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg is mentioned as the former sancakbegi of Hersek who authorized several timar appointments, probably referring to the previous year. BOA, TT 91 (from 926 H. / 1520), 33, 43, 94, 101. Published in facsimile in *91, 164, MAD 540 ve 173 Numaralı Hersek, Bosna ve İzvornik Livâları İcmâl Tahrîr Defterleri (926-939 / 1520-1533). II: Tıpkıbasım*.

332 In the *sancak tevcih defteri* TKSMA D.10057: *liva-i Niğbolu: benam-i Mehmed Beg veled-i Mihal (has – 603,000 akçe)*. Gökbilgin, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman Devri Başlarında Rumeli Eyaleti, Livaları, Şehir ve Kasabaları."

333 In the *sancak tevcih defteri* TKSMA D.10057: *liva-i Vidin: benam-i Yahşi Beg veled-i Mihal (has – 400,000 akçe)*. Gökbilgin.

334 In the *sancak tevcih defteri* TKSMA D.5246: *liva-i Niğbolu: benam-i Mehmed Beg veled-i Mihal (has – 603,000 akçe)* and *liva-i Vidin: benam-i Yahşi Beg veled-i Mihal (has – 400,000 akçe)*. See Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*, 104–16.

335 The sinoptic register of Niğbolu from 1530 lists the hasses of the then governor: *hassha-i fahrü'l-ümera el-kiram Mehmed Beg veled-i Ali Beg bin Mihal, mir-i liva-i Niğbolu*. BOA, TT 370 (1530), 512. Published in facsimile in *370 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm-İli Defteri (937/1530)*, vol. 2. Çirmen, Müsellemân-ı Çingâne, Müsellemân-ı Kızılca, Silistre, Kefe, Niğbolu ve Vidin Livâları, Çirmen ve Vize Müsellemleri, Yörük ve Tatar

again as the acting *sancakbegi* of Bosna, when he informs the captain of the Adriatic-coast fortress of Zengg/Senj, Hieronymus of Zara, that he has sent the letter of the king of Bohemia and Hungary Ferdinand I (r. 1526–1564) to the sultan's court.[336] It is in this very same year when he reportedly died while he occupied the post of a *sancakbegi* of Bosna and was replaced by Hüsrev Beg [337] (See Fig. 6). With his death the second generation of Mihaloğlu district-governors came to an end, only to be prolonged, however, by another generation of its decendants who continued to prosper in the provinces, extending their governing positions to new districts, all situated in the Ottoman Balkan territories.

This third period of provincial governorates held by the traceable family members continued for just 20 years and was dominated by only three individuals who hailed from the Plevne and Pınarhisar branches of the dynasty. Most certainly, this reduction must be attributed to the high mortality rate that the family suffered in the major military campaigns they took part in during the previous period, Çaldıran battle (1514) being a notable case in point. An additional factor, however, must have been the general prosperity of the landed estates which seems to have been in direct correlation to the prosperity of the family lines sparking from the respective domains. Hence, for example, in the third generation of district governors, between the mid-1540s and mid-1560s, I was not able to find a representative of the İhtiman branch but only one member of the initial İskender Beg's line (established in the region of Edirne and Pınarhisar) and two more members of the Plevne branch that sprang from Ali Beg's line.

From the collated data, it seems that the Plevne line of district-governors persisted through the respective sons of Mihaloğlu Hasan Beg/Pasha and Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, namely Süleyman Beg and Ali Beg. The first documentary evidence comes from 1540/41, when Mehmed Beg's son Ali Beg was recorded as the governor of Niğbolu, the *sancak* that his father administered most frequently, and where Ali Beg's brother İskender Beg and cousin Süleyman Beg held *zeamets* at the same time.[338] Next in chronological order we find the son of Yahşi Beg

Cemâatleri ile Voynuğan-ı Istabl-ı Âmire ve Kıbtiyân-ı Vilâyet-i Rûm-ili (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001).

[336] Ivić, "Neue cyrillische Urkunden aus den Wiener Archiven," 205–6.

[337] Around 1536 Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg died in Sarajevo (while Bosnian governor). His place was taken by Hüsrev Beg, while on Hüsrev Beg's place as a *sancakbegi* of Smederevo was installed the ex-Morean district-governor Yahyapaşaoğlu Mehmed. Zlatar, *Gazi Husrev-beg*, 52–53.

[338] In the detailed registration of the district of Niğbolu (BOA, TT 416) we find the hasses of the then *sancakbegi* Mihaloğlu Ali Beg in the following sub-districts: Niğbolu (comp. pp. 22–45), İvraca (comp. pp. 145–147), Lofça (comp. pp. 186–194), and Tırnovi (comp. pp. 279–282). The dirlik-holding of his brother İskender Beg was in the sub-districts of Niğbolu (comp. pp. 57–58) and İvraca (comp. pp. 152–153), while the *zeamet*-holding of his cousin Süleyman Beg (a son of Hasan Beg/Pasha), was also in the sub-district of Niğbolu (comp. pp. 51–55). Previously, in 1516 (BOA, TT 1007) we find Süleyman Beg as a *zeamet*-holder in the district of Semendire. See Miljković, "The Timar System in the Serbian Lands from 1450 to 1550: With a Special Survey on the Timar System in the Sanjak of Smederevo," 45. The *defter* of Niğbolu (BOA, TT 416) has no dating at the begginning,

(from the already established Pınarhisar line), Hızır Beg, when at the beginning of 1545 he was assigned the *sancakbeglik* of Segedin/Szeged.[339] At an unspecified date prior to 1550/1 he held the governorate of Ohri (mod. Ohrid, North Macedonia),[340] assuming the post of *sancakbegi* of Segedin for the second time most probably in late 1551 and holding it until the spring of 1552.[341] His cousin Ali Beg, on the other hand, was again the *sancakbegi* of Niğbolu during 1555/6, after which date I was not able to detect his governorates.[342] The late 1550s were dom-

which resulted in several hipothetical years for its compilation put forward by different researchers. According to Bistra Tsvetkova, who initially published the document, it was compiled between 1544 and 1561. See [Bistra Tsvetkova] Бистра Цветкова, ed., *Турски извори за българската история, Т. 3: Документи от XVI век [Turkish Sources for the Bulgarian History*, Vol. 3: *Documents from the 16th Century]*, Извори за българската история 16 (София: БАН, 1972), 454–455, 467–468. Vera Mutafčieva dated it to 1540. [Vera Mutafčieva] Вера Мутафчиева, "За ролята на вакъфа в градската икономика на Балканите под турска власт (XV – XVII век) [About the Role of the Waqf in the Urban Economy of the Balkans under Turkish Rule (15th-17th Centuries]," *Известия на Института за история* 10 (1962): 136. The year 1540/1 for the compilation of the register was put forward by Stefka Parveva. [Stefka Parveva] Стефка Първева, "Представители на мюсюлманската религиозна институция в града по българските земи през XVII век. [Representatives of the Muslim Religious Institution in the City in the Bulgarian Lands during the 17th Century]," in *Мюсюлманската култура по българските земи. Изследвания*, ed. Росица Градева and Светлана Иванова (София: Международен Център по Проблемите на Малцинствата и Културните Взаимодействия, 1998), 146, fn. 44. Indeed, a marginal note on f. 24a dates from the end of the Hijri year 947, i.e. the beginning of 1541, which makes it plausible to accept that the register was compiled shortly before that date, probably at the end of 1540 and the beginning of 1541.

[339] Hızır Beg was appointed as the district-governor of Szeged on January 27, 1545, succeeding Derviş Beg, who moved to Székesfehérvár (BOA, TSMA E. 12321, 78b). Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, *„Az ország ügye mindenek előtt való". A szultáni tanács Magyarországra vonatkozó rendeletei (1544–1545, 1552)* [*"Affairs of State Are Supreme." The Orders of the Ottoman Imperial Council Pertaining to Hungary (1544–1545, 1552*)] (Budapest: História, MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2005), 49–50. In a *ruznamçe* register from 1545 Mihaloğlu Hızır Beg, son of Yahşi Beg's previous occupation, prior becoming the *sancakbegi* of Szeged, was specified as being from among the Rumelian *zeamet*-holders, a *subaşı*. BOA, D.BRZ.d. 20614, p. 256, 258. Cf. Miklós Fóti, "Szeged 16. századi szandzsákbégjei [The Sancakbeyis of Szeged in the 16th Century]," *Aetas* 39, no. 4 (2023): 7–8. It is unclear until when Hızır Beg held the governorship of Szeged. In 1547 the district governor was already Yahya Beg, so most certainly Hızır must have left the position sometime prior to 1547. Fóti, 7.

[340] In an appointment register from 1550–1551 Hızır Beg appears as the newly appointed *sancakbegi* of Szeged, while his previous appointment was in the district of Ohri. Unfortunately, there is no specific dating of neither appointments. Feridun M. Emecen and İlhan Şahin, "Osmanlı Taşra Teşkilâtının Kaynaklarından 957–958 (1550–1551) Tarihli Sancak Tevcih Defteri I," *Belgeler* 19, no. 23 (1999): 106.

[341] Emecen and Şahin, 106. In view of the actions of Hızır Beg, when he played a crucial defensive role during the 1552 siege of Szeged led by Tót Mihály, it could be supposed that he held the governorship until that year, but was dismissed after the Hungarian attack, as on March 4, 1552 Mustafa Beg was appointed as the new *sancakbegi* of Szeged. During the siege Hızır Beg barely managed to escape into the castle. Additionally, there was a significant dispute between Hızır Beg and Kasım Beg, the former Pasha of Buda, concerning authority over the region: Hızır was trying to make the Makó inhabitants to fulfill their tax obligations to Szeged, while Kasım Beg claimed that Hızır's jurisdiction did not extend beyond the Tisza's opposite bank. This jurisdictional conflict further complicated the defense efforts during the siege. Miklós Fóti supposes that Hızır Beg's inability to successfully defend Szeged and the subsequent confusion over regional control led to his removal from his position shortly after the siege, which put an end of his tenure as the Szeged *sancakbegi*. Fóti, "Szeged 16. századi szandzsákbégjei [The Sancakbeyis of Szeged in the 16th Century]," 8–9.

[342] Ali Beg's *hass*es are recorded in the detailed registration of the *sancak* of Niğbolu (BOA, TT 382). According to Machiel Kiel the register dates from 1550. See Machiel Kiel, "Hrăzgrad-Hezargrad-Razgrad: The Vicissitudes of a Turkish Town in Bulgaria (Historical, Demographical, Economic and Art Historical Notes)," *Turcica* 21–23 (1991): 539; Machiel Kiel, "Urban Development in Bulgaria in the Turkish Period: The Place of Turkish Architecture in the Process," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4, no. 2 (1989): 79–129. Rumen Kovachev and

inated by the governorships of just two Mihaloğlu members, Yahşibeg-oğlu Hızır Beg and Hasanpasha-oğlu Süleyman Beg. At an uncertain date prior to mid-1556 Hızır Beg is said to have governed the district of Çirmen,[343] while at the beginning of June 1556 he was appointed *sancakbegi* of Prizren (in mod. Kosovo).[344] It remains unclear for how long he held that post and whether he assumed another governorate until prior mid-1559, when he is recorded as the former governor of Prizren.[345] His last governorate seems to have been in the district of Çirmen, as specified by several sultanic orders from the spring of 1560, during which tenure he lost his life in the course of the same year.[346] It is in 1557 that we find the former *zeamet*-holder of Niğbolu sub-district, Süleyman Beg, as a district-governor in his own right, when he administered the sancak of Vılçitrın,[347] becoming the second known family member after his uncle Mehmed Beg to govern the same district at the beginning of his governmental career. In the Fall of 1559 Süleyman Beg is again attested as the governor of Vılçitrın and as the acting head of the Mihallu wing of the *akıncı* corps,[348] a post and military leadership, which became almost hereditary to his sons, who remained the only ones to continue the Mihaloğlu line of governors

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Evgeniy Radushev date the same document to 1555/6. [Rumen Kovachev and Evgeniy Radushev] Румен Ковачев and Евгений Радушев, *Опис на регистри от Истанбулския османски архив към Генералната Дирекция на Държавните Архиви на Република Турция [Inventory of Registers from the Istanbul Ottoman Archives of the General Directorate of State Archives of the Republic of Turkey]* (София: Народна Библиотека "Св. св. Кирил и Методий," 1996), 19.

[343] A sultanic order from June 4, 1556 stipulates that the former governor of Çirmen Mihaloğlu Hızır Beg is to assume the governorate of Prizren. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d.2, order no. 870.

[344] Ibidem. His vacant *zeamet* in Çirmen was taken over by Mehmed Beg, the former vizier Pir Mehmed Paşa's son. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 2, order no. 901.

[345] Two sultanic orders sent to Mihaloğlu Hızır Beg (one from August 17, 1559 and the other from September 9, 1559) specify him as the former governor of Prizren, but do not mention his current gubernatorial seat. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 3, order no. 193 and BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 3, order no. 277.

[346] On May 13, 1560 an order was sent to the Çirmen district-governor Mihaloğlu Hızır Beg, who ought to send a criminal from his district to İstanbul. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 3, order no. 1070. In the same year, on May 24, 1560 Hızır Beg was instructed to join the troops of the *beg* of Silistre owing to the movement of enemy troops from Özi and Azak. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 3, order no. 1111. Most certainly during the clashes Hızır Beg died, as at the beginning of the next year, on January 1, 1561, his post of Çirmen governor was taken by the former *sancakbegi* of Vidin, Ahmed Beg. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 4, order no. 1815. As an aftermath of Hızır Beg's death, on April 25, 1561, his son Derviş Beg received a *zeamet*. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 4, order no. 2168.

[347] BOA, Kamil Kepeci Defterleri (KK.d) 216/a, 32. Rahman Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," *Gazi Akademik Bakış Dergisi (GABD)* 16, no. 31 (2022): 46. Mihaloğlu (Koca) Süleyman Beg hailed from the Plevne branch of the family. He was the son Hasan Beg/Pasha, himself the second oldest son of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, the founder of the pious endowment in Plevne. In the family ancestral residence in Plevne Süleyman Beg erected one of the biggest mosques in 1561/2 as recorded in the preserved dedicatory inscription. Kiprovska, "Shaping the Ottoman Borderland: The Architectural Patronage of the Frontier Lords from the Mihaloğlu Family," 205.

[348] An information was sent to the Vılçitrın governor Süleyman Beg on October, 10, 1559 regarding the assignment of Mustafa Beg as the clerk responsible for the compilation of the *akıncı* register. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 3, order no. 399. From another sultanic order from December 2, 1559 we learn that Süleyman Beg was the then district-governor of Vılçitrın and the active *akıncı begi* of the Mihallu wing of the *akıncı* corps at the same time. BOA, A.DVNSMHM. d. 3, order no. 520, published in *3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (966–968/1558–1560)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1993), 230.

in the following period until the close of the sixteenth century. Süleyman Beg's last provincial office is attested in the documentary sources during 1565 as the governor of Çirmen,[349] after which date we lose track of his known governorates and of any other member from the third generation of Mihaloğlu provincial governors (See Fig. 7).

[349] On Mart 19, 1565 Süleyman Beg became *sancakbegi* of Çirmen. *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri (972/1564–1565)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1995), 42 (order no 879); Ayşe Kayapınar and Emine Erdoğan Özünlü, *Mihaloğulları'na Ait 1586 Tarihli Akıncı Defteri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2015), 17; Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," 46. He was at the same time the leader of the left wing Mihallu *akıncı* corps. Probably as the acting *sancakbegi* of Çirmen, when, according to another order, the *akıncı* troops ought to be summoned under his command. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 6, order no. 1051.

second generation district-governors (early 1500s–1540s)												
Ali Beg's line (Plevne)								**Mahmud Beg's line (İhtiman)**		**İskender Beg's line (Edirne-Pınarhisar)**		
Mustafa Beg, v. Ali Beg		**Hasan Beg/Pasha, v. Ali Beg**		**Mehmed Beg, v. Ali Beg**				**Kasım Beg**		**Yahşi Beg, v. İskender Beg**		**Mahmud Beg, v. İskender Beg**
Hersek	1504	***Hersek***	1504 1511–1512 (multiple times)	***Vılçitrın***	sometime in the period 1505–1511			***Hersek***	1512	***Tarsus***	1521/2	***Çirmen*** 1521/2
Tırhala	1514	***Vidin***	1504 1508	***Vidin***	1515			***Hums***	1521/2	***Vidin***	1522 1526 1527	
		Gelibolu	1512	***Niğbolu***	1521/2 1526 1527 1530			***Niğbolu***	1522	***Aintab***	sometime in the period 1522–1541	
				Hersek	1523–1526							
				Bosna	1536							

Fig. 6: Mihaloğlu district-governors from the early 1500s to the 1540s

third generation district-governors (1540s–1560s)					
Ali Beg's line (Plevne)				**İskender Beg's line (Edirne-Pınarhisar)**	
Süleyman Beg, v. Hasan Beg/Pasha		**Ali Beg, v. Mehmed Beg**		**Hızır Beg, v. Yahşi Beg**	
Vılçitrın	1557 1559	***Niğbolu***	1540/41 1555/6	***Segedin***	1545 1551–1552
Çirmen	1565			***Ohri***	1550/1
				Çirmen	prior to 1556 1560
				Prizren	1556 prior to 1559

Fig. 7: Mihaloğlu district-governors from the 1540s to the 1560s

The last phase of traceable gubernatorial seats in the hands of known Mihaloğlu family members could be discerned for the period stretching from the second half of the 1560s to the first half of the 1590s. It was marked by the dominance of four sons of Süleyman Beg: Hasan, Mustafa, Hızır, and Ali. Judging by their identifiable career paths, it could be said that the four brothers kept the governorate of Vılçitrın almost uninterruptedly for the whole period with only several other *sancakbeglik* positions in other Balkan districts, which were already held by preceding family members. The first among the four brothers to assume the governorate of Vılçitrın was Hasan Beg who must have remained in that post for almost five years, from late 1568 to early 1573, during the spring of which he died, most probably during the clashes with the Moldavian voivode John the Terrible with whom other family members, as we saw above, fought on multiple occasions during 1573 and 1574.[350] While a *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın, Hasan Beg also supervised the compilation of the *akıncı defter* of all Rumelian raiders of the right wing (*canib-i yemin*, lit. the right-hand side), who were under the command of the Mihaloğlu family, and known therefore, as the Mihallu.[351] Due to his death during the spring of 1573, the registration remained incomplete and had to be carried on by his brother and successor Hızır Beg, who was appointed as *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın on April 21, 1573.[352] Another brother of

[350] From a provincial appointment register covering the years 1548–1574 (BOA, MAD 563) it becomes evident that Hasan Beg was in office at least from November 26, 1568 to February 11, 1570. Pervin Sevinç, "955–982/1548–1574 Tarihli Osmanlı Beylerbeyi ve Sancakbeyleri Tevcih Defteri (563 nr.)" (Unpublished MA Thesis, İstanbul, Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 1994), 10. Sultanic orders from the period 1571–1573 attest that he was still a *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın in that period. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 14, order no. 900; BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 14, order no. 1344; BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 15, order nos. 62, 140, 1915, 2081, 2165; BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 16, order no. 570; Cf. Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," 47. Apparently, he died sometime prior April 17, 1573 when his brother Mustafa, the *sancakbegi* of Niğbolu at that time, brought the news of his passing away. Şahin, 48. While a *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın, Hasan Beg also supervised the compilation of the *akıncı defteri*. Due to his death during the spring of 1573, the registration remained incomplete and had to be carried out by his brother and successor Hızır Beg. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 21, order no. 700. Cf. Şahin, 51.

[351] Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," 48. For the territorial spread of the Mihallu raiders according to two *akıncı* registers from the 1470s and 1580s, see Mariya Kiprovska, "The Military Organization of the *Akıncı*s in Ottoman Rumelia" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Ankara, Bilkent University, 2004); Kayapınar and Erdoğan Özünlü, *Mihaloğulları'na Ait 1586 Tarihli Akıncı Defteri*; Emine Erdoğan Özünlü, "Akıncı Ocağına Dair Önemli Bir Kaynak: 625 Numaralı Akıncı Defteri Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler," *Belleten* 79 (2015): 473–500; Emine Erdoğan Özünlü and Ayşe Kayapınar, *1472 ve 1560 Tarihli Akıncı Defterleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2017). While the earlier, partially preserved register encompassed a small territory in Thrace, the later one extended to cover the Ottoman districts of Niğbolu, Silistre, Kırkkilise, Çirmen, Paşa, Köstendil, Vidin, and Üsküb.

[352] On his appointment see Sevinç, "955-982/1548-1574 Tarihli Osmanlı Beylerbeyi ve Sancakbeyleri Tevcih Defteri (563 nr.)," 10. The completion of the unfinished *akıncı* registration is mentioned in BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 21, order no. 700. Cf. Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," 51. On May 13, 1574 the Vılçitrın governor and *akıncı begi* Hızır Beg received further details from the sultanic chancery how to proceed with the raiders' registration, specifying the *dirlik* awards of their officers, the *tovica*s. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 24, order no. 507. There is a contradicting information in the sources regarding Hızır Beg's exact whereabouts during the period between his appointment in Vılçitrın and his possible governorate of Prizren in the course of 1574. Some sources suggest that Hızır Beg remained governor of

Hızır Beg and the late Hasan Beg, namely Mustafa Beg, was at the time of the latter's death in the spring of 1573 the acting *sancakbegi* of Niğbolu.[353] In June 1573 Mustafa Beg was already the governor of Vidin.[354] It is in this latter capacity that he took part in the major campaign of 1574 against the Moldavian voivode John the Terrible.[355] His two brothers, Hızır Beg (the then governor of Vılçitrın) and Ali (still young and under Hızır Beg's command but to assume the governorship of Vılçitrın later on) also participated in the campaign.[356]

Unlike the tragic Çaldıran battle, however, the battle of Cahul proved very rewarding for the family members and their retinue,[357] as they continued to thrive in the provinces. Shortly after the battle, on October 3, 1574 Hızır Beg was recorded as the governor of Prizren, when his son Kasım was given a *zeamet*.[358] The next reference I was able to find for Hızır Beg suggests that prior to January 1577, probably before his brother Mustafa Beg assumed this post in the late 1576, he was the acting governor of Vılçitrın.[359] A sultanic order from January 1, 1577 indicated him again as the new governor of Prizren, but it further specified that he had to stay in Vılçitrın until the inspection of his previous misdoings was over.[360] It remains uncertain when he went to Prizren, but an order from April 23, 1579 mentions Hızır Beg already as the acting governor of the district, making it clear that he assumed his appointment from several years ago.[361] The next mention of Hızır Beg comes in August 9, 1581. Then, he is specified as the former *sancakbegi* of Prizren, but from the record it does not become clear until when he was occupying this post. After this date we lose track of Hızır Beg. Mustafa Beg, on the other hand—although for the time being it remains unknown whether (and for how long) he occupied his previously held district of Vidin after the 1574 compaign—comes to the fore again at the end of 1576 as the new governor of Vılçitrın, a tenure that lasted for almost 13 years until the

Vılçitrın only until mid-1574, when he was transferred to the governorship of Prizren, where he was ordered to stay until an inspection, headed by the current governor of Vılçitrın was over. The inspection was to investigate the abuses inflicted by Hızır Beg and his men in the place of his previous appointment, i.e. Vılçitrın, for which the people of Vılçitrın filed a complaint. Şahin, 48–49. Given the fact that Hızır Beg participated in the Moldavian campaign from June 1574 as the *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın, it is likely that he did not go to Prizren. For his participation in the battle of Cahul see below. On the other hand, the proccimity of the two districts also does not exclude his frequent move between the two *sancak*s.

[353] As the governor of Niğbolu Mustafa Beg brought the news of Hasan Beg's passing away. Şahin, 48.

[354] BOA, A.NŞT 1/56. Cf. the previous section of the present chapter.

[355] BOA, A.NŞT 1/31 and the previous section of the present chapter.

[356] BOA, A.NŞT 1/64 and the previous section of the present chapter.

[357] See the previous section of the present chapter.

[358] BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 25, order no. 2515.

[359] BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 29, order no. 82.

[360] Ibidem.

[361] BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 37 , order no. 1572.

Fall of 1589.[362] Mustafa Beg, as his brothers and predecessors, was also charged with the registration of all *akıncı* forces of the Mihallu wing.[363] After this appointment, he also disappears from the records. The first mention of a provincial governance appointmen of the youngest brother of Hasan, Mustafa, and Hızır, namely Ali Beg, comes in the late-1590 in his capacity of the district-governor of Vize.[364] In mid-1593 Ali Beg was already the *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın and the head of the *akıncı* troops.[365] With this last mention, the fourth generation of successful district-governors of traceable Mihaloğlu lineage until the close of the sixteenth century came to an end (See Fig. 8).

fourth generation district-governors (1560s–1590s)							
Ali Beg's line (Plevne)							
Hasan Beg, v. Süleyman Beg		**Mustafa Beg, v. Süleyman Beg**		**Hızır Beg, v. Süleyman Beg (?)**		**Ali Beg , v. Süleyman Beg (?)**	
Vılçitrın	1568–1573	***Niğbolu***	1573 (1st half)	***Vılçitrın***	1573–1574 1576	***Vize***	1590
		Vidin	1573 (2nd half) mid-1574	***Prizren***	late-1574 1577 1579 prior to 1581	***Vılçitrın***	1593
		Vılçitrın	1576–1589				

Fig. 8: Mihaloğlu district-governors from the 1560s to the 1590s

Undoubtedly, the presented list of district governors of verified Mihaloğlu descent could be enriched with even more representatives of the dynasty, whom I was unable to trace partially due to the absence of concrete evidence for the descent of the Ottoman district governors (since they are most often referred to in sources only by their proper names). More importantly, however, the vast amount of data that needs to be processed to properly identify the respective provincial governors presents a significant challenge, further complicated by the lack of a comprehensive prosopographical study of the Ottoman provincial elite. Yet, despite the limitations

[362] A sultanic order from December 20, 1576 specifies Mustafa Beg as the new governor of Vılçitrın. His governorship in Vılçitrın lasted for almost 13 years until November 28, 1589. Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," 49–50.

[363] Şahin, 52. The preserved defter of 1586 must have been his doing. See the published registration of 1586 in Kayapınar and Erdoğan Özünlü, *Mihaloğulları'na Ait 1586 Tarihli Akıncı Defteri*.

[364] A sultanic letter was sent on November 19, 1590 to Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, when he was the appointed *sancakbegi* of Vize. However, because he never went in person to his district but was residing instead in his private lands in Plevne, he was warned that he will receive a fine if he does not relocate to Vize. BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d. 67, order no. 130.

[365] An order from June 28, 1593 specifies the appointment of the *akıncı begi* Ali Beg as the *sancakbegi* of Vılçitrın. Şahin, "Vılçıtrın Sancağı'nda Beylik Yapmış Mihaloğlu Akıncıları ve Faaliyetleri," 51. Although his descent is not specifically referred to, it is plausible to suggest that he was one of the two younger brothers of Mustafa Beg named Ali, who participated under the lead of their older brother in the 1574 Moldavian campaign and who were rewarded with fiefs for their companionship. BOA, A.NŞT 1/64.

of the presented results, they provide a firm basis for future research. Knowing, for example, that family members held gubernatorial positions in identified border districts stretching from the Middle and Lower Danube, the Western Balkans, and Thrace to South-Central and Eastern Anatolia, and Syria, provides a solid foundation for further and more detailed investigation of these districts' social composition. This would involve searching for family members and their household dependents embedded in the provincial grid of socio-economic and military relationships (such as *timar*, *zeamet*, *çiftlik*, and *mülk* holders, as well as *mukataa* managers and *vakıf* endowers).

Moreover, the results not only attest to the wide territorial spread of the dynasty's provincial governorates but also convincingly demonstrate that the highly mobile Ottoman provincial elites, at least concerning the Mihaloğlu dynasty, should not be studied from a confined local perspective. Such a narrow scope severely distorts the historical narrative, which presently reduces these provincial Ottoman powerholders to actors with only restricted regional power, subsumed by the almighty Ottoman sultanic authority on whom they were solely dependent. As I have endeavored to demonstrate, social relations in the provinces governed by the Mihaloğlu dynasty were deeply influenced by the family's clientelistic household networks. These networks, which were continually expanding, played a significant role in shaping the processes of social mobility within the provinces. Furthermore, as evidenced by the few cases discussed, these networks were closely connected to other provincial and central (including sultanic) elites' household networks, which borrowed adept individuals from fellow households. It remains a desideratum for further research to unravel this complicated matrix of inter-elite relationships. However, even the currently available scattered evidence suggests that these networks were quite porous and, to some extent, driven by a collective agenda to sustain the durability and high status of the respective elites, motivated by common economic, political, and military interests at a given time and under particular circumstances.

Naturally, at their pinnacle, these networks were bolstered by intricate kinship ties both within and beyond the Ottoman realms, positioning household heads as pivotal figures in both domestic and international arenas. As observed in the previous chapter, the matrimonial bond between the Mihaloğlu and the Craiovescu families from the second half of the fifteenth century dominated Ottoman-Wallachian political, military, and diplomatic relations for more than half a century, and possibly longer. Such matrimonial alliances were likely used as strategic devices in relations with other contemporary political entities neighboring the Ottoman frontier districts. Such alliances provided the Mihaloğlu dynasty members, who administered these border

districts, with firmer grounds to interfere in the incessant political struggles within these political entities, installing suitable pretenders, and ultimately leading to favorable outcomes for the Mihaloğlus', and by extension, the Ottoman dynasty's control over these territories. The subsequent administration of former Karamanid, Dulkadirid, and Mamluk territories by Mihaloğlu family members points in this direction. However, the prevailing statist historiographical view, which privileges the Ottoman and other ruling dynasties as the leading actors while neglecting the role of other stakeholders, makes it difficult to assess whether such ties existed between the currently sidelined and therefore silenced local elites.[366]

This same statist approach prevails in studies of intermarriage relations within the Ottoman socio-political landscape. We are more familiar with the Ottoman dynasty's political matrimonies with indigenous political leaders and the "integration" of some Ottoman grandees into the royal family through marriage to Ottoman princesses. These political marriages are commonly argued to be clear signs of the growing dependence of the elites on the benevolence of the Ottoman sultans and a well-calculated device used by the sultanic dynasty to regulate social relations in the empire by inaugurating a hierarchical dependency based on the so-formed political slavery, although an assessment in the opposite direction is equally possible.[367] The intermarriages between provincial power holders, hence, remain shrouded in mystery, which further strengthens the view of the growing absolutism of the Ottoman dynasty.[368] Several documented cases of inter-elite matrimonies between members of the Mihaloğlu family and other

[366] For the Ottoman interference in Karamanid succession politics in the 1460s see Sara Nur Yıldız, "Razing Gevele and Fortifying Konya: The Beginning of the Ottoman Conquest of the Karamanid Principality in South-Central Anatolia, 1468," in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. Andrew Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 307–29. For Ottoman-Dulkadirid relations see Yinanç, *Dulkadir Beyliği*. For the intricacies of the Ottoman-Mamluk relations and diplomatic encounters see Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–1491*; Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World*.

[367] M. Çağatay Uluçay, "Bayezid II. in Ailesi," *Tarih Dergisi* 10, no. 14 (1959): 104–24; M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992); Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*. Juliette Dumas characterized the increased frequency of marriages between sultanic daughters and Ottoman dignitaries (*kul*) starting from the second half of the 15th century, particularly under the reign of Bayezid II, as a "matrimonial revolution." She suggests that this practice was a strategic tool used by the sultans to establish and reinforce an ideological demarcation strategy aimed at distancing the ruling family from all other powerful families, both within and outside the Ottoman realm (including the powerful frontier lords' families). Juliette Dumas, *Au coeur du harem. Les princesses ottomanes à l'aune du pouvoir (XVe-XVIIIe s.)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2022), chap. 2: "Mariages et amours des princesses," 81–198. On the concept of "political slavery" see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, chap. 3: "The Court Strikes Back: The Making of Ottoman Absolutism," 79–114. Most frequently, for the period of the 15th and 16th centuries current historiography accentuates on the prominence of the Ottoman ruling elite from a *devşirme* (*kul*) origin to emphasize this dependence. See, for example the synthesis of Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, chap. 1: "Imperial Territory, Social Hierarchy, and Identity," 27–46.

[368] The marriage alliances of Ottoman provincial elites, while briefly addressed in studies on certain prominent figures, have yet to receive substantial historiographical attention. Jane Hathaway has taken a significant step towards a more thorough exploration of these matrimonial networks, particularly in her work on the Egyptian

provincial stakeholders, however, attest to the fact that this seemingly absolutist portrayal of the Ottoman dynasty's supremacy in regulating social relations is too simplistic. It obfuscates a far more sophisticated set of social interactions and the actual workings of the Ottoman socio-political structure and governance practices as a whole.

As already discussed in the previous chapters, the Danubian lord of the marches, Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, emerged as a pivotal figure during the reign of Mehmed II and further solidified his authority during the time of Bayezid II. He played a significant role not only in military conquests but also in the diplomatic arena, acting as a mediator during the peace negotiations with Matthias Corvinus, which were closely linked to Cem Sultan's European sojourn. As documented by several sources, he also intervened in the succession struggles in neighboring Wallachia, positioning himself as a key player in the regional power balance. His political brockerage, it seems, was successfully implemented not only by the sword but also by forging an allience with the boyar Craiovescu family with whom he came into natural contact due to the proximity of their domains on the two sides of the Danube. This political alliance was sealed with a dynastic marriage between the two clans. Based on Suzi Çelebi's epic poem—which describes in detail the love story between Ali Beg and Meryem, the daughter of an unnamed Wallachian ban—and a letter from Ali Beg's son Mehmed Beg to Bayezid II (dated 1512),[369] where he refers to himself as a relative of Parvul-oğlu (implying Neagoe Craiovescu, known as Neagoe Basarab after his enthronement) while requesting Neagoe's investiture to the voivodship of Wallachia, Cristina Feneşan has suggested that Ali Beg must have married the daughter of the then ban of Strehaia, jupan Neagoe.[370] This kinship alliance, as I proposed in the previous

military households of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These intermarriages among leading local families served not only to preserve wealth but also played a crucial role in solidifying clientelistic relationships between clients and their patrons. Furthermore, they were instrumental in regional factional politics, acting as a means to maintain the balance of power at the provincial level, and served as a natural method for forming political alliances outside the imperial court. Jane Hathaway, "Marriage Alliances among the Military Households of Ottoman Egypt," *Annales Islamologiques* 29 (1995): 133–49; Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt*, 116–17; Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, History of the Near East (Harlow, England; New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 100–101. For a less analytically solid, yet provincially oriented, view on the intermarriages between provincial elites that assured reproduction and preservation of the elite, see Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "The Role of Women in the Ottoman Empire: How the *Khassa* Reproduces the *Khassa* — Elite Reproduction in Sixteenth Century Ottoman Jerusalem," in *Festschrift Hans Georg Majer: Frauen, Bilder Und Gelehrte – Studien Zu Gesellschaft Und Künsten Im Osmanischen Reich / Arts, Women and Scholars – Studies in Ottoman Society and Culture*, ed. Sabine Prätor and Christoph K. Neumann, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Simurg, 2002), 185–93.

[369] BOA, TSMA, e. 1010/79 [former shelf mark: TSMA, E. 11 876]. Published by Mehmet, "Două documente turceşti despre Neagoe Basarab [Two Turkish Documents about Neagoe Basarab]."

[370] Feneşan, "Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg et la principauté de Valachie (1508-1532)," 143–45; Cristina Feneşan, *Convertire la Islam în spaţiul carpato-dunărean: (secolele XV-XIX)* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2020), 243–248. She also supposed that Neagoe's daughter's and Ali Beg's ex-Christian wife's adopted Muslim name must have been Selimşah Hatun, as she appears in an inheritance document, concerning the familial properties around Harmankaya in Anatolia. This assumption, however, must be ruled out, as the document, which was drawn in

chapter, gave the prerogative to Ali Beg's descendants, mainly his son Mehmed Beg, to frequently interfere in the affairs of Wallachia and depose violently the oponents of his kindered family during much of the first half of the sixteenth century.

Some historians have further hypothesized that Ali Beg established kinship ties with the Hungarian court when he married King Mathias Corvinus's daughter, whom he allegedly took captive during his early Transylvanian raid, when he captured Michael Szilágyi too.[371] This, however, remains unconfirmed by any source that I am aware of. Others believed that he was related to the royal house of Savoy and of France, but based on the sources cited, the latter hypothesis must also be discarded.[372]

An interesting observation, however, comes from a contemporary report of the Milanese ambassador to Venice Taddeo Vimercati. While relating the successful raid of ban Pál Kinizsi in early 1494 south of the Danube, which targeted the posessions of Ali Beg in the district of Semendire, Vimercati reported that Sultan Bayezid was particularly enraged by Kinizsi's raid, as one of his daughters had narrowly escaped capture in one of the attacked fortifications.[373] Coupled with the observation of the Hungarian court historian Antonio Bonfini, who recorded that one of the fortifications was sheltering Ali Beg's family, including his wife and children,[374] the remark of Vimercati seems to be referring to one of the wives of Ali Beg. If my interpretation is correct, that would mean that Ali Beg was in matrimonial union with the ruling Ottoman dynasty, i.e. with a daughter of Bayezid II, and would partially explain his confidential link with that particular sultan, who seems to have promoted Ali Beg and his family as pivotal actors and decision-makers in the core provinces, as well as on the battlefield, when members of the

1573, clearly refers to another Ali who was the grandson of the said Ali Beg (through his son Mehmed Beg), and hence to the grandson Ali's wife Mahitab Hatun and his concubine Selimşah Hatun. This erroneous assumption was initially made by Yaşar Gökçek and was later on reiterated by Tayyib Gökbilgin. Gökçek, "Köse Mihal Oğulları," 26; Gökbilgin, "Mihaloğulları," 288. For details about the inheritance line see the following chapter.

[371] This was first assumed by the nineteenth-century descendent of the family, who made the first attempt to write a comprehensive history of the Mihaloğulları. Mehmed Nüzhet Paşa, *Ahvâl-i Gazi Mihal*, 61.

[372] This assumption was put forward by Gökbilgin, who referred to the sixteenth-century text of the humanist Paolo Giovio (1483–1552). Gökbilgin, "Mihaloğulları," 288. In this part of his text, however, Giovio, mentions the Mihaloğlu leadership of the *akıncı* troops, indicating no specific personal name, but clearly referring to the contemporaneous reign of Süleyman I, when the raiders have devastatingly plundered the regions around Vienna and Linz, in defiance with the peace concluded with Süleyman. He then states that the captain of the *akıncı*s in these times was a Mihaloglu, a man of Turkish blood and with great courage and high status, who, by way of his wife, makes himself a relative of the Duke of Savoy and the King of France. See Paolo Giovio, "Commentario de le cose de Turchi : a Carlo Quinto Imperadore Agusto di Paulo Iovio Vescovo di Nocera" (Venice, 1541), 63–64, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München, https://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/details:bsb10208816. In his short encyclopedia article Franz Babinger cites Giovio's remark coorrectly. Franz Babinger, "Mīkhāl-Oghlu," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam (Second Edition)* (Leiden; New York, 1993).

[373] Quated after Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman-Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*, 295 (fn. 95).

[374] Antonius de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades, Tomus IV., Pars I. (Decades IV. et Dimidia V.)*, 245–47.

family were virtually involved in every major campaign to the East and to the West, while also endorsing the acquisition of large portions of landed estates throughout the empire.[375]

Moreover, it appears that matrimony was often used by the Mihaloğlu family as a successful device to forge further alliances with other powerful political households of the time. A register of gifts (*inamat defteri*), covering the years 1503–1527, is a valuable source that contains multiple references to kinship bonds of Ottoman statesmen of the time, who received presents from the court. It is all the more valuable because it keeps special record of the sultanic daughters (specified as *duhter-i hazret hullide mülkühu*), married to the households of these statesmen, and their offspring, and has therefore been explored by historians to trace the representatives of the Ottoman elite who were hence integrated into the wider sultanic family by becoming the ruler's sons-in-laws.[376] The source, still, makes further notice of the wives of prominent individuals, who were not princesses, yet, because of their elite status, also received appropriate courtly presents. It is precisely from this register of gifts that we aquire the information that Ali Beg's brother, İskender Beg, who was equally favored by Bayezid II, was married to certain Nefise Hatun, a relative (*hiş*) of Mahmud Pasha, who received a bundle of velvet textiles in 1501.[377] While not much more information could be gathered from this record, it is plausible to suggest that the said Nefise Hatun—herself a daughter of the Anatolian governor-general of Murad II, Timurtaşoğlu Oruç Pasha—was indeed a kin to Mehmed II's grand vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1456–1466; 1472–1474). Mahmud Pasha was married to one of the daughters born from Nefise Hatun's marriage to his predecessor on the grand vizieral seat Zaganos Pasha (1453–1456).[378] It is most certainly after the death of her husband that Nefise Hatun was wedded for the second time to Mihaloğlu İskender Beg. Although I have no further information concerning the marriage of İskender Beg and Nefise Hatun, nor of their possible offspring, this reference is still indicative of the inter-elite relationships of the Mihaloğlu family, which, in this specific case, bonded itself with the prominent families of the ruling elites from the previous generation. The record is also interesting in another way. Since it specifies Nefise Hatun as a relative of Mahmud Pasha, it might well indicate the intricate link between these

[375] See the following Chapter.
[376] Uluçay, "Bayezid II. in Ailesi"; Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*.
[377] Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909–933/1503–1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 1460. This specific entry apparently dates to July 1501.
[378] On Mahmud Pasha's marriages and children see Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 101–6. On Zağanos Pasha's wife Nefise Hatun and her endowment deed from 1492 see Ali Himmet Berki, "İslam'da Vakıf, Zağanus Paşa ve Zevcesi Nefise Hatun Vakfiyeleri," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, no. 4 (1958): 19–38.

specific families, as their common military endeavors during the reign of Mehmed II undoubtedly point at.[379]

The interfamilial bonds between the elites were further forged by the marriages Ali Beg arranged for his own sons. Hence, we know that his second eldest son Hasan Beg, who rose to the posts of Anatolian and Rumelian *beglerbegi* (1504–1505 and 1505–1512 respectively) during the reign of Bayezid II, was married to Yahya Pasha's daughter Hani Hatun. As a dowry, Hasan Beg gifted his wife two villages in the region of Plevne, which he previously received in full possession from his father.[380] Considering the overlapping, and neighboring, territorial spheres of influence of these two houses, Yahyapasha-oğlus on the Middle (particularly in Semendire) and Lower Danube (Vidin and Niğbolu) and Bosna, and Mihaloğlus along the Danube (Semendire, Vidin and Niğbolu) and Bosna at the same time, as well as the simultaneously rising careers of their members both in the provinces (as district-governors) and in the central administration (as governor-generals and viziers), this matrimonial alliance comes as a no surprise.[381] One is, hence, tempted to assume that these dynastic houses' close alliance brought these regions under their firm and almost uninterrupted governance, not only securing the endurance and augmenting the prominence of the respective dynasty, but the establishment of a collective body of provincial and courtly elite as well. The other matrimonial alliences of the family certainly point in this direction.

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[379] For the participation of the two Mihaloğlu brothers, Ali and İskender Beg, in campaings lounched alongside Mahmud Pasha, see Tansel, *Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Siyasî ve Askerî Faaliyeti*; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*.

[380]BOA, TT 382, 733, 743; BOA, TT 713, 216. Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları (XV.–XVI. Yüzyıl)," 175. For further details see the next chapter.

[381] For Yahya Pasha's career see Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 336–345. For his sons' and other progeny's provincial posts and military careers see Pál Fodor, "Wolf on the Border: Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey (?-1527). Expansion and Provincial Elite in the European Confines of the Ottoman Empire in the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Şerefe. Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Pál Fodor, Nándor E. Kovács, and Benedek Péri (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2019), 57–87; Claudia Römer and Nicolas Vatin, "The Lion That Was Only a Cat: Some Notes on the Last Years and the Death of Arslan Pasha, Bey of Semendire and Beylerbeyi of Buda," in *Şerefe. Studies in Honour of Prof. Géza Dávid on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Pál Fodor, Nándor E. Kovács, and Benedek Péri (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2019), 159–82. For Mihaloğlu Hasan Pasha's career during the reign of Bayezid II (although not identified as a Mihaloğlu), see Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 205–212. For the subsequent district-governorates of the two families in Bosna during the fifteenth century see Truhelka, "Tursko-slovjenski spomenici dubrovačke arhive. II: Razjašnjenja (4. Hercegovački krajišnici; 5. Posljednja bosanska kraljica; 6. Ahmed paša Hercegović; 7. Hodatci nekim našim dokumentima; 8. Epilog). III: Popis imena i nazivlja [Turco-Slavic documents from the Dubrovnik Archive. II]," 327–49. More broadly, on the governance of several clans in the Central and Western Balkans, among whom Yahyapasha-oğlus and Mihaloğlus, see Zlatar, "O nekim musulmanskim feudalnim porodicama u Bosni u XV i XVI stoljeću [About Some Muslim Feudal Families in Bosnia in the 15th and 16th Centuries]." Also [Olga Zirojević] and Олга Зиројевић, *Турско војно уређење у Србији (1459–1683)* [*Turkish Military Organization in Serbia (1459–1683)*] (Београд: Историјски институт, 1974), 261–67, with a list of Ottoman district-governors in the Central and Western Balkans and their estimated tenures.

Not only was Hasan Beg/Pasha married to Yahya Beg/Pasha's daughter but in turn he gave his own daughter in matrimony to another statesman. From the above-mentioned register of gifts it becomes apparent that an unnamed female offspring of Hasan Pasha was married to the then governor of Vize Ahmed Beg, who was the son of Sinan Pasha, himself a long-time statesman in the reign of Bayezid II.[382] She received lavish gifts on multiple occasions in the period of her father's tenure as a Rumelian *beglerbegi* (1505–1512).[383] Yet again, just consulting the known career paths of (Mihaloğlu) Hasan Pasha and Sinan Pasha, whose political alliances were sealed with kinship ties through a dynastic marriage, as governor generals of Anatolia and Rumelia, and coupling them with these of Yahya Pasha, to whose daughter Hasan Beg/Pasha was married, it becomes apparent that these men and their respective households were managing these offices, and the state affairs for that matter, on a rotational principle as a distinct caste of statesmen who were closely intertwined.[384] This observation becomes further strengthened by another known marriage alliance of a Mihaloğlu family member.

Hasan Beg/Pasha's brother, Mehmed Beg, was related to the Hersekoğlu family (the progeny of the Bosnian noble dynasty of Kosača in Ottoman service) by marrying a daughter of Hersekoğlu Ahmed Pasha, who was born from Ahmed Pasha's marriage to Hundi Sultan, a daughter of Bayezid II.[385] Besides being offered regular gifts by her grandfather's court, certainly partially in recognition of her royal descent, the wife of Mehmed Beg was also given presents by the Dubrovnik republic while residing in Mostar during her husband's governorate tenure in Hersek in the 1520s.[386] This dynastic alliance with the indigenous Bosnian nobility

[382] Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 319–35.
[383] Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909–933/1503–1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 440, 577, 726, 1045, 1195, 1443.
[384] See the two tables with the tenures of identified *beglerbegi*s during the reign of Bayezid II at the end of Hedda Reindl's book: Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 360–61.
[385] Gök, "Atatürk Kitaplığı M. C. O.71 Numaralı 909–933/1503–1527 Tarihli İn'âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon-Değerlendirme)," 1105, 1365, 1217. Judging by the special designation in her name, the daughter of Mehmed Beg, Hadice Sultan, who inherited a village in the region of Plevne in constant inheritence of Mehmed Beg's progeny, could well have been a product of her father's marriage to the granddaughter of Bayezid II and daughter of Hersekoğlu Ahmed Pasha. See the next chapter. The marriage of Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg to Hersekoğlu Ahmed Pasha's daughter was already noted previously. See [Veljan Atanasovski] Вељан Атанасовски, *Пад Херцеговине* [*The Fall of Herzegovina*] (Београд: Историјски институт у Београду; Народна књига, 1979), 216; Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "Some Notes on Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, His Family, and His Books," ed. Selim Kuru and Baki Tezcan, *Defterology: Festschrift in Honor of Heath Lowry/Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013): 315–26. Atanasovski points to Ahmed Pasha's relatives (sons-in-law) from other notable Ottoman statements' houses revealing other such dynastic marriages. Cf. [Atanasovski] Атанасовски, *Пад Херцеговине [The Fall of Herzegovina]*, 216, fn. 175.
[386] The Ragusan sources from August 1523 record that a gift was sent to the wife of Mehmed Beg Alibegović, specifying that she was the daughter of the deceased Hersekoğlu Ahmed Pasha, and that her mother was a daughter of Sultan Bayezid II. Popović, "Upravna organizacija Hercegovačkog sandžaka u XVI veku [Governmental Organization of the Herzegovinian District in the 16th Century]," 92.

already suggests that the provincial governorates of Mehmed Beg and his brother Hasan in the district of Hersek (denoting Herzeg Stefan Vukčić Kosača's domains),[387] were not hazardous but might well have occurred as a result of a thoughtful agreement between the elite houses, which must have enjoyed each other's political backing in sustaining their authority in the region. Moreover, adding the Hersekoğlu family to the already sketched scheme of interrelated governor-generals of Anatolia and Rumelia, and the vizieral posts that they held while superseding each other in the highest decision-making posts of Bayezid II's empire,[388] opens new vistas for rationalizing the governmental practices of the Ottoman state, which seem to have been implemented by well intermingled caste of governing elite from the lowest to the highest ranks of the Ottoman government.

Conclusion

The preceding narrative clearly illustrates that the house of Mihal was far from being marginalized during and after the reign of Mehmed II. On the contrary, members of this extended family became influential socio-political figures in regional matters, serving as military leaders and district governors of critical border areas, and asserting Ottoman political superiority over neighboring states. This prominence was achieved through effective military operations led by successive generations and by forming political unions with border elites, often sealed with dynastic marriages. As demonstrated, the family solidified its standing within both regional and imperial Ottoman socio-political landscapes. By building a network of loyal household servants who formed the backbone of provincial Ottoman structures, the Mihaloğlu patrons significantly

[387] A closer examination of the protracted conquest of the Balkan territories has revealed that the influential Balkan frontier lords were the ones with whom the Balkan nobility allied for their own political objectives, especially in Thrace, Tessaly, the Morea, Serbia, Albania, and the Eastern parts of the Balkans. The Balkan regional princes, who initially turned to the Ottoman frontier lords for support during conflicts, aimed to bolster their own authority while focusing on safeguarding their autonomy and political leverage. However, internal rivalries eventually undermined any unified defense, which in turn allowed Ottoman influence and conquest to advance more easily, thereby aiding the process of conquest and integration. See the meticulous studies of Oliver Jens Schmitt, "Der Balkan zwischen regionaler Herrschaftsbildung und osmanischer Eroberung (ca.1300 – ca.1500)," in *Handbuch zur Geschichte Südosteuropas. Bd. 2: Herrschaft und Politik in Südosteuropa von 1300 bis 1800*, ed. Oliver Jens Schmitt (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2021), 9–217; Schmitt, "Traîtres ou champions de la survie? Les seigneurs de tendance ottomane dans les Balkans à l'époque de la conquête ottomane"; Schmitt, "'Sie kämpften mit den Türken, wider Willen zwar, aber es war nicht anders möglich': Beobachtungen zur serbisch-osmanischen Verflechtung zwischen der Schacht am Amselfeld und dem Untergang des serbischen Despotats (1389–1459)." For a comprehensive account of the prolonged Ottoman conquest of the Medieval kingdom of Bosnia, which started at the end of the fourteenth century and persisted well into the end of the fifteenth, and which was marked by various groupings of the fragmented Bosnian elites and interference in the Bosnian political struggles by the neighboring Ottoman frontier lords (in this case Paşa Yiğit and his descendents), see Filipović, *Bosansko kraljevstvo i Osmansko carstvo (1386–1463) [The Bosnian Kingdom and the Ottoman Empire (1386–1463)]*.
[388] See Reindl, *Männer um Bayezid: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bayezids II. (1481–1512)*, 359–61.

defined social and military mobility within their territorial spheres of influence. The authority thus achieved positioned the family among the Ottoman ruling class, while simultaneously playing a leading role in its formation. Through alliances and matrimonial ties with other socio-political entities of the time, as suggested by relevant sources, the Mihaloğlu dynasty contributed to the creation of an intertwined elite caste of Ottoman statesmen especially during the reign of Bayezid II, when their decision-making capacity was expanded at both the provincial and central government levels.

All these personal, but no doubt also dynastic, alliances speak of a well-connected and integrated Ottoman social elite, which radically diverges from the prevailing binary image of the Ottoman governmental structure that positions the Ottoman sultan and his bonded governmental body of palace-grown courtly servants at the top of a large mass of obedient office-holders who were not connected to each other but were fully dependent on the former. Even the partial evidence presented above, however, gives sufficient grounds to dismantle the hub-and-spoke model of Ottoman social hierarchy that Karen Barkey has put forward,[389] suggesting a much earlier stage of what Baki Tezcan has labeled as a participatory model of governance,[390] in which different post-sixteenth-century elites took conscious part. It also begs for further investigations that go below the highest levels of governance and seek the actual workings of these elite alliances on the ground. Did these groupings affect the decision-making processes in the empire, such as the course of the major expansionistic military campaigns or the military and commercial alliances forged with neighboring and distant powers? How did the observed coalitions between the Ottoman elites reflect in the provincial posts on a district level? Did the same "rotational" principle in the highest governing positions among the allied houses, persist in the provincial districts under the governorates of these elites? Who were the dependent people of each elite household and in what way were they affected by the developed interractions? Did the latter also participate in forging further agreements and with whom? Overall, how did the wider Ottoman administration work on the ground? Although valid and logical, these questions can only begin to be answered once we gather sufficient data that connects a critical mass of regions and peoples, which are currently studied from a very local perspective. This local focus prevents the development of a broader framework for analysis, which, for the time being, remains an aspiration for future broader and interconnected research.

[389] Barkey, *Empire of Difference*.
[390] Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*.

CHAPTER 3 | GOVERNING THE (E)STATES

INTRODUCTION[391]

In pre-modern agrarian societies like the Ottoman, land was the fundamental source of wealth and power. In accord with the prevailing patrimonial understanding of power within the context of the pre-seventeenth century Ottoman Empire, the system of land tenure within the Ottoman domains is, hence, traditionally regarded as a purview of state/dynastic control. The ruler, the conventional narrative goes, as the only rightful owner of state land (*miri*), had the authority to allocate it—by delegating usufruct rights (*tasarruf*) or by granting it in full possession (*temlik*)—to his subjects in various ways: to peasants (*reʿaya*) as protected tenants for cultivation; to the military class (*askeri*) as prebends in exchange for military or other state service; and to particular individuals in full ownership (as *mülk*s, and by way of a sultanic grant, *temlikname*), who could then fully own the land, its usufruct, and people, and henceforth either keep it, sell it, or convert it into an endowment (*vakıf*).[392] This state control over the land, it is commonly maintained, loosened in the peripheral regions of the Ottoman suzerainty, where local chieftains and nobilities were left to govern their previous hereditary domains with virtual autonomy in exchange for regular supplies of collected taxes to the central Ottoman treasury and military contingents for the central army.[393] Most commonly, scholars attribute a drastic transformation

[391] The field research for this chapter was partially funded by the Central European University Foundation of Budapest (CEUBPF). The interpretations presented herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CEUBPF. I am grateful to CEUBPF for supporting a field trip to Bulgaria in 2023, where I had the opportunity to visit the former Mihaloğlu estates centered on Ihtiman and Pleven, and document the surviving architectural remains from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

[392] This overwhelmingly statist perception was promoted by Ömer Lütfi Barkan and later by Halil İnalcık, who followed the former's footsteps. See the collected articles of the most authoritative scholar on Ottoman land-related issues in Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, *Türkiye'de Toprak Meselesi, Toplu Eserler 1* (Istanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1980); Halil İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, vol. 1: *The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 103–131. A powerful criticism to the nationalistic Turkish historiography, which very much follows what he calls the "Barkanian discourse" on Ottoman political establishment and social relations, is voiced by Halil Berktay. See, for instance, Halil Berktay, "The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/Historiography," ed. Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (Special issue: New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History, ed. by Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi) (1991): 109–84.

[393] The dominant view presumes that a robust state/dynastic control over the land and its revenues was applied in the Ottoman provinces close to the imperial center, which were governed by the centralizing mechanisms of the "state" and its agents who were directly appointed by the central/dynastic authority. Hence, the narrative goes, the firm, sultanic grip on rulership loosened only in remote regions, far from the dynastic center of power, leading to a more flexible and "indirect" form of rule in the peripheral provinces. Gábor Ágoston, "A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1-2 (Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes, ed. by Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens) (2003): 15–31; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Between Universalistic Claims and Reality: Ottoman Frontiers in the Early Modern Period," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 205–19.

in the so portrayed equilibrium only after the turn of the sixteenth century, when the state/dynastic control over its principal provinces became more decentralized and brought the emergence of provincial notables.[394] The growth of large private agricultural estates (*çiftlik*s), therefore, comes into a sharper historiographical focus after the dissolution of the "classical" Ottoman institutions—most notably the *timar*-system—in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.[395] It is, hence, with the rise of provincial notables (*ayan*s) within the Ottoman domains that accumulation of big private estates is most commonly associated with.[396] While researchers

With a particular focus on the Eastern Anatolian Kurdish districts see Tom Sinclair, "The Ottoman Arrangements for the Tribal Principalities of the Lake Van Region in the Sixteenth Century," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1-2 (*Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes*, ed. by Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens) (2003): 119–44; Mehmet Öz, "Ottoman Provincial Administration in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia: The Case of Bitlis in the Sixteenth Century," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1-2 (Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes, ed. by Kemal Karpat and Robert Zens) (2003): 145–56; Tom Sinclair, "Administration and Fortification in the Van Region under Ottoman Rule in the Sixteenth Century," in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. Andrew Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 211–24.

[394] Ariel Salzmann, "An Ancien Régime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993): 393–423; Ariel Salzmann, "The Old Regime and the Ottoman Middle East," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 409–22; Bruce McGowan, "The Age of the *Ayan*s, 1699–1812," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, vol. 2: *1600–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 637–758; Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Center and the Provinces: State Power and Society in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empirei," in *Die Welt querdenken. Festschrift für Hans-Heinrich Nolte zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Carl-Hans Hauptmeyer et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 159–72.

[395] Halil İnalcık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 27–52; Halil İnalcık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 283–337; Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change, 1590–1699"; Yuzo Nagata, "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire's Doctrine of State Landownership: The Development of the *Çiftlik* Type of Landownership," in *Studies on the Social and Economic History of the Ottoman Empire*, by Yuzo Nagata (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1995), 135–39; Michael Ursinus, "The Transformation of the Ottoman Fiscal Regime, c. 1600–1850," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 423–34.

[396] See Bruce McGowan, *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe: Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Fikret Adanir, "Tradition and Rural Change in Southeastern Europe During Ottoman Rule," in *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Daniel Chirot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 131–76; Gilles Veinstein, "On the Çiftlik Debate," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 35–53; Çağlar Keyder, "Introduction: Large-Scale Commercial Agriculture in the Ottoman Empire?," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1–13. The above authors cautioned against the popular opinion that *çifilik*s were large size arable landed estates with market-oriented production. See also Halil İnalcık, "The Emergence of Big Farms, *Çiftlik*s: State, Landlords, and Tenants," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, ed. Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 17–34, who accentuated on the exploitation of waste (*mevat*) land as means of land acquisition for establishing large plantation-like agricultural farms. Yet, the *ayan* notables capitalized on accumulation of *çiftlik* (both private and *miri*) lands—mostly under tax farming contracts—to augment their revenues and enlarge their regional spheres of influence. Cf. Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*, 65–115; Antonis Anastasopoulos and Eleni Gara, "The Rural Hinterland of Karaferye: Settlements, Divisions and the *Çiftlik* Phenomenon (Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries)," in *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies: Halcyon Days in Crete VIII: A Symposium Held in Rethymno 13-15 January 2012*, ed. Ēlias Kolovos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2015), 261–92; Yannis Spyropoulos, Stefanos Poulios, and Antonis Anastasopoulos, "*Çiftlik*s, Landed Elites, and Tax Allocation in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Veroia," *European Journal of Turkish Studies [Online]*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.4000/ejts.6647.

made it clear that the Muslim notables were not the only elites who controlled landed estates in the provinces even prior to the seventeenth century,[397] one of the biggest private landholders in the Ottoman realm since the nascent stage of the state's existence are still largely left out of the current Ottoman land tenure discussion, namely the owners of large *mülk* (private) or endowed *vakıf*—in essence also private—lands.

To be sure, the significance of privately owned lands (*mülk* and *vakıf*) outside the *miri* system was acknowledged early on by scholars interested in the Ottoman landownership arrangement and its agrarian institutions. The pioneering work of M. Tayyib Gökbilgin focused specifically on the private estates of the Ottoman elite in a large part of the Rumelian province—what he called *Paşa livası*—laying the groundwork for a prosopographic study of the elite and referred to therefore by generations of Ottoman historians.[398] Basing her analysis partially on the material presented by Gökbilgin, Vera Mutafčieva was among the first to explore how large private endowments contributed to wealth accumulation by the Ottoman landed aristocracy, challenging some views in Turkish historiography, which denied the existence of a powerful

[397] These included, above all, the Christian monastic houses who were among the largest landholders in various geographies and political entities that came to form parts of the Ottoman domains and who largely retained their properties under the Ottoman suzerainty. Although not typically considered part of the Ottoman land tenure system, the monastic landholdings were part and parcel of its formation, which have the potential to elucidate many historiographical flaws concerning—but not confined to—the Ottoman land regime and its evolution over time. See, among others, the contributions of [Aleksandar Fotić] Александар Фотић, *Света Гора и Хиландар у Османском царству (XV-XVII век)* [*Mount Athos and Hilandar in the Ottoman Empire (15th-17th Centuries*] (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ - Свети Архијерејски синод Српске православне цркве - Манастир Хиландар, 2000); [Phokion Kotzageorgis] Φωκίων Κοτζαγεώργης, *Η Αθωνική Μονή Αγίου Παύλου κατά την οθωμανική περίοδο* [*The Athonite Monastery of Saint Paul during the Ottoman Period*] (Θεσσαλονίκη: University Studio Press, 2002); Ēlias Kolovos, "Negotiating for State Protection: *Çiftlik*-Holding by the Athonite Monasteries (Xeropotamou Monastery, Fifteenth-Sixteenth C.)," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, ed. Colin Imber, Keiko Kiyotaki, and Rhoads Murphey, vol. 2 (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 197–209; Sophia Laiou, "Some Considerations Regarding *Çiftlik* Formation in the Western Thessaly, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Toward a Social and Economic History. Studies in Honor of John C. Alexander*, ed. Ēlias Kolovos et al. (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2007), 255–77; Sophia Laiou, "Diverging Realities of a Christian *Vakıf*, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," *Turkish Historical Review* 3 (2012): 1–18; Ēlias Kolovos, "The Monks and the Sultan Outside Newly Conquered Ottoman Salonica in 1430," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (*Defterology: Festschrift in Honor of Heath Lowry*, ed. by Selim Kuru and Baki Tezcan) (2013): 271–79; Ēlias Kolovos, "Monasteries in the Rural Society and Economy of the Greek Lands under the Ottomans: A Historiographical Appraisal," in *Ottoman Rural Societies and Economies: Halcyon Days in Crete VIII: A Symposium Held in Rethymno 13-15 January 2012*, ed. Ēlias Kolovos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2015), 165–72.

[398] M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livâsı: Vakıflar, Mülkler, Mukataalar* (İstanbul: Üçler Basımevi, 1952). Sadly, Gökbilgin's study did not generate a pointed academic interest in a more encompassing manner investigating the formation of the Ottoman elite in a broader imperial landscape and especially in correlation to its landed estates. Instead, his work remains mostly a point of reference for tracking the career paths or identifying certain prominent individuals, whom scholars encounter in their own research. Hence, the potential of Gökbilgin's book for a prosopographic research were (and still largely remain) unrecognized. See, for example, Faroqhi's now outdated—but still valid for the early Ottoman centuries—overview of Ottoman prosopographic studies. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, "Civilian Society and Political Power in the Ottoman Empire: A Report on Research in Collective Biography (1480–1830)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 1 (1985): 109–17.

feudal class outside the Ottoman dynasty.[399] In contrast, some Turkish historians—although recognizing that the state/sultan relinquished all rights in favor of freeholders, hence granting them full immunity in their land possessions—have primarily focused on the exploitation of peasants, agricultural production, and the *vakıf* buildings' public roles. Ömer Lütfi Barkan emphasized that *vakıf* estates and the buildings associated with them were crucial for Ottoman settlement and colonization policies in newly acquired Ottoman territories in Anatolia and the Balkans,[400] while Halil İnalcık added that many of these lands were originally uncultivated and their revival by the private landholders in essence expanded arable land in the broader imperial context. Despite private ownership, he argued, the production system remained unchanged, while the primary goal of land grants was to establish charitable foundations that served public needs, such as mosques, schools, and bazaars, and hence, by extension, the state/sultanic welfare policy.[401]

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[399] Despite being imbued by the theoretical framework of Marxist materialism, Mutafčieva's works are still valuable in many respects. [Vera Mutafčieva] Вера Мутафчиева, *Аграрните отношения в Османската империя през XV – XVI век* [*Agrarian Relations in the Ottoman Empire in the XV - XVI Centuries*] (София: Издателство на Българската Академия на Науките, 1962), esp. 88–176; Vera Mutafčieva, *Le vakif, un aspect de la structure socio-économique de l'Empire ottoman, XVe-XVIIe s* (Sofia: Comite de la Culture Centre National des Langues et Civilisations Anciennes, 1981), esp. 67–184.

[400] Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "İslâm - Türk Mülkiyet Hukuku Tatbikatının Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Aldığı Şekiller I. Şer'î Miras Hukuku ve Evlatlık Vakıflar," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası* 6, no. 1 (1940): 156–81; Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler. I: İstilâ Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler; II: Vakıfların bir iskân ve kolonizatyon metodu olarak kullanılmasında diğer şekiller," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, no. 2 (1942): 279–386, here: 354–365.

[401] İnalcık emphasized that the lands granted with full proprietorship rights were, more often than not, abandoned, uncultivated arable, or "dead" (*mevad*) lands, and that the henceforth revival of these properties led to an actual expansion of arable land in the imperial landscape. Even though such lands were brought into private hands and became the basis of large endowments, İnalcık noted that the change in land status "from *miri* to private estate/*vakıf* or vice versa did not affect its production organization at the level of the direct producer." Highlighting the state's interest in bringing abandoned lands under cultivation, he concluded that this led, much in agreement with Barkan, to accumulation of resources for public works projects. İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, vol. 1: *The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300–1600*, chap. 4: Land Possession Outside the Miri System, 120–131, esp. 120–126. In a later comparative article he elaborated on the formation procedure of the *vakıf*s emphasizing that the endowed landed properties have indeed functioned as 'autonomous enclaves' of the private landholders, but still insisted on the sultanic prerogative to abrogate this autonomy, as was the case with the so-called "land reform" of Mehmed II, when he confiscated a large number of private estates and redistributed them as *dirlik*-holdings. İnalcık, "Autonomous Enclaves in Islamic States: Temlîks, Soyurgals, Yurdluk-Ocaklıks, Mâlikâne-Mukâta'as and Awqâf." While Mehmed II's abrogation of a large number of private properties with vast immunities in their managements clearly points to the political intentions of this act, Oktay Özel has also shown that, at least for the region he studied, the proprietary rights over the *timar*ized lands remained in the hands of their previous owners, a finding that begs for additional explanations as to what was in reality at stake. Oktay Özel, "Limits of the Almighty: Mehmed II's 'Land Reform' Revisited," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 2 (1999): 226–46. Moreover, it is interesting to note that similar "confiscations" and limitation of the tax immunities of the landholders were carried out by successive Ottoman sultans—in the 1550s Süleyman I imposed a land tax on the private endowments in Egypt, while in the late 1560s Selim II initiated a confiscation of church and monastic properties throughout the empire which likewise led to the taxation of these estates—that still lack comprehensive explanations as to the motives that laid behind them. A future comparative study on these state/dynastic attempts to curb the power of the landed elites in their respective socio-political contexts might indeed lead to a more comprehensive understand-

While admittedly the public services provided by the endowments' buildings were amongst the main features of the *vakıfs—previously* commonly referred to as pious, religious or charitable foundations[402]—a burgeoning field branded as "*waqf* studies" has also made it clear that there is a much wider range of themes that could be examined through the study of *vakıfs*. This, on the other hand, also presents a significant challenge for historians who are trying to understand these complex institutions and their multiple roles.[403] Besides their charitable and benevolent function—admittedly the most widely emphasized feature in the otherwise extensive literature on the *vakıf*s,—more recent scholarship has made it clear that the endowments

ing of these measures. John C. Alexander, "The Lord Giveth and the Lord Taketh Away: Athos and the Confiscation Affair of 1568–1569," in *Mount Athos in the 14th-16th Centuries*, Athonika Symmeikta 4 (Athens: The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, 1997), 149–200; Abdurrahman Atçıl and Christopher Markiewicz, "Sharīʿa and Governance in Ottoman Egypt: The Waqf Controversy in the Mid-Sixteenth Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 56, no. 1 (2024): 55–74.

[402] John Robert Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1986). Moving away from the previous legalistic approach to studying these institutions, current scholarship increasingly recognizes that while *vakıf*s were originally established to support religious buildings, such as mosques (*camiʿ* or *mescid*), and charitable institutions like public kitchens (*ʿimaret*s), these descriptions fail to fully encompass their diverse functions. It is by now clear that v*akıf*s were deeply embedded in Ottoman economic and social life, operating as comprehensive social welfare organizations with a wide range of economic roles. Oded Peri, "Waqf and Ottoman Welfare Policy. The Poor Kitchen of Hasseki Sultan in Eighteenth-Century Jerusalem," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35, no. 2 (1992): 167–86; Miriam Hoexter, *Endowments, Rulers, and Community: Waqf Al-Ḥaramayn in Ottoman Algiers* (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1998); Miriam Hoexter, "The Waqf and the Public Sphere," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, S.N. Eisenstadt, and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 119–38; Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002); Nina Ergin, Christoph K. Neumann, and Amy Singer, *Feeding People, Feeding Power: Imarets in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: EREN, 2007); Kayhan Orbay, "Imperial Waqfs within the Ottoman Waqf System," *Endowment Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017): 135–53. Orbay emphasizes the need to move away from the conventional definitions of *vakıf*s as "religious" and "charitable" institutions, arguing that these terms do not accurately reflect their primary functions. He suggests that it is more appropriate to describe them as social and economic institutions. This characterization may hold true for larger imperial foundations, but it overlooks smaller, "ordinary" endowments, which were primarily motivated by pious intentions rather than social or economic aims. I concur with Orbay's concerns that focusing on the religious and charitable roles of major foundations only may lead to inaccurate observations, since this fixation masks other important functions of the institutions. I will, therefore, avoid using the adjectives "religious" and "charitable" while speaking of the *vakıf*s. Instead, I will refer to them as endowments or foundations, with particular emphasis on "family endowments" to highlight their inheritable nature, as seen in the case of the Mihaloğlu family *vakıf*s.

[403] It would be impossible to cite all relevant literature within this expansive field (eloquently labeled *waqf* studies), in which multiple disciplines and regional studies converge. For a somewhat comprehensive historiographical overview at different points in time, see, for instance, the following: Daniel Crecelius, "Introduction," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, no. 3 [A special issue: The Waqf] (1995): 247–61; Miriam Hoexter, "Waqf Studies in the Twentieth Century: The State of the Art," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 4 (1998): 474–95; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Pious Foundations in the Ottoman Society of Anatolia and Rumelia: A Report on Current Research," in *Stiftungen in Christentum, Judentum Und Islam Vor Der Moderne: Auf Der Suche Nach Ihren Gemeinsamkeiten Und Unterschieden in Religiösen Grundlagen, Praktischen Zwecken Und Histroischen Transformationen*, ed. Michael Borgolte and Tillmann Lohse (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 223–56; Svetlana Ivanova, "Introduction," in *Inventory of Ottoman Turkish Documents about Waqf Preserved in the Oriental Department at the St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library. 1, 1*, ed. Evgenij Radušev, Svetlana Ivanova, and Rumen Kovačev (Sofia: Narodna biblioteka "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodiĭ, 2003); Pascale Ghazaleh, "Introduction: Pious Foundations: From Here to Eternity?," in *Held in Trust: Waqf in the Islamic World*, ed. Pascale Ghazaleh (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 1–22; Nada Moumtaz, "Theme Issue: A Third Wave of *Waqf* Studies," *Islamic Law and Society* 25, no. 1/2 (2018): 1–10.

should be examined in more *practical* terms by focusing on the specific agency of the benefactors, beyond the signs of legitimacy and grandeur that the monumental buildings of their patrons displayed or the beneficence they distributed over large segments of society. The proliferation of scholarly studies centering on the *vakıf*s in recent years has brought to light other aspects of the institution that weave together social, economic, familial, political, and philanthropic dimensions.[404] A renewed scholarly focus on the identities of the benefactors and the beneficiaries of the foundations, moreover, has more pointedly reminded us that these institutions—essentially private properties endowed for diverse purposes and intended to last in perpetuity—were also a practical device used by a variety of social actors to serve not only public purposes, but protect their own private interests. These practical concerns, most often than not, expressed the intentions of the endower and are particularly visible in the so-called family endowments (*ehli* or *zürri vakıf*s).[405] In addition to the more obvious reasons, such as preserving accumulated wealth and bypassing the constraints of Islamic inheritance law, scholars have highlighted that family endowments enabled founders to control the distribution of wealth among legatees of endowed properties. This allowed them to direct revenues to specific beneficiaries—sometimes privileging certain individuals over others, including legal heirs, or designating heirs where none were legally acknowledged—thus altering the estate's distribution.[406] These endowments

[404] See, among others, the following studies that delimit the use of the foundations outside their purely religious and charitable functions. Concerning the Mamluk Sultanate, see Daisuke Igarashi, "The Waqf-Endowment Strategy of a Mamluk Military Man: The Contexts, Motives, and Purposes of the Endowments of Qijmās al-Isḥāqī (d. 1487)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 82, no. 1 (2019): 25–53; Yehoshua Frenkel, "The Waqf System During the Last Decades of Mamluk Rule," in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2022), 221–72. Similar concerns for the Ottoman context are more recently raised by Orbay, "Imperial Waqfs within the Ottoman Waqf System"; Kayhan Orbay, "'A Man You Do Not Meet Every Day': The Waqf Founder as a Benevolent Employer and the Waqf as a Sinecure for the Founder's Retainers," in *"Buyurdum Ki…." – The Whole World of Ottomanica and Beyond: Studies in Honour of Claudia Römer*, ed. Hülya Çelik, Yavuz Köse, and Gisela Procházka-Eisl (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2023), 493–520. For the *vakıf*s in Lebanon after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and during the French colonial rule, see Nada Moumtaz, "'Is the Family *Waqf* a Religious Institution?' Charity, Religion, and Economy in French Mandate Lebanon," *Islamic Law and Society* 25, no. 1/2 (2018): 37–77; Nada Moumtaz, *God's Property: Islam, Charity, and the Modern State* (California: University of California Press, 2021).

[405] See, for example, David S. Powers, "The Maliki Family Endowment: Legal Norms and Social Practices," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 3 (1993): 379–406; Randi Deguilhem, ed., *Le waqf dans l'espace islamique: Outil de pouvoir socio-politique* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1995); Gabriel Baer, "The Waqf as a Prop for the Social System (Sixteenth-Twentieth Centuries)," *Islamic Law and Society* 4, no. 3 (1997): 264–97; Ruth Roded, "The Waqf and the Social Elite of Aleppo in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Turcica* 20 (1998): 71–91; Mustapha Anouar Taher and Jean-Claude Garcin, "Identité du dédicataire, appartenance et propriétés urbaines dans un waqf du xve siècle," in *Valeur et distance. Identités et sociétés en Égypte*, ed. Christian Décobert (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2000), 189–97; Christian Müller, "A Legal Instrument in the Service of People and Institutions: Endowments in Mamluk Jerusalem as Mirrored in the Haram Documents," *Mamluk Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (2008): 173–89; Pascale Ghazaleh, ed., *Held in Trust: Waqf in the Islamic World* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011).

[406] Powers, "The Maliki Family Endowment: Legal Norms and Social Practices"; Beshara Doumani, "Endowing Family: Waqf, Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800 to 1860," *Comparative Studies in Society*

also played a key role in consolidating a distinct elite identity with strong attachment to the region where they were established.[407]

Building on insights from recent historiographical advancements, this chapter delves into various aspects of the Mihaloğlu family's landed estates, weaving together several interrelated themes. These themes are all, in one way or another, connected to the mechanisms of provincial governance and their broader social implications. Focusing on the landed estates of the family, and hence adopting a microhistorical perspective, provides a valuable lens through which to explore different dimensions of the workings of provincial society, where the family's patronage had far-reaching repercussions. This focused approach, I believe, has the potential to illuminate not only the specific agency of the Mihaloğlu endowers, but also to highlight the central role of the family estates in shaping and sustaining a collective familial and class identity. It emphasizes how the estates facilitated the accumulation of governmental authority, the consolidation of patronage networks, the creation of social connections, and the expansion of capital formation strategies beyond the estates themselves, ultimately molding the broader imperial landscape.

Consolidating Status: Land as a Prop of an Estate Identity

One of the prevailing and deeply entrenched myths in Ottoman studies is the notion that the empire lacked a stable, hereditary nobility. The existence of the political slavery (*kul*) and the significance of the child levy system (*devşirme*) for establishing a ruling class fully dependent on the state/dynasty are the most often cited features of the Ottoman governmental practices in support of this lasting belief.[408] Even the critical voices raised against this notion, who tend to identify a distinct hereditary ruling class in the face of the prebend-holding *sipahi*s, equally

and History 40, no. 1 (1998): 3–41; Sylvie Denoix, "Fondations pieuses, fondations économiques, le waqf, un mode d'intervention sur la ville mamelouke," in *Le Khan al-Khalili: Un centre commercial et artisanal au Caire du XIIIe au XXe siècle*, ed. Sylvie Denoix, Jean-Charles Depaule, and Michel Tuchscherer (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1999), 19–26; Taher and Garcin, "Identité du dédicataire, appartenance et propriétés urbaines dans un waqf du xve siècle"; Aharon Layish, "*Waqf* of *Awlād al-Nās* in Aleppo at the End of the Mamlūk Period as Reflected in a Family Archive," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51, no. 2 (2008): 287–326.

[407] Jonathan Miran and Aharon Layish, "The Testamentary Waqf as an Instrument of Elite Consolidation in Early Twentieth-Century Massawa (Eritrea)," *Islamic Law and Society* 25, no. 1/2 (2018): 78–120.

[408] As an eloquent illustration how deeply entrenched is this notion serves the introduction to a volume dedicated to the provincial Ottoman elites by Antonis Anastasopoulos who supports the commonly accepted view that "informal" aristocratization in the Ottoman Empire is to be seen mostly during the eighteenth century, when local "notables" (*ayan*s) in the face of a number of powerful families have started to emerge. Antonis Anastasopoulos, "Introduction," in *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete V: A Symposium Held in Rethymno 10-12 January 2003*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005), xi–xxviii.

accept that there existed no hereditary aristocracy with permanently held family property.[409] Besides the "service" *askeri* class, to whom the sultan had delegated certain powers as tax receivers by granting them a sultanic diploma,[410] different scholars have similarly considered signs of aristocratic formation for different strata of the society during other periods and geographies of the empire. Madeline Zilfi, for instance, emphasized that the political instability of the seventeenth century, along with the decline in scholarly expertise among the religious elite (*ulema*) in the eighteenth century, contributed to the rise of a new aristocratic class, distinguished by rigid recruitment procedures and well-defined privileges.[411] Hülya Canbakal attributed a similar aristocratic formation to a distinct class of *seyyid*s, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, whose ranks appear to have been expanded and promoted by Ottoman state authorities (what she calls *seyyidization*) in response to the centralization and political changes in Safavid Iran during the seventeenth century. Further on, the rise of Twelver orthodoxy, she argued, also fostered the recognition of an Alid aristocracy within the Ottoman domains.[412] Most recently, Nilay Özok-Gündoğan put forth a compelling argument that a hereditary nobility, represented by the Kurdish elite in the Eastern *hükümet* of Palu at the fringes of the Ottoman domains, was clearly identifiable as early as the sixteenth century and it retained its hereditary rights for over three centuries. This nobility was solidified with a growing sense of integration into the Ottoman administrative system, making it justifiable to refer to it as a Kurdish-Ottoman nobility.[413] These scholarly findings notwithstanding, the landed elites of the early Ottoman

[409] John Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 18, no. 3-4 (Special issue: *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, ed. by Halil Berktay and Suraiya Faroqhi) (1991): 18–108. An inspiring study that goes beyond the commonly considered strata of Ottoman society and examines the Christian nobility within the Ottoman imperial context is provided by Radu Păun, "»Well-born of the Polis«. The Ottoman Conquest and the Reconstruction of the Greek Orthodox Elites under Ottoman Rule (15th–17th centuries)," in *Türkenkriege und Adelskultur in Ostmitteleuropa vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Robert Born and Sabine Jagodzinski (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2014), 59–85.

[410] Halil İnalcık, "The Nature of Traditional Society: B. Turkey," in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, ed. Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 42–63.

[411] Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988); Madeline C. Zilfi, "The Ottoman Ulema," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 209–25.

[412] Hülya Canbakal, "On the 'Nobility' of Provincial Notables," in *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire: Halcyon Days in Crete V: A Symposium Held in Rethymno 10-12 January 2003*, ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005), 39–50; Hülya Canbakal, *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: ʿAyntāb in the 17th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), chap. 2: Privilege Certified, 59–89; Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52, no. 3 (2009): 542–78.

[413] Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, *Kurdish Nobility and the Ottoman State in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

period, who inherited their properties until the empire's dissolution in the late nineteenth century, have largely been overlooked in discussions concerning the existence of a hereditary nobility in particular and the imperial land-tenure system in general.

The observations of Vera Mutafčieva, who was among the first to highlight the existence of an Ottoman feudal aristocracy—particularly through the powerful state-founding families in the Balkans, such as the houses of Evrenos, Mihal, İshak, Turahan, and Malkoç—have largely been overlooked by later historiography. In recent years, only Heath Lowry has definitively asserted that these families were "as close to a hereditary nobility as the Ottomans produced,"[414] citing the remarkable longevity of these dynasties, especially the Evrenos lineage, which rivaled that of the Ottoman dynasty itself.[415] Indeed, as Lowry and İsmail E. Erünsal also justly asserted in their detailed studies on the Evrenosoğulları, the vast hereditary landed estates of the family (both *mülk* and endowed, *vakıf*) around their power base in Yenice-i Vardar, which spanned vast tracts of land throughout Northern Greece and were reconfirmed in perpetuity by the Ottoman sultans until the early twentieth century, were a crucial part of the permanent bond the dynasty forged with the region, which it dominated for half a millennium.[416] This "unbreakable chain," as the authors styled it, clearly demonstrates that a hereditary landed nobility with regional and political influence was an integral part of the Ottoman social structure essentially since its inception until its very demise. This observation is even more powerfully illustrated by the evidence we possess regarding the landed estates of the Mihaloğlu family, which became the "apple of discord" and a source of intense dispute between the Ottoman Empire and the newly established autonomous Principality of Bulgaria and the vassal Eastern Rumelia in the late nineteenth century. The conflict was not resolved until the formal establishment of the independent Bulgarian state in 1908, which ultimately favored Bulgaria's claims over these family lands.[417]

[414] Lowry, *The Nature*, 142.
[415] Lowry labeled the Evrenosoğulları "the second family of the Ottoman Empire, for only the line of Osman, the dynasty's founder, could match them in terms of either longevity or continuity of family name." Lowry, *The Shaping of the Ottoman Balkans, 1350–1550: The Conquest, Settlement & Infrastructural Development of Northern Greece*, 16.
[416] Lowry and Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar*, esp. 105-138 and Appendix iv, 162–164.
[417] Kiprovska, "Power and Society in Pleven on the Verge of Two Epochs: The Fate of the Mihaloğlu Family and Its Pious Foundations (*Vakf*) during the Transitional Period from Imperial to National Governance"; [Veselin Yančev and Mariya Kiprovska] Веселин Янчев and Мария Кипровска, "Повратни времена: Ихтиманският вакъф на Михалоглу Махмуд бей от неговото създаване през XV до началото на XX в. [Times of Transformational Change: The Pious Endowment of Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey from Its Establishment in the 15th Until the Beginning of the 20th Century]," *История* 27, no. 6 (2019): 559–98; Anna M. Mirkova, *Muslim Land, Christian Labor: Transforming Ottoman Imperial Subjects into Bulgarian National Citizens, 1878-1939* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2017); [Veselin Yančev, Mariya Kiprovska, Grigor Boykov] Веселин Янчев, Мария Кипровска, Григор Бойков, eds., *Вакъфите в България* [*The Waqfs in Bulgaria*] (София: Университетско издателство "Св. Климент Охридски," 2020).

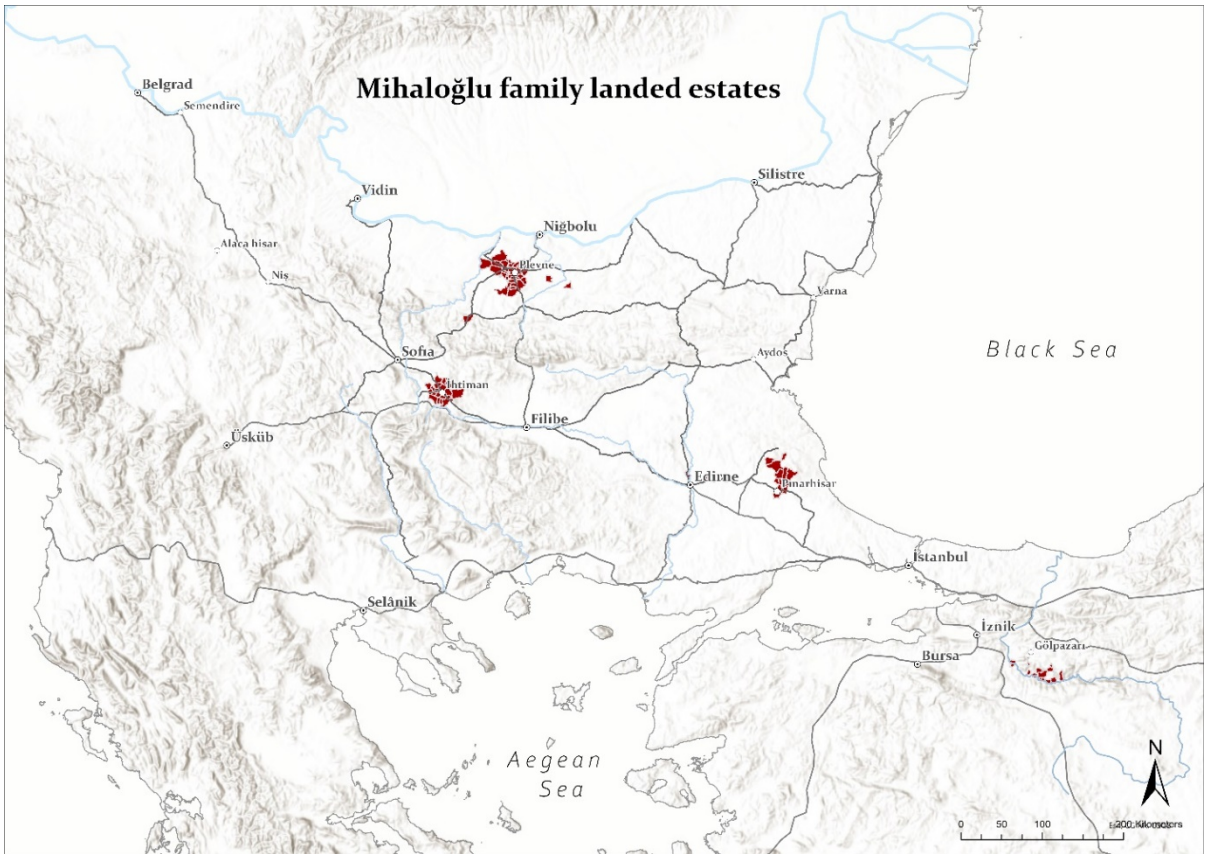
Building on the findings of an expanding body of scholarship, which has uncovered the significant extent of the architectural patronage and to some degree also the vastness of the landed estates of other such patrimonial families, I propose to use these insights not as an end, but rather as a starting point for further exploration. By examining the Mihaloğlu estates— their scale, geographic location, initial formation, development over time, inheritance practices, and specific management—I will address key issues that not only reinforce previous scholarly observations but also offer new insights into how these estates became *the* liminal space between governmentality and nobility. These domains, I will argue, formed not only the locus for creating a common sense of belonging to an elite group of governors with social, governmental, and cultural attachments to a defined space and its peoples, but also became a springboard for molding the spaces beyond their territorial confines, ultimately contributing to the infrastructural socio-economic and cultural development of the wider Ottoman world.

Developing territorial enclaves

I will start with some general observations, which might not appear apparent from the way previous scholarship has presented the available material, that concern the actual extent of the privately owned estates. It should be made clear from the beginning, however, that my remarks will be based only on the biggest landed estates identified thus far and do not consider the smaller estates (consisting of several villages, or other tracks of land) that individual family members have accumulated and endowed for their respective foundations throughout the Ottoman territories. By selecting these estates, I do not want to diminish the significance of the smaller endowments, but rather to accentuate more pointedly on what such estates had the capacity to accumulate, which arguably was the case with the other landed properties too, albeit on a smaller scale. The domains that I want to take as exemplary cases, are the ones that have grown as conglomerates of lands forming distinct territorial enclaves in the Ottoman provinces: the estates that have developed in the region of Harmankaya, around Pınarhisar, İhtiman, and Plevne. Although their composition has received some scholarly attention and is not entirely unknown, these estates are rarely referred to with their spatial dimensions, at times owing to the fact that besides the Ottoman names of the villages and other tracts of lands, more often than not, they are not properly identified with the present settlements' names, which ultimately makes it difficult to situate them within the physical landscape.[418] The proper identification of

[418] See, for example, the otherwise meticulous publications of Vedat Turgut, "Vakıf Belgeleri Işığında Umur Bey ve Lala Şahin Paşa'nın Menşei ve Osmanlılar ile İttifakı'na Dair," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 47 (2016): 39–47; 162–79; Vedat Turgut, *Yitirilen Mirasımız: Vize Sancağı Vakıfları (Fethinden XVI. Yüzyılın Sonlarına Kadar)* (Eskişehir: Türk Dünyası Vakfı Yayınları, 2016), 77–80; 229–34.

the components of these large domains makes it feasible to locate them correctly in the space and draw informed conclusions as to their magnitude. Moreover, using the GIS software, as showcased by Grigor Boykov in one of his recent publications, makes it possible not only to locate these estates precisely, but also to make some further conclusions as to their exact magnitude and about the features of their terrain, which were essential for their initial formation and later development.[419] Since the publication of Boykov, which, amongst others, also included an assessment of the Mihaloğlu estates, I have made some further refinements as to the proper identification of the place names, and hence a more accurate map could be generated for my current purposes (See Map 2).



Map 2: The Mihaloğlu family biggest landed estates in the Ottoman domains: Pınarhisar, Harmankaya, İhtiman, Plevne

As it becomes noticeable even from this general map, the estates quite visibly formed a very dense conglomeration of settlements and lands that were spread across a substantial territory, something that was rarely the case for the sultanic landed endowments or for the *çiftlik* estates of the provincial notables of later centuries. The magnitude becomes even more visible if one

[419] Grigor Boykov, "Conquered by Sword, Subdued by Charity? Geospatial and Quantitative Analysis of Land Waqfs in Ottoman Bulgaria," *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 59 (2021): 37–77.

calculates the actual size of the privately owned lands. The Pınarhisar estate at its greatest magnitude covered approximately 585 km^2; the estate of Harmankaya encompassed a territory of 276 km^2; the one around İhtiman – 562 km^2; and the Plevne estates alone – a little more than 1001 km^2. Despite the fact that current scholarship does not provide a comparative material concerning other such big landholdings in the Ottoman domains, these enormous in size and compact in nature blocks of landed estates indeed place the family among the important landholding European nobility of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[420]

Even though some of these estates were endowed for the big foundations of the family, it is interesting to note that the regional enclaves included not only the lands, which were donated for the family endowments, but also a number of privately held landed properties of different family members, yet geographically forming an essential part of the same enclave. Before going into further details as to how these evolved to form large cohesive and interconnected landholdings, I will present the history of each estate to the degree that it is possible on the basis of the available material, so that they could also be better contextualized within the proper historical and political context.

Historicizing the estates within time and space

Evaluating the presently known information, it is possible to say that the the evolution of the family landed estates indeed relate most prominently to the reigns of Mehmed I (r. 1413–1421), Murad II (r. 1421–44 and 1446–51) and Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), when their establishment and subsequent extension could be linked to individual members of the Mihaloğlu dynasty active at the time. Hence, although there are still some blank spots in our knowledge as to the earlier periods, it seems that both the Harmankaya estate and the one around Pınarhisar were developed by Mihal Beg. Mihal was one of the most forceful military leaders during the Ottoman dynastic struggles after the battle of Ankara (1402), on whose support the princely pretenders relied for their successful enthronements. Although originally supporting prince Musa Çelebi, who elevated him to the post of Rumelian *beglerbegi*, Mihal Beg became alienated from the latter and pledged his support to the would-be sultan Mehmed Çelebi, as his defection tipped the balance to the latter's advantage and finally made him victorious over his opponent in

[420] For example, consider the discussion by Leigh Shaw-Taylor on the essence of "small farm" versus "large farm" in the context of the rise of English agrarian capitalism, which offers valuable insights. Leigh Shaw-Taylor, "The Rise of Agrarian Capitalism and the Decline of Family Farming in England," *Economic History Review* 65, no. 1 (2012): 26–60. I am grateful to Alp Yücel Kaya for bringing this reference to my attention. Compare this with the figures presented in Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Even the 19th-century *çiftlik*s in the Ottoman Empire, for which we have more data, could not match the vast Mihaloğlu family estates. Some of these figures are discussed by İnalcık, "The Emergence of Big Farms, *Çiftlik*s: State, Landlords, and Tenants."

1413.[421] The chronicles also claim that Mihal Beg was subsequently imprisoned by the victorious Mehmed I in Tokat. For the time being, it remains unclear when exactly this happened and what was the actual reasoning behind this arrest. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that it was precisely during the reign of Mehmed I when Mihal Beg received sultanic land grants in the region of Edirne, parts of which would be later endowed for the support of his large complex in Edirne, and when he completed another monumental complex in the town of Göl (mod. Gölpazarı) in Bithynia, possibly before his custody in Tokat.

Mihal Beg rose to prominence once again during the reign of Murad II, when the sultan released him from imprisonment in Tokat to help him in his struggle for the throne against the claimant Düzme Mustafa, who had gained the support of many Rumelian lords. Mihal Beg's esteemed reputation among the Rumelian frontier troops played a crucial role in persuading these lords to side with Murad. His influence ultimately helped secure Murad's enthronement and continued rule.[422] It is likely that Murad II, in recognition of Mihal Beg's loyalty and success in rallying support, granted him further landholdings that became the foundation of his family's wealth, although currently there is no clear evidence about such land grants. Yet, the close proximity of the landed estates of Mihal Beg's endowment in the area of Pınarhisar with those endowed for the maintenance of Murad II's Darülhadis *medrese* around Edirne suggests that two men were very close and might have conceived of their lands as contributing to each other's prosperity.[423] Nevertheless, later documentary evidence suggest that not all of the freehold properties (*mülk*s) of Mihal Beg were endowed to his foundations, but instead were perpetually inherited by several of his descendants as privately held landholdings. This dual approach strengthened the family's social and economic standing, securing their prominence across generations.

The exact landholdings of Mihal Beg in the ancestral domain around Harmankaya, the birthplace of the dynasty with which the eponymous founder Köse Mihal is associated in the

[421] Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 137–42, 161–62; Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800*, 46–47; Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-Nümâ. Neşrî Tarihi*, 2:487–91.

[422] Dimitri Kastritsis, ed., *An Early Ottoman History: The Oxford Anonymous Chronicle (Bodleaian Library, Ms Marsh 313). Historical Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Dimitri J. Kastritsis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 155–58; Âşık Paşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, ed. Kemal Yavuz and M. A. Yekta Saraç (İstanbul: Koç Kültür Sanat Tanıtım, 2003), 434; Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-Nümâ. Neşrî Tarihi*, 2:561. For a more or less comprehensive account of these events on the basis of the available contemporary sources see Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1481*, 91–95. See also the detailed study of John R. Melville-Jones, "Three Mustafas (1402–1430)," *Annuario Istituto Romeno di Cultura e ricerca Umanistica* 5 (2003): 255–76.

[423] For Murad II's Darülhadis endowment and its landed assets see İrem Gündüz-Polat, "Waqfs as Political Instruments: An Examination of Murad II's *Waqfiyya*s and Endowments (1421–1451)" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Istanbul, Marmara University, 2024), chap. iv: 142–173, esp. 161–166.

oldest Ottoman narrative tradition, is not well documented.[424] Yet, based on architectural and some documentary evidence from the fifteenth century, it is plausible to detect some of the individuals who were well entrenched in the region. Leaving aside the uncertainty of the narrative evidence that links the founder of the family to the area since the time of the first Ottoman ruler Osman at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century, Mihal Beg, whose historicity is less shrouded in mystery, has left a permanent mark on the region at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Mihal Beg's strong connection to the region north of the Sangarios (Sakarya) River is evidenced by his architectural contributions in the center of the sub-district Göl (mod. Gölpazarı), where he commissioned the construction of a *zaviye* and a *hamam*, with the latter being endowed for the maintenance of the *zaviye*.[425] Additionally, he built a *menzil hanı* (inn), which was neither recorded in the Ottoman *defter*s nor appears to have been endowed to the *zaviye*. However, a dedicatory inscription over the inn's entrance provides a precise timeline for the complex: construction began in 1415/6 and was completed in 1418/9.[426]

It remains unclear for now what additional assets supported the foundation in Gölpazarı or whether these included any landholdings. However, sixteenth-century surveys of the Hüdavendigar province indicate that Mihal Beg's descendants held significant *mülk* lands through hereditary transmission over several generations. This suggests it is likely that, in addition to the endowed buildings in Göl, Mihal Beg owned substantial landed estates, which he passed on to his heirs. Furthermore, several tax registers and *vakıf* documents from the sixteenth century reveal the transfer of property within the Mihaloğlu family before these lands were endowed to the newly established pious foundation of Boyalı Mehmed Paşa. These records indicate that nearly 20 villages, cultivated lands (*mezraa*s), and *çiftlik*s in the districts of Gölbazarı, Göynük, and Bilecik, including the village of Harmankaya, were part of the Mihaloğlu family's *mülk* and were held on a hereditary basis. Initially, some of these freeholdings were in

[424] For further details see Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland."

[425] "Nefs-i Göl'de merhum Mihal Beg bir zaviye bina idüb, mezkür zaviye içün bir hamam bina idüb vakf etmiş." See Barkan and Meriçli, *Hüdavendigâr Livâsı Tahrir Defterleri*, 320; 328–329. The authors have wrongly supposed that the Mihal Beg mentioned in the defter is indeed Köse Mihal and have thus supposed that the endowment was established in the reign of sultan Orhan.

[426] The inscription of the *han* is not unknown and was published by several authors. See, for example, Mahmut Ragıb Gazimihal, "Harmankaya Nerededir III: Kitabe, Türbe ve Rivayetler," *Uludağ: Bursa Halkevi Dergisi* 77 (1946): 1–7; Yaşar Gökçek, *Türk İmparatorluk Tarihinde Akıncı Teşkilâtı ve Gazi Mihal Oğulları* (Konya: Alagöz Yayınları, 1998), 18; Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, *Osmanlı Mimarisinde Çelebi ve II. Sultan Murad Devri 806–855 (1403–1451)* (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1972), 169–71; Abdülhamit Tüfekçioğlu, *Erken Dönem Osmanlı Mimarisinde Yazı* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 133–34; Arslan, *Türk Akıncı Beyleri ve Balkanların İmarına Katkıları (1300–1451)*, 67–79.

the possession of Bali Beg, son of Mahmud Beg (the endower from İhtiman) and grandson of Gazi Mihal Beg, while others, which were in possession of Mihal Beg, were later held by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg (the endower from Plevne). Subsequently, Ali Beg acquired the landholdings from Bali's descendants, consolidating the previously divided *mülk* into a single estate under his ownership. After Ali Beg's death, the *mülk* was inherited by two of his sons, Ahmed Beg and Mehmed Beg. Upon their passing, the land was passed down to a number of male and female progeny. Eventually, in 1573 the entire *mülk* was acquired by Boyalı Mehmed Paşa (d. 1593), a family member and the *nişancı* and *beglerbegi* of Haleb (Aleppo), when he endowed the entire estate's income to his newly built *muallimhane* (teachers' training school) in Tosya.[427]

The fragmented nature of the sources and the inconsistent data they provide make it difficult to draw further conclusions about the internal development and demographic changes of the Harmankaya estate. However, the available information does indicate that the domain was exclusively inhabited by Muslims, with a total population of 973 inhabitants in 1520, growing to 1,712 by 1540. The estate's revenues were relatively modest, amounting to 11,975 *akçe* in 1520 and increasing to 19,782 *akçe* by 1540.[428] Despite these figures, which suggest the estate was of limited economic importance, it seems to have held significant military value. Ottoman records consistently mention that many villages within the Mihaloğlu family's *mülk* had mixed populations, including members of the *yaya* infantry, who were under the Mihaloğulları's hereditary command.[429] Several villages are noted with remarks such as "the inhabitants have

[427] This inheritance story becomes clear from the tax registers of the sixteenth century: BOA, TT 453 (from 1520), f. 277a–279a; TT 531 (from 1540), pp. 270–281; Barkan and Meriçli, *Hüdavendigâr Livâsı Tahrir Defterleri*, 313–16. Additionally, a number of *vakıf* documents from the second half of the sixteenth century, also reveal the property transfer from one Mihaloğlu family member to another prior to the lands' endowing to the newly established foundation of Boyalı Mehmed Paşa in 1573. The content of these documents was first disclosed by amateur historian Mahmut Ragıp Gazimihal, a twentieth-century descendant of the Mihaloğlu family, in two brief articles: Mahmut Ragıb Gazimihal, "Harmankaya nerededir," *Uludağ: Bursa Halkevi Dergisi* 72–73 (1945): 1–4; Mahmut R. Gazimihal, "Rumeli Mihaloğulları ve Harmankaya," *Uludağ: Bursa Halkevi Dergisi* 81 (1947): 21–26. Gazimihal later provided a more detailed account in his expanded work Mahmut R. Gazimihal, "İstanbul Muhasaralarında Mihaloğulları ve Fatih Devrine Ait Bir Vakıf Defterine Göre Harmankaya Mâlikânesi," *Vakıflar Dergisi* 4 (1958): 125–37. These conveyance documents were compiled in a small defter consisting of 20 pages. The booklet was stored in the mosque of Akköy, the administrative center of the Harmankaya sub-district, and was brought to Gazimihal's attention by the then local administration. Orlin Sabev later utilized the information presented by Gazimihal in these documents, demonstrating the Mihaloğlu family's ownership of the Harmankaya *mülk*. See Orlin Sabev, "The Legend of Köse Mihal: Additional Notes," *Turcica* 34 (2002): 244. Cf. Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland."

[428] These figures are extracted from the following registrations: BOA, TT 453 (from 1520), fols. 277a–279a; TT 531 (from 1540), pp. 270–281.

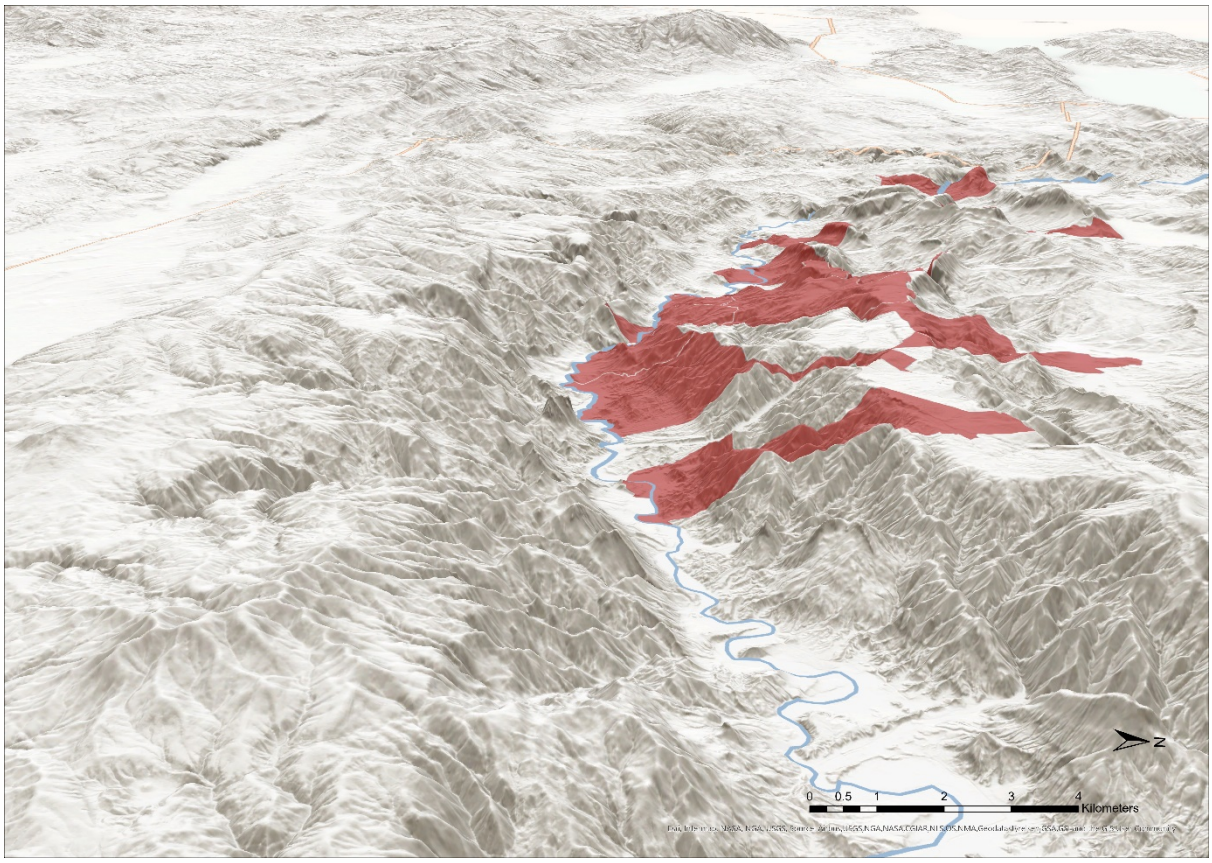
[429] The earliest surviving registers of the Ottoman foot (*yaya/piyade*) troops in the district of Sultanönü, where the estate was located, show that the leadership of these troops was also passed down hereditarily within the Mihaloğlu family. The first identifiable commander was Mihal Beg, followed by two distinct units led by Mihaloğlu Bali Beg and his cousin Mihaloğlu Ali Beg, mirroring the division of the estate itself. Thus, it seems that both the

been mixed with the *yaya* infantry since ancient times" (*içinde olan eşhas yaya ile mahlutdur, kadimden böyle ola gelmiş*) or "they have long lived mixed with the infantry" (*yaya ile mahlut oturırlarmış, ʿan kadim*).[430] These records indicate that the estate was important due to its militarized inhabitants, who controlled the lowlands of the Middle Sangarios/Sakarya valley (See Map 3). The landholding not only oversaw the strategic route from the Marmara to Ankara along the Sangarios/Sakarya River basin, but also dominated the region between the Sakarya and Göynük Rivers. This area was intersected by two critical communication arteries—one connecting Nicaea to Ankara via Gölpazarı and the other following the Göynük River basin through Geyve, Taraklı, and Göynük (See Map 4).[431]

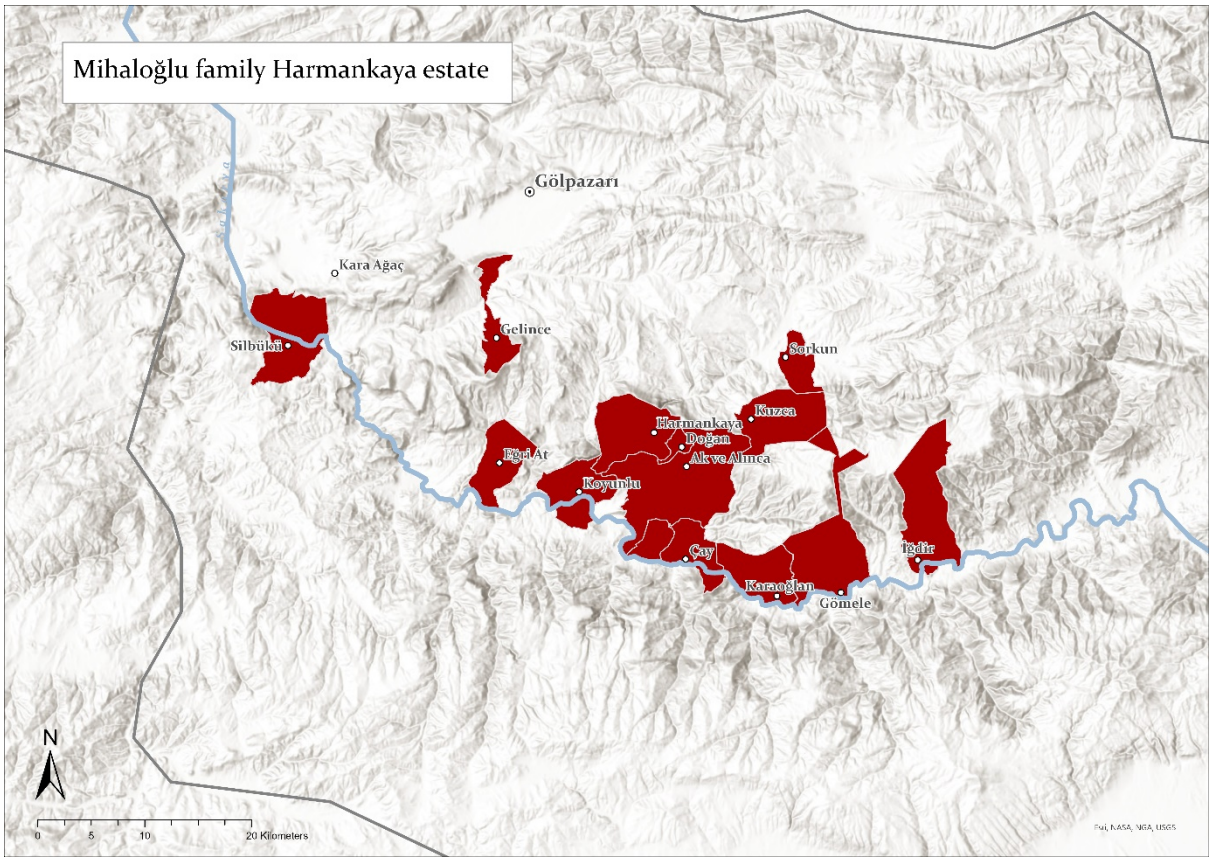
family's freehold land and the leadership of the yaya/infantry regiments in the Harmankaya districts were inherited by successive generations of the Mihaloğlu family. By 1520, the command of both Harmankaya districts had been consolidated under a single family member, Mehmed Beg, the son of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg. The hereditary leadership of the Harmankaya infantrymen remained within the family until at least 1579, as confirmed by the region's last *yaya* registers. See BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver [MAD], No. 8 (from 1466/7), f. 56b, 69b; BOA, MAD 64 (1520), fols. 95b, 114a. Cf. Halime Doğru, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Yaya-Müsellem-Taycı Teşkilatı (XV. ve XVI. Yüzyılda Sultanönü Sancağı)* (İstanbul: Eren Yayınevi, 1990), xv, 55–58, 73–95; Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland."

[430] *Karye-i Ak ve Alınca – içinde oturan re'aya ve kullar yaya ile mahlût otura gelmişler* [BOA, TT 453 (1520), f. 277[a]]; *karye-i Göm(e)le tabi' Alınca – içinde olan eşhas yaya ile mahlûtdur* [BOA, TT 453, f. 278[a]]; *karye-i Ekberi At, kaza-i Göl – yaya ile mahlût oturur* [BOA, TT 453, f. 276[b]]; *karye-i Ku/ozca, tabi' Alınca, kaza-i Göynük – içinde olan eşhas yaya ile mahlûtdur kadimden böyle ola gelmiş* [BOA, TT 453, f. 277[b]]; *karye-i Kara oğlan tabi' Alınca – kadimden yaya ile mahlûtdur* [BOA, TT 453, f. 278[b]]; *karye-i İğdir tabi' Alınca – yaya ile mahlût oturırlarmış 'an kadim* [BOA, TT 453, f. 278[b]).

[431] Rudi Paul Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 50; Jacques Lefort, "Les communication entre Constantinople et la Bithynie," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland. Papers from the Twenty-seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, April 1993*, ed. Cyril Mango and Gilbert Dagron (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), 207–18; Jacques Lefort, "Les grandes routes médiévales," in *La Bithynie au Moyen Âge*, ed. Bernard Geyer and Jacques Lefort (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 2003), 461–72; Raif Kaplanoğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu* (İstanbul: Avrasya Etnografya Vakfı, 2000), 51–55. See also the map appended to Klaus Belke, *Bithynien und Hellespont*, vol. 13, Tabula Imperii Byzantini (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2020).



Map 3: The Mihaloğlu family's Harmankaya estate at the lowlands of the Middle Sakarya valley.



Map 4: The Mihaloğlu family's Harmankaya estate and its surroundings.

The strategic positioning of the Mihaloğlu landed estates is clearly discernable by their holdings in the Balkans as well, such as the estate around Pınarhisar, whose initial establishment is likewise associated with Mihal Beg. Although Ottoman narrative tradition credits a member of the Mihaloğlu family with playing a crucial role in the conquest of the region of Eastern Thrace and the Strandža Mountain slopes in 1369,[432] the family's strong presence in the area was only firmly established during the first half of the fifteenth century, when Mihal Beg established his endowment in support of his monumental complex in the then Ottoman capital Edirne—comprising of a *zaviye/imaret*, *hamam*, and a bridge—, which he completed in 1421/22.[433] The operation of Mihal Beg's complex was supported by a pious foundation (*vakıf*) that funded the maintenance of the buildings and ensured the continuation of its functions. It appears that tracts of land in Eastern Thrace were granted to Mihal Beg in full proprietorship, which were later endowed to sustain the complex. Although the original charter (*vakfiye*) outlining the establishment and purpose of the foundation has not been preserved, making it difficult to determine the exact date of its creation, a sultanic decree (*ferman*) from 1514 ratified the landholdings of Gazi Mihal's foundation.[434] This decree confirms that several villages near Edirne—Pınarhisar, Gerdelü, Poryalu, Urum-beğlü, Sazara, and Manastır—had been granted to Mihal Beg by a Sultan Mehmed and later endowed to his foundation. The right of possession was reaffirmed by later sultans, Bayezid II and Selim I (1512–1520). The document does not specify which Sultan Mehmed is being referred to, making it most logical to infer that it was Mehmed II, given his reign prior to Bayezid II. However, considering that Mihal Beg died in 1435/36[435] and Mehmed II only ruled briefly in 1444–1446 and then again from 1451–1481, it is more likely

[432] For a detailed discussion of the sources and the complex historical context see Mariya Kiprovska, "Pınarhisar's Development from the Late Fourteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century. The Mihaloğlu Family *Vakf* Possessions in the Area," in *Cities in Southeastern Thrace: Continuity and Transformation*, ed. Daniela Stoyanova, Grigor Boykov, and Ivaylo Lozanov (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2017), 183–93.

[433] The dedicatory inscription of the complex was published and analyzed in detail by Fokke Theodor Dijkema, *The Ottoman Historical Monumental Inscriptions in Edirne* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 17–18. Cf. Sedat Emir, "Edirne Mihal Bey Zaviyesi," *Arredamento Mimarlık*, no. 265 (2013): 98–105.

[434] The document is published by Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livâsı*, 246. The original *ferman*, the content of which was revealed by Gökbilgin, is stored in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi in İstanbul. At the time of Gökbilgin's writing, it was listed under number 57 in the Fekete collection. Since then, the archival collections at the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi have undergone a new cataloging process and are now generally organized based on the specific Ottoman state department that issued the document (with a few notable exceptions). Despite my efforts to search through various archival collections, I was unable to locate the original document, so I rely on the contents as presented by Gökbilgin.

[435] Mihal Beg was interred in Edirne, adjacent to his *zaviye/imaret*, in what eventually became a family cemetery. His epitaph indicates that he passed away in H. 839 (1435/36). The inscription on Mihal Beg's tombstone has been the subject of various interpretations and readings by multiple authors. A brief discussion of these differing interpretations can be found in Kiprovska, "Byzantine Renegade and Holy Warrior: Reassessing the Character of Köse Mihal, a Hero of the Byzantino-Ottoman Borderland," 259 (fn. 65).

that the document references Mehmed I, who secured his rule during the Ottoman civil war with Mihal Beg's crucial support.

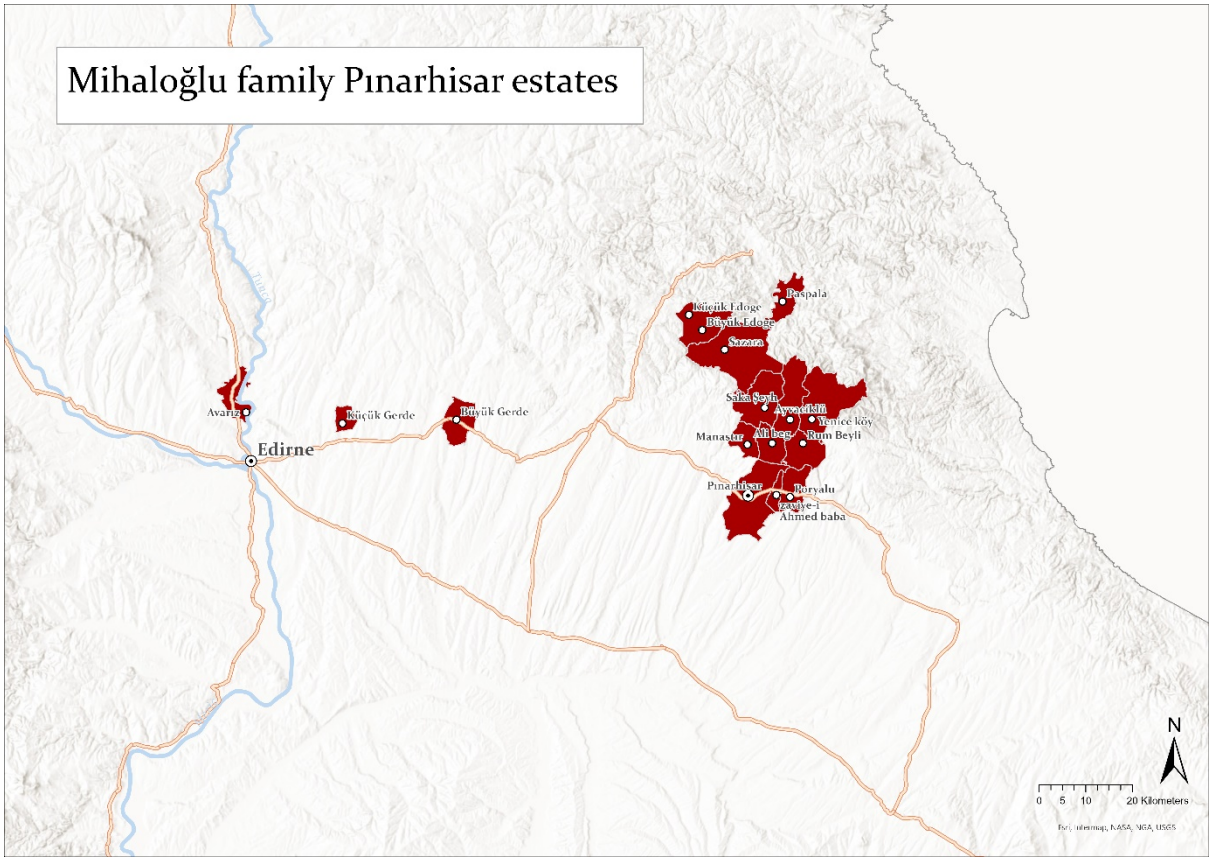
Based on the available evidence, it can be confirmed that an endowment was established to support the maintenance of Mihal Beg's complex in Edirne, probably shortly before he passed away in the mid-1430s. Additionally, the tax registers of the area indicate that the Mihaloğlu family held significant landholdings in the province of Edirne that were not part of Mihal Beg's endowment, but were instead passed down through hereditary ownership. These included several villages that had been granted in full proprietorship to Mihaloğlu İskender Beg by Sultan Bayezid II, and the rights to these lands (in equal shares) were inherited by his two sons, Yahşi Beg and Mahmud Beg.[436] Later on, these lands were passed down in inheritance to Yahşi Beg's three sons Hızır, Ahmed Beg, and Hüseyin Begs. Although these landholdings do not appear to have been directly connected to the *vakıf* estates of Mihal Beg's foundation near Kırkkilise and Pınarhisar, it is reasonable to suggest that İskender Beg was likely responsible for managing Gazi Mihal's pious foundation in Edirne during the fifteenth century. His two sons, Yahşi Beg and Mahmud Beg, seem to have later taken over the administration of the *vakıf* properties located east of Edirne as well. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate any of these settlements and cultivated lands, which prevents me from mapping them spatially. It is plausible that they were situated near the main estate around Pınarhisar, similar to some private landholdings in the Plevne domain, but at present I cannot confirm this supposition. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these sizable landholdings were not converted into endowments. Instead, they appear to have formed a distinct landed enclave that was inherited across at least three generations up until the end of the sixteenth century.

By 1530, when the earliest tax register of Gazi Mihal's endowed properties in the region of Pınarhisar was compiled, there was already a significant increase in the estate's landholdings. In contrast to the previous century, when the estate consisted of only six villages,[437] it had expanded to include Pınarhisar, which had developed from a rural settlement into a town, along

[436] The two brothers inherited the following villages from their late father, who received the land grants from Bayezid II: Gülmez Halil village (also known as Kara Yiğit, part of Kızıl Ağaç), Derviş Mehmed village (part of Kara Beğlü), Demurcu Hızır village (also known as Kara Beğlü, part of Kızıl Ağaç), İbrahim village (part of Kara Beğlü), Pomaklu village (part of Kara Beğlü), Komari village (also known as Sufiler and Kazıklu), the Kazıklu division (associated with Komari village, also called Sufiler and Kazıklu), and the Behadır mezra'a. These details can be found in BOA, TT 73 (1519), pp. 83–84; BOA, TT 77 (1519), pp. 327–328; and BOA, TT 370 (1530), p. 62. For the carrier paths of the father İskender and his two sons, refer to the previous chapter.

[437] According to the *ferman* published by Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livâsı*, 246. Another village, Havaroz (mod. Avarız köy), located less than 10 km north of Edirne on the banks of the Tundža River, was also part of Mihal Beg's foundation, as indicated from the earliest tax registers of the Edirne district, where it pertained administratively. Its revenues were allocated for the maintenance of Gazi Mihal's *imaret* in Edirne, as

with fourteen neighboring villages. These were: Ali beg (probably mod. Akören), Ayvaciklü (mod. Evciler), Büyük Edoge (mod. Armağan), Büyük Gerde (mod. Büyükgerdelli), Havaroz (mod. Avarız), Küçük Edoge (now vanished), Küçük Gerde (now vanished), Manastır (mod. Çayırdere), Paspala (mod. İncesırt), Poryalu (mod. Poyralı), Rum Beyli (mod. İslambeyli), Saka Şeyh (probably mod. Kurudere), Sazara (mod. Çukurpınar), Yenice köy (mod. Yenice) (See Map 5).



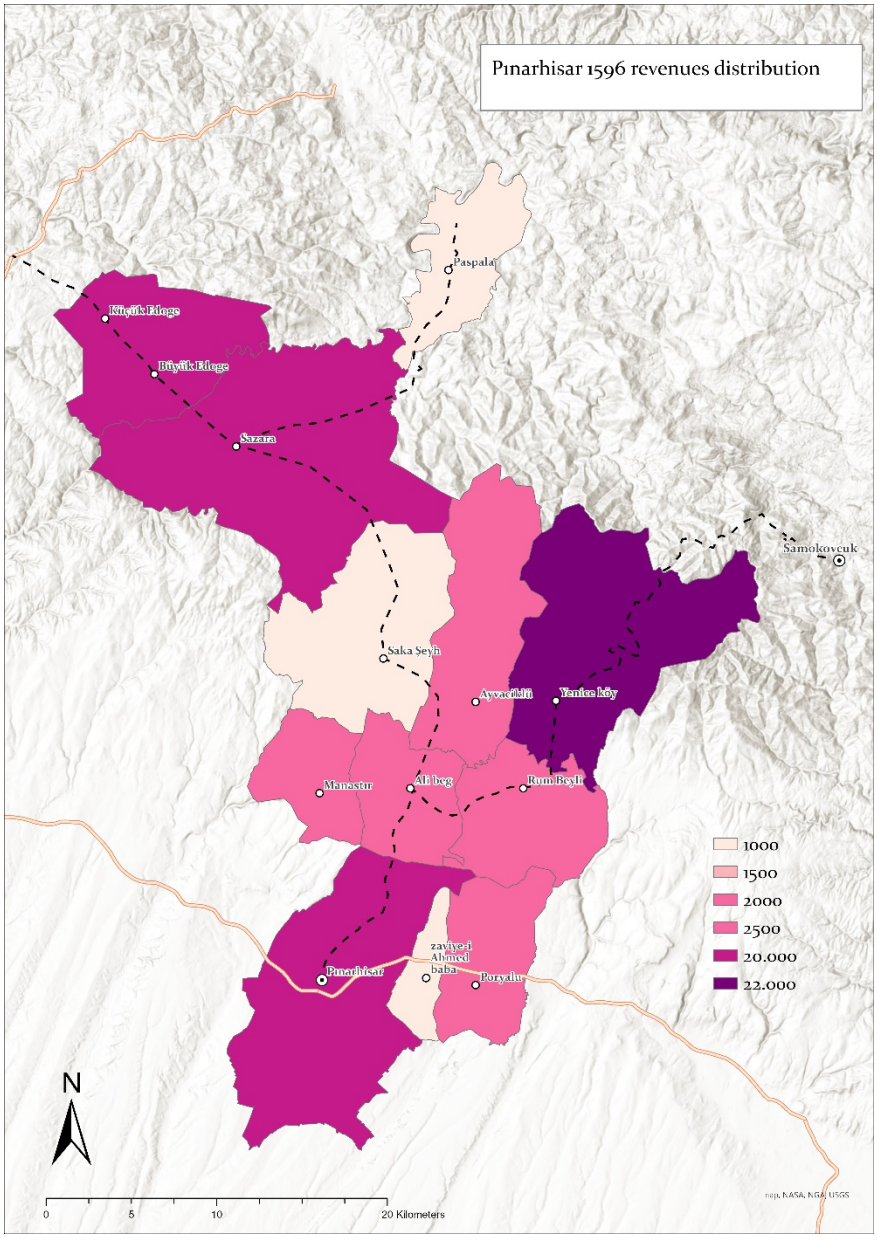
Map 5: The Mihaloğlu family's Pınarhisar estate.

An interesting observation regarding the internal development of the estate can be made from the sixteenth-century registration records too. While the population of the Muslim settlements remained relatively stable, the Christian settlements, which generated the highest income for the family endowment, experienced steady growth, with a remarkable population increase throughout the century. By the mid-sixteenth century, the population of the Christian villages had doubled, and by the century's end, it had tripled.[438] This rapid demographic expansion was

indicated in the records. Cf. BOA, TT 20 (1481), p. 66; BOA, TT 73 (1519), p. 14; BOA, TT 77 (1519), p. 97; BOA, TT 370 (1530), p. 12; and BOA, TT 498 (1570), p. 567. For further reference, see Gökbilgin, 245.

[438] See details in Kiprovska, "Pınarhisar's Development from the Late Fourteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century. The Mihaloğlu Family *Vakf* Possessions in the Area."

largely due to an influx of external settlers, many of whom were noted in the respective registrations as previously unregistered peasants (*haymane*). This suggests that the economic conditions and living standards in the *vakıf* villages were attractive to newcomers. The demographic growth significantly increased the endowment's revenue, which was primarily derived from individual taxes imposed on the population and on dues levied from the taxable production of the villagers. In 1530, the estate had a total population of 4,700 inhabitants and generated 54,443 *akçe*s in revenue. By 1596, the population had grown to 9,940 inhabitants, and the revenue had increased to 90,755 *akçe*s (See Map 6).



Map 6: Total revenues collected from the settlements of the Pınarhisar family estate.

In addition to favorable conditions set by the estate administrators, who had the authority to adjust the tax burden on their tenants, the estate's strategic location likely contributed to its growth. Situated at the crossroads of major trade routes, including the Via Diagonalis, which connected Istanbul to the Balkan hinterland and further north-west to Central Europe, and the northern routes leading to the ports along the western costs of the Black Sea, the estate must have also benefited from its proximity to the larger city of Edirne and the nearby iron mines of Samokovcuk (which were basically adjacent to the estate). These factors undoubtedly played a role in attracting new settlers and must have had an impact on the augmenting incomes (See Maps 5 and 6).

A similar rationale likely motivated the establishment of another Mihaloğlu family estate in the Balkans, specifically the İhtiman domain, which was situated directly on the Via Diagonalis route that crossed the peninsula and was in close proximity to another major iron mining center, namely Samokov (see Map 7). The establishment of the İhtiman estate is attributed to another family member who was active during the reigns of Murad II and Mehmed II.[439] While the original deed granting full ownership to Mihaloğlu Mahmud Beg has not survived, early sixteenth-century Ottoman tax registers for the region suggest that Mahmud Beg's endowment was based on a title deed (*mülkname*) granted by Bayezid II and later reaffirmed by subsequent rulers.[440] Mahmud Beg's foundation, which was supported by the incomes of over 20 villages

[439] The only narrative source that links Mahmud Beg to İhtiman is the fifteenth-century history of Enverî. According to Enverî, Mahmud Beg was the son of İlyas Beg, a *su-başı* and close companion of Bayezid I, who died heroically at the Battle of Ankara against Timur in 1402. İlyas Beg, in turn, was said to be the son of Balta Beg, who had come from Şam (Damascus) with Mihal Beg, likely referring to Köse Mihal. Enverî mentions that at the time of writing (shortly before finishing his work in 1465), Mahmud Beg had settled in İhtiman and was still living there, suggesting that he must have been active during the reigns of either Murad II or Mehmed II. Enverī, *Düstûr-Nâme*, ed. Mükrimin Halil Yınanç (İstanbul: Devlet Matba'ası, 1928), 90–91; Enverī, *Fatih Devri Kaynaklarından Düstûrnâme-i Enverî. Osmanlı Tarihi Kısmı (1299-1466)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2003), 40–41. Machiel Kiel misunderstood Enverî's text and suggested that it was not İlyas Beg, but Mahmud Beg himself who lost his life in the Battle of Ankara. Kiel's firm belief that the founder of the vakf died in 1402 on the battlefield near Ankara led him to assume that the endowment was created much earlier and, after being revoked by Mehmed II, was restored to its previous owner during Bayezid II's rule. However, the content of the Ottoman documents neither confirms nor suggests that any such abrogation occurred. Machiel Kiel, "İhtiman," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2000), 572; Kiel, "Four Provincial Imarets in the Balkans and the Sources about Them," 106–7; Machiel Kiel, "The Zaviye and Külliye of Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey in İhtiman in Bulgaria, Second Oldest Ottoman Monument in the Balkans," in *Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi'nin Hâtırasına: Osmanlı Mimarlık Kültürü*, ed. Hatice Aynur and A. Hilâl Uğurlu (İstanbul: Kubbealtı, 2016), 351–70.

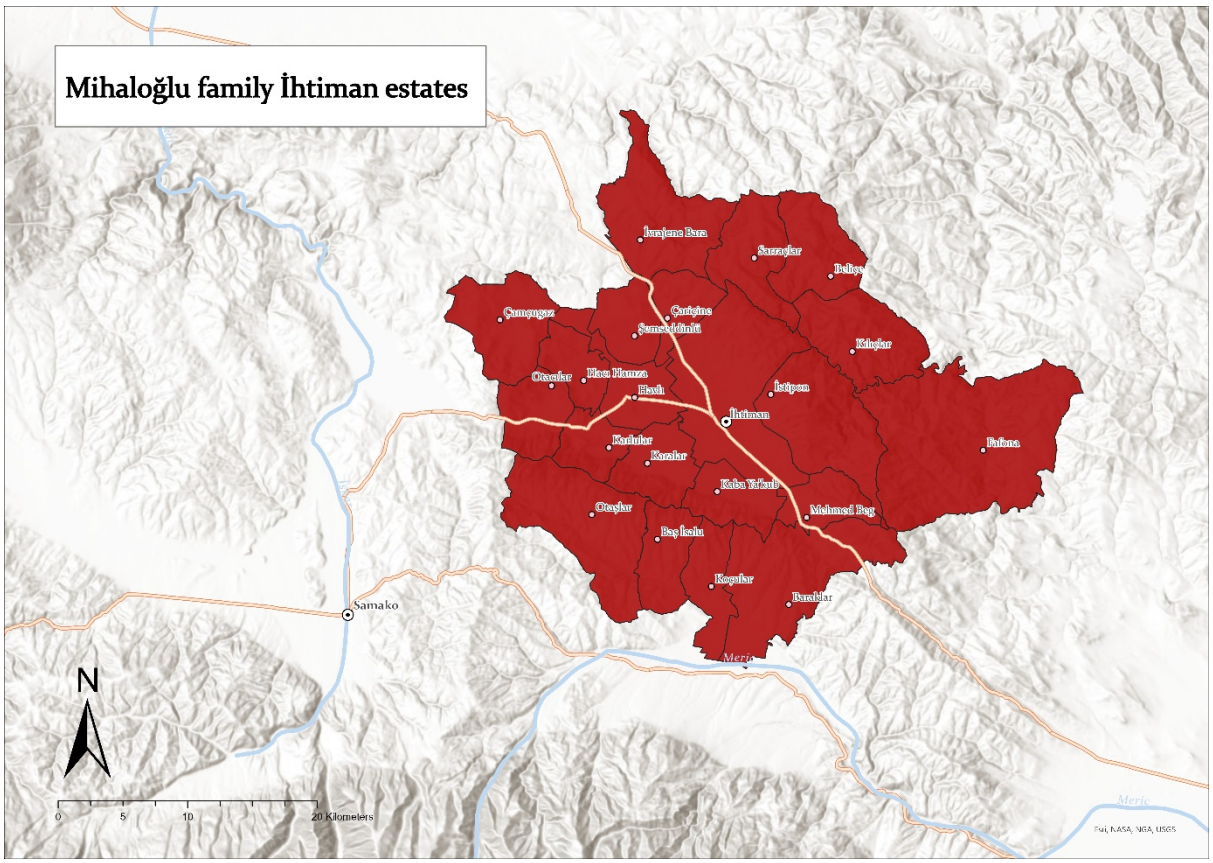
[440] According to the first surviving registration of 1519 (BOA, TT 82, f. 335), the lands in the plane of İhtiman were granted to Mahmud Beg, son of Mihal, by the late sultan Bayezid. From the following *defter*s it becomes clear that the *mülkname* was indeed issued by Bayezid II, since they explicitly note that the initial title deed of Bayezid was later corroborated by his descendants, sultan Selim [I] and sultan Süleyman [I], which affectively identifies the late Bayezid as Bayezid II. Cf. BOA, TT 130 (from 1525/6), f. 597–598; BOA, TT 409 (from 1525/6), f. 584 [=comp. p. 295]; BOA, TT 370 (*370 Numaralı Muhâsebe-i Vilâyet-i Rûm-İli Defteri (937/1530)*,

and the cultivated lands surrounding (and including) İhtiman, remained in the hereditary possession of his descendants for centuries, enduring until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.[441] The estate generated rather moderate incomes: bringing 3,6870 *akçe* in the 1520s, which augmented to 61,403 *akçe* by the end of the sixteenth century.[442] The population figures also do not suggest a very prosperous development: the total figures ranged between 2,594 inhabitants in the 1520s and 4,339 in the 1590s, with the Muslims rising steadily in numbers, while the Christians, contrary to the observed development in Pınarhisar, remained almost the same in numbers. It is noteworthy, however, that in nearly half of the endowed settlements, a significant portion of the inhabitants were registered as either *yürük*s (semi-nomadic livestock breeders, also organized as a separate corps in the Ottoman army with paramilitary duties) or *akıncı*s (raiders). This indicates that, much like the domain in Harmankaya, the İhtiman estate primarily fulfilled military functions. In addition to maintaining the endowed buildings, the domain supported the military contingents under the family's command. Its terrain was particularly well-suited for pastoralist nomads, offering abundant summer and winter pastures in the lowland İhtiman plain and the surrounding mountainous highlands respectively (See Map 8).

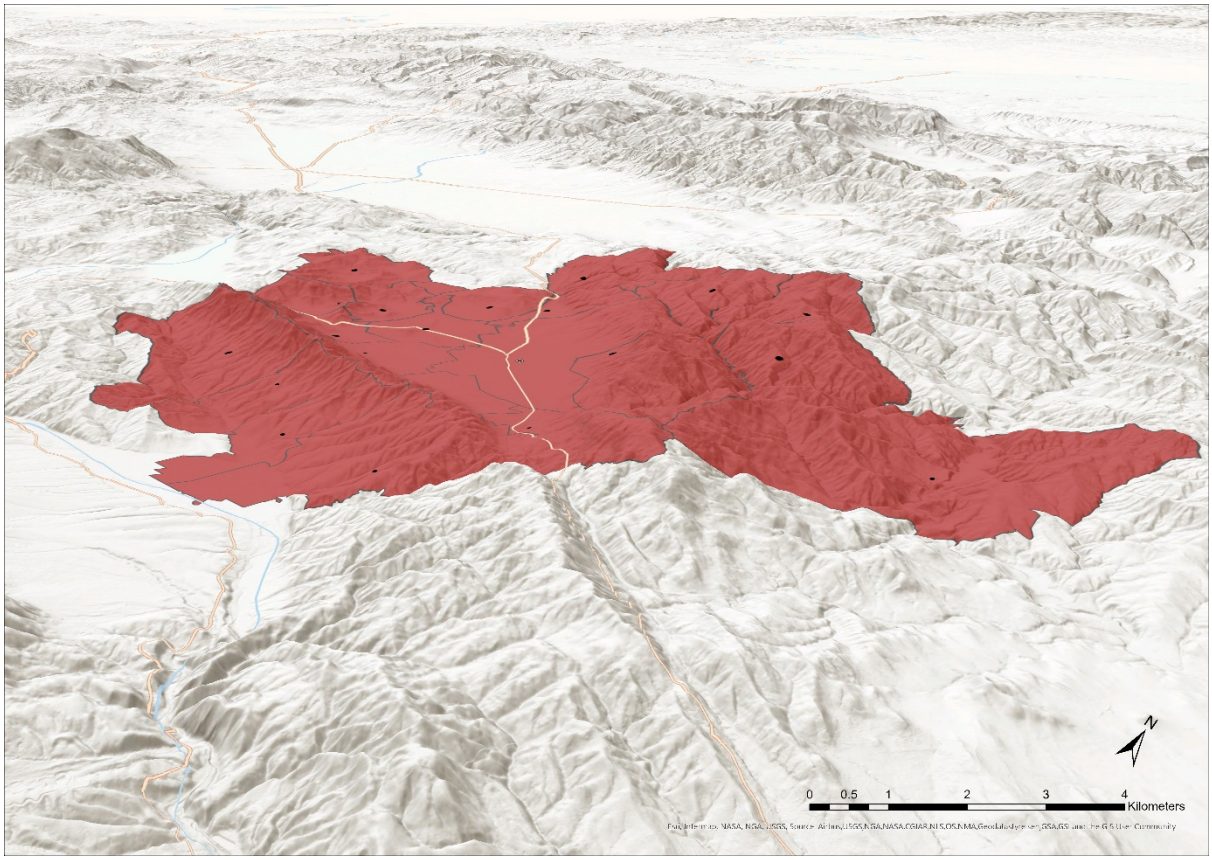
vol. 1. Paşa (Sofya) ve Vize Livâları ile Sağkol Kazâları: Edirne, Dimetoka, Ferecik, Keşan, Kızıl-ağaç, Zağra-i Eski-hisâr, İpsala, Filibe, Tatar-bâzârı, Samakov, Üsküb, Kalkan-delen, Kırçova, Manastır, Pirlepe ve Köprülü (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001), 202. BOA, TT 236 (from 1544/5), f. 607; BOA, TT 492 (from 1570/1), f. 724. The registration from the late sixteenth century includes the same information and adds that this land ownership was corroborated by sultan Selim II (1566–1574). Cf. the *defter*s from the last quarter of the sixteenth century: BOA, TT 539, f. 704; BOA, TT 566, f. 676; Tapu ve Kadastro Genel Müdürlüğü, Kuyud-u Kadime Arşivi [KuK], defter No. 61 (from 1596), fol. 356[b].

[441] [Veselin Yančev and Mariya Kiprovska], Янчев, and Кипровска, "Повратни времена: Ихтиманският вакъф на Михалоглу Махмуд бей от неговото създаване през XV до началото на XX в. [Times of Transformational Change: The Pious Endowment of Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey from Its Establishment in the 15th Until the Beginning of the 20th Century]."

[442] This information is derived from the following registrations: BOA, TT 409 (from 1525/6), BOA, TT 236 (from 1544/5), BOA, TT 492 (from 1570/1), TGKM, KuK 61 (from 1596).



Map 7: The Mihaloğlu family's İhtiman estate.



Map 8: The geographical terrain of the Mihaloğlu family's İhtiman estate.

The most prosperous and expansive family estate was established north of the Balkan range by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg during the reign of Bayezid II, who granted him the initial landholdings, on which the domain developed (See Map 9). Beginning with just three villages, Ali Beg gradually expanded the landed domain by acquiring additional lands and revenue-generating assets (by purchase) and founding new settlements through populating his freeholdings. By 1496, when he founded his pious endowment (*vakıf*), he was able to donate the revenues from over twenty villages, including the already developed town of Plevne, to support the foundation.[443] Another portion of his private lands was distributed by him as full proprietorship grants to his sons, daughters, and freed slaves. Ali Beg's descendants, in turn, secured the inheritance rights for their own descendants, effectively maintaining the Mihaloğlu family's collective ownership of the region for centuries. The prosperity of the Danubian estate exemplifies the cooperative effort of the family to develop an entire region, enhancing its assets and increasing its overall revenues, making it the most prosperous domain within the extended family, which had split into various branches. The Plevne branch of the dynasty appears to have been the most successful, arguably largely due to the effective management of its landed estates. Notably, through the efforts of various family members, the domain experienced continuous growth throughout the sixteenth century in both population and income. In the 1530s, it had a population of 9,182 (both Muslim and Christian) and generated an income of 173,812 *akçe*.[444] By 1555/6, the population had increased to 20,561, and the revenue had risen to 332,651 *akçe*.[445] This upward trend continued, and by 1579, the estate was home to 21,201 residents and generated 358,276 *akçe*,[446] a figure comparable to the income of a small Ottoman district (*sancak*) at the time. Its geographical location, like that of the other estates, does not appear to have been chosen by chance. It was strategically located at a key junction of several major roads that crossed the

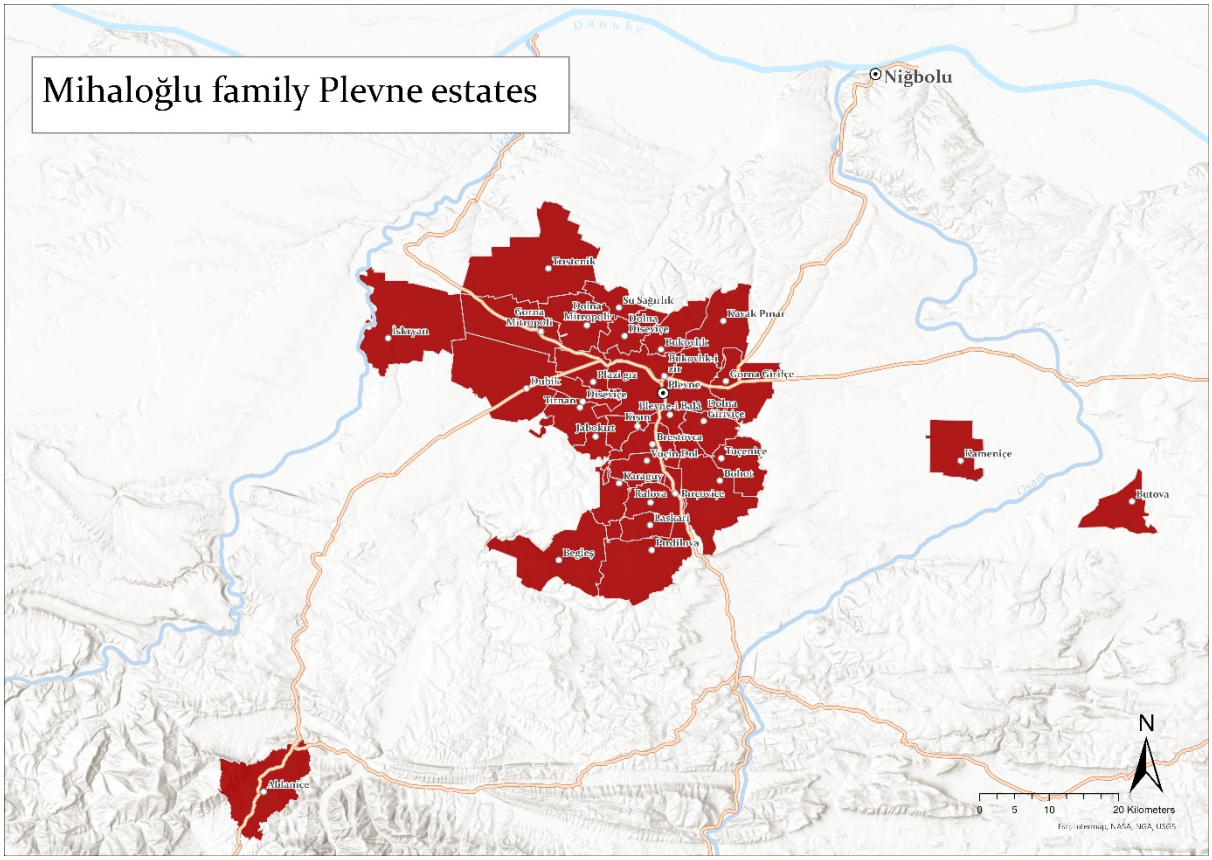
[443] The expansion of the initial landholdings is corroborated by both the *vakfiye* of Ali Beg, drawn up in 1496, and the tax registers of the Niğbolu sub-province, where ownership rights and exclusive privileges over the taxable population and produce are meticulously recorded. BOA, HR. SYS, dosya 310, gömlek 1, vesika No 51, fols. 1–8 [the original Arabic *vakfiye*]; Pir Muhammed bin Evrenos [Zaʿifi], *Külliyāt-ı Ẓaʿīfī*, BnF, Département des Manuscrits, Supplément turc 572, fols. 316v–320r [sixteenth-century Ottoman translation of the original by Zaifi]. The 1545/5 tax register of the Niğbolu district (BOA, TT 382, p. 675) also mentions that Bayezid II initially granted only three villages—Plevne, Dolna Giriviçe, and Kışin—along with their arable lands, in full possession (*temlik*) to Ali Beg, with exclusive rights over all taxes, including the poll tax on Christian inhabitants. These properties enjoyed full immunities on land revenue and peasant labor within their borders, and were freed from the interference of the state and its agents, as they were crossed out from the tax registers (*serbest mefruʿzü'l-kalem ve maktuʿü'l-kıdem*). In addition to the endowed estates, the 1545/5 (BOA, TT 382, pp. 675–765) and 1579 (TKGM, KuK 559, fols. 74a–130a) tax registers provide further details on the inheritance of other privately owned lands (*mülk*) by different family members, making it possible to trace both the family's lineage and the practices of consolidating land ownership across generations.

[444] BOA, TT 370 (1530), pp. 518–522.

[445] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 675–765.

[446] TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 74a–130a.

Eastern Balkans from west to east and north to south. Two main routes passing through the estate connected the Danubian plain with the major urban and military centers along the Via Diagonalis to the south, namely Sofia and Filibe (mod. Plovdiv), and linked them to the Danubian port and stronghold of Niğbolu to the north. From Niğbolu, the route crossed the Danube and split into two major arteries, extending northward to the Saxon Transylvanian centers of Sibiu/Hermannstadt (via the Olt River valley) and Braşov/Kronstadt, respectively. Another major road crossing the Danubian plain from west to east connected the Danubian fort of Vidin to Plevne (via Kutlofça, mod. Montana), and extended further east from Plevne to the Danubian port and stronghold of Rusçuk (mod. Ruse). From there, it crossed the Danube and continued northward to Bucureşti, branching out further to the north, northwest, and northeast, linking to other key urban trade centers in Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia.



Map 9: The Mihaloğlu family's Plevne estate.

Collective Endeavor: Embedding Landownership into Group Identity

The Plevne family estate exemplifies how a landed domain was established, transformed, and preserved across multiple generations by different family members. It demonstrates that their focus extended beyond the accumulation of personal wealth, while prioritizing the maintenance

of collective authority over the domain, even as it was divided among various members. Its historical trajectory is particularly well-documented, as it is currently the only big landholding for which an endowment deed is known to have been preserved. Additionally, the tax registers of the Niğbolu district provide extensive details regarding the inheritance of the privately owned lands (*mülk*) by various family members, making it possible to trace both the family's lineage and the practices of consolidating land ownership across generations. By assembling the available information, it also becomes plausible to suggest that the domain served as a training ground for developing administrative skills, which its managers later applied in their governmental careers.

The founder of the Plevne foundation, Mihaloğlu Alaeddin Ali Beg, established his endowment in 1496. It was intended to secure income—derived from taxes on the landed estates and from profitable assets such as shops, mills, and bathhouses—to support the institutions he founded in Plevne (including the *mescid-i camiʿ*, *ʿimaret*, *medrese*, *zaviye*, and *muallimhane*)[447] and to fund the wages of the employees working in these institutions (*hatib*, *imam*, *müezzin*, *müderris*, *şeyh*, *muallim*, *bevvab*, *kayyim*, *kilardar*, *aşçı*, *etmekçi*, *nakib*),[448] as well as the salary for the endowment's administrator (*mütevelli*).[449] He designated the revenues from eighteen villages to support his *imaret* and mosque,[450] while the proceeds from an additional five villages were allocated for the maintenance of his *zaviye*.[451] The stipulations of the Plevne family endowment required that the foundation be managed through inheritance by the eldest son of the founder, following the system of primogeniture, thus ensuring that the estate remained within the direct descending line of the family.[452] Despite the provisions of the endowment deed, however, it is challenging to ascertain the identities of the subsequent administrators from Ali Beg's lineage. However, hints can be found in several sixteenth-century sources, though they provide only partial information for specific time intervals. For instance, an amendment to the *vakfiye* (*zeyl*) from January 1505 stipulated that Ali Beg's eldest living son, Hasan Beg (Rumelian *beglerbegi*, 1505–1512), assumed the administration of his father's endowment from the previous *mütevelli*, a certain Karagöz b. Abdullah, whom the endower has chosen as the administrator

[447] Pir Muhammed bin Evrenos [Zaʿifi], *Külliyāt-ı Ẓaʿīfī*, BnF, Département des Manuscrits, Supplément turc 572, fols. 317v, 318v, 319r.
[448] Ibidem, fols. 318v–319r.
[449] Ibidem, fol. 319r.
[450] The following villages were bequeathed to the *imaret*: Begleş; Brestovca; Bukovlık; Butova; Dolna Giriviçe; Dolna Mitropoli; Gorna Mitropoli; İskryan; Karaguy; Laskari; Pırçoviçe; Pırdilova; Plazi gız; Plevne; Plevne-i Balâ; Tırnan; Tuçeniçe; Vuçin Dol.
[451] The revenues from the following settlements supported the *zaviye*: Bukovlık-i zir; Jabokırt (Novasil, n.d. Jabokırt – evolved by way of separation from Kışin-i Büzürg); Kameniçe; Kışın-i Büzürk; Kışın-i Küçük.
[452] Ibidem, fol. 320r.

of his *vakıf* before his sons reached maturity.[453] Based on this information, it can be inferred that Hasan Beg's elder brother, Hızır Beg, who was present at the establishment of the initial endowment in 1496, had already passed away, leaving the management to the next eldest living son.

Another clue appears in the mid-sixteenth century, when, on January 11, 1557, the poet Pir Muhammed bin Evrenos, known by his pen name Zaifi, translated the original Arabic endowment deed into Ottoman at the request of the foundation's administrator, Hızır Beg.[454] Zaifi knew Hızır Beg from his time as *müderris* at the Plevne *medrese*, a role he assumed in 1537 with the support of his patron, Sofu Mehmed Pasha (d. 1557).[455] Additionally, the inheritance of certain privately held lands around the town indicates that Hızır Beg was a grandson of Ali Beg through his son, Mehmed Beg.[456] Hızır Beg was a notable military leader during the reign of Süleyman I, and like his predecessors, he had strong ties to the principalities north of the Danube. He distinguished himself during the Moldavian campaign of 1538, which brought the principality under firmer Ottoman control.[457]

Further evidence about the Plevne endowment's administration comes from the appointment of Küçük Muhiddin Efendi as a *müderris* in Ali Beg's *medrese*. After studying under one of Prince Selim's (later Sultan Selim II (r. 1566–1574) tutors, Muhiddin Efendi took the position of *müderris* at the *medrese* in Plevne with a daily salary of 25 *akçe*. Shortly afterwards, he left this post to become a judge (*kadı*) in Akçakazanlık (mod. Kazanlak), a position he also vacated shortly thereafter. When Mihaloğlu Süleyman Beg, a grandson of Ali Beg and the then-administrator of the Plevne endowment, learned of this, he invited Küçük Muhiddin Efendi back to the Plevne *medrese*—a position Muhiddin accepted and held until his death in 1567/8.[458] Thus, another family endowment's administrator, Süleyman Beg—the son of Hasan

[453] BOA, HR. SYS., dosya 310, gömlek 1, vesika No 51, vr. 7.
[454] Pir Muhammed bin Evrenos [Zaʿifi], *Külliyāt-ı Ẓaʿīfī*, BnF, Département des Manuscrits, Supplément turc 572, fols. 316v–320r, where on fol. 320r he provides the exact date of the translation.
[455] Anhegger, "16. Asır Şairlerinden Za'ifî."
[456] The village of Yablaniçe, which was originally granted by Ali Beg to his eldest living son, Hızır Beg, as stipulated in the endowment deed, was later on inherited by the latter's son, Çalış Beg. BOA, TT 370, p. 518. After Çalış Beg passed away sometime in the early 1530s, the landownership was taken by his brother Mehmed Beg, who in turn passed it on to his own son Hızır Beg. After Hızır Beg's dead, the village was inherited by his daughter Şehribanu Hatun. BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), 755–757.
[457] Mihail Guboğlu, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın Boğdan Seferi ve Zaferi (1538 M. 945 H.)," *Belleten* 50, no. 198 (1986): 727–805.
[458] Câhid Baltacı, *XV-XVI Asırlar Osmanlı Medreseleri: Teşkilât, Tarih* (İstanbul: İrfan Matbaası, 1976), 86; [Orlin Sabev] Орлин Събев, *Османски училища в българските земи, XV – XVIII век* [*Ottoman Schools in the Bulgarian Lands, 15th-18th Centuries*] (София: Любомъдрие-Хроника, 2001), 204; [Orlin Sabev] Орлин Събев, "Родът Михалоглу и мюсюлманското образование в българските земи на Османската империя [The Family of Mihaloğlu and Muslim Education in the Bulgarian Lands of the Ottoman Empire]," in *История на мюсюлманската култура по българските земи. Изследвания*, ed. [Rossitsa Gradeva] Росица Градева

Beg/Pasha and a grandson of the initial endower—appears to have managed the *vakıf* while simultaneously serving as a prominent district governor of his time.[459]

As previously mentioned, alongside the private landed estates bequeathed to his endowment, Alaeddin Ali Beg, the founder of the Plevne foundation, allocated a portion of his personal assets to his heirs and key figures within his military-administrative household, particularly his freed slaves, likely as a means to secure their personal financial backing. Most of these landholdings bordered the endowed estates, not only expanding the territorial reach of the Mihaloğlu domain, but also enhancing its economic prosperity by establishing a dynamic connection between Plevne, the estate's urban economic and trade center, and its surrounding agricultural lands.

The *vakfiye* of Ali Beg clearly indicates that by the time he established his endowment, he had already distributed some of his landed assets. Four of his villages were associated with two of his male heirs—his sons Hızır and Hasan—and two individuals from his close entourage, namely his manumitted slaves, Yusuf b. Abdullah and Şamlı Hızır b. Abdullah. Although the endowment document does not clarify their connection to the villages where they were recorded as residing, later provincial registers from the Niğbolu province reveal that Ali Beg allocated shares of his landed assets to these and other specific individuals.

For example, the village of Yablaniçe, where Ali Beg's eldest son, Hızır Beg, resided at the time of the endowment's establishment in 1496, subsequently passed to Hızır Beg's son, Çalış Beg, who retained proprietorship rights over the village (*mülk*) until his death in the early 1530s.[460] Since Çalış Beg left no heirs, these rights were then transferred to his uncle Mehmed Beg (Ali Beg's son and Hızır Beg's younger brother). After the death of Mehmed Beg (d. 1536) the village was inherited by the latter's son Hızır Beg, who did not leave a male heir and thus the landed property went in the hands of his daughter Şehribanu Hatun.[461] Sometime before 1579, Şehribanu Hatun chose not to further subdivide the property among legal heirs. Instead, she sought to preserve its unity by endowing its income for the upkeep of the mausoleum (*türbe*) of one of the family's most distinguished members, Süleyman Beg.[462] Besides being one of the

(София: Международен център по проблемите на малцинствата и културните взаимодействия, 2001), 148. Sabev refutes Mehmed Sureyya's assertion in *Sıcill-i Osmani* that Mihaloğlu Süleyman Beg established a *medrese* in Akçakazanlık for Küçük Muhiddin Efendi. Sureyya appears to have misinterpreted information from Atai's seventeenth-century biographical dictionary, which states that Küçük Muhiddin Efendi served twice as *müderris* at the Plevne *medrese* before taking on the judgeship in Akçakazanlık. After leaving his post as *kadı* there, he returned to Plevne at Süleyman Beg's invitation, where he eventually passed away in 1567/8.

[459] For the known governmental positions of Süleyman Beg, refer to the previous chapter.

[460] BOA, TT 370, p. 518.

[461] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 755–757.

[462] TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 118a–119a.

renowned Ottoman provincial governors of the mid-sixteenth century, Süleyman Beg had left a significant mark on the town of Plevne by constructing one of its largest mosques and establishing an endowment to ensure its maintenance.[463] His prowess both on governmental and local level must have appeared attractive to his niece Şehribanu, who bestowed a substantial amount of revenues (amounting to 14,667 *akçe* in 1579) for the upkeep of his mausoleum in town, bolstering at the same time the collective identity of the Mihaloğlu noble lineage (see Maps 10 and 11).

Similarly, the village of Gorna Diseviçe (Diseviçe-i Bala), where Ali Beg's second oldest son, Hasan Beg, resided at the time the endowment deed was drafted, appears to have been granted to him in full ownership by his father. Subsequently, Hasan Beg allocated it as a dowry to his wife, Hani Hatun, the daughter of Yahya Pasha.[464] Over time, through inheritance rights, proprietorship of the village passed to their son, the above-mentioned Süleyman Beg.[465] Upon Süleyman Beg's death, the village and its incomes were inherited by his two sons, Hasan Beg and Mustafa Beg, as well as his daughter, Hüma Hatun. The shares were further subdivided when Süleyman's son Hasan passed away, with his share transferring to his wife, Zeliha Hatun, suggesting either the absence of progeny or that any heirs were minors at the time of recording.[466] In any case, the property remained within the lineage of Ali Beg's son Hasan Beg, though now divided among Mustafa Beg, Hüma Hatun, and Zeliha Hatun (see Maps 10 and 11).

Another village gifted to Hasan Beg by his father took a different path. The rural settlement of Dubnik was initially separated from Ali Beg's landed properties, who then transferred it as a gift to his son Hasan Beg. Hasan Beg, in turn, gifted it to his wife, Yahya Pasha's daughter Hani Hatun, in place of the eighteen thousand florins designated as her deferred dowry.[467] Unlike the other village in her possession (Gorna Diseviçe), which Hani Hatun eventually passed down to her heirs, she chose to endow the revenues of Dubnik to her own foundation. The income from Hani Hatun's endowment was designated for the maintenance of her mosque (*mescid*) in Üsküb and for the recitation of Quranic portions in Plevne in memory of her late husband, Hasan Beg (*nefs-i Plevne'de zevci Hasan Beg ruhiyçün on beş cüz okunur*)[468] (see Maps 10 and 11). This decision by Hani Hatun is particularly significant, as it reflects her dual sense of belonging to two noble lineages: her birth family, the Yahyapasha-oğlus, and her

[463] See the relevant sections below.
[464] BOA, TT 370 (1530), p. 518.
[465] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 743–745.
[466] TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 126b –127a.
[467] BOA, TT 370, p. 518.
[468] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 733–740; TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 113b–116b.

adopted family, the Mihaloğlus. By constructing a mosque in Üsküb, where her father, Yahya Pasha, had also established a substantial endowment, she reinforced her connection to her birth family. Meanwhile, by dedicating endowment shares for her husband's soul in his birthplace of Plevne, she further solidified her ties to her adopted family. In both instances, however, her identity as a member of the noble class shines through, emphasizing her noble background and affiliations with strong regional attachments.

Other women who were direct descendants of the Mihaloğlu family also played a role in preserving the private fortune and commemorating the family legacy. Such was the case with Mahitab Hatun, who, sometime prior to 1579, endowed her share of the village of Bohot (also known as Sof Pınar or Pınarbaşı) for the recitation of the Quran in memory of her son Ahmed Beg.[469] This village was originally gifted by the Plevne endower Alaeddin Ali to his third son, Mehmed Beg. Upon Mehmed's death, proprietary rights were passed to his three sons—Ali, Hızır, and İskender—before Ali Beg ultimately became the sole holder when Hızır and İskender relinquished their claims. After Ali Beg passed away, ownership transferred to his son, Ahmed. Upon Ahmed's death without surviving heirs, the inheritance, as determined by a certificate of kinship, passed to his uncle Süleyman Beg, son of Hasan Beg, and to Mahitab Hatun, Ahmed's mother, as well as to other family members.[470] During his lifetime (certainly before 1579), Süleyman Beg exchanged his share in Bohot for Mahitab Hatun's share in another village, Su Sığırlık, thus acquiring full ownership of the latter, while Mahitab Hatun's holdings in Bohot increased. Mahitab Hatun subsequently endowed her augmented portions in Bohot in memory of her late son, Ahmed Beg, while another portion remained under the ownership (*mülk*) of Aynişah Hatun, Süleyman Beg's daughter (see Maps 10 and 11).[471]

By way of inheritance Süleyman Beg became the proprietor of shares in two other villages, namely Gorna Girifçe (Giriviçe) and Su Sığırlık. Parts of the former village appear to have been granted by Alaeddin Ali Beg to his manumitted slave Yusuf b. Abdullah (mentioned also in the *vakfiye* as residing in this specific village), who, after populating his *mülk* with the permission of his patron, passed it on in inheritance to his daughters (Şemi, Huri, and Ayşe Hatuns),[472] whose progeny in turn inherited parts of Yusuf's landholding.[473] Based on subse-

[469] TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 119a–120a.
[470] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 746–748.
[471] TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 119a–120a.
[472] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 763–765.
[473] In 1579, the shares of Yusuf's daughters were passed on to their respective heirs: Şemi's share passed down to her daughters Cennet and Ayni; Huri's share – to her daughter Hanzade; Ayşe's share to her son Süleyman and her daughter Mahi. TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 129b–130a.

quent inheritance practices, it appears that the other portion of the village Gorna Girifçe (Giriviçe) remained under the full ownership of Yusuf's master, Alaeddin Ali Beg. Upon his death, shares were divided among his heirs, Hasan Beg and Mehmed Beg. Hasan Beg's share was inherited by his son, Çalış, whose rights of possession were transferred to Mehmed Beg after Çalış's passing in the early 1530s.[474] The thus augmented *mülk* share of Mehmed Beg in the village was subsequently passed down to his sons Hızır, İskender, and Ali *beg*s. When Hızır and İskender passed away, their shares were inherited by their brother Ali Beg, and later transferred to Ali's son, Ahmed Beg. After a dispute, ownership of the village went to Fatma Hatun, daughter of Mehmed Beg.[475] Upon her death, the property was transferred to Süleyman Beg, who endowed these newly acquired shares of the village to the mosque he built in Plevne. He also included the village of Su Sığırlık, which he had succeeded in fully appropriating through a previous exchange of shares with Mahitab Hatun in the village of Bohot (see Maps 10 and 11).[476] Süleyman Beg's initiatives arguably positioned him as the most active landowner in the Plevne region during the mid-sixteenth century, while simultaneously serving as the administrator of the family endowment established by his grandfather. He consolidated portions of his legal inheritances, exchanged some with other heirs, endowed part of his landholdings to his foundation in Plevne, and left additional portions as inheritance for his progeny, much like his grandfather had done at the close of the fifteenth century. This rise in Süleyman's authority as the patriarch of the family may have been partially facilitated by circumstantial factors, such as the notable increase in deaths among other male heirs. Nevertheless, Süleyman Beg—likely with the assistance of his household agents—proved instrumental in consolidating the estate, revitalizing the ancestral domain, and laying a stable foundation for the next generation of Mihaloğlu governors, all of whom, unsurprisingly, were his own descendants.[477]

Süleyman Beg's accomplishments notwithstanding, other members of the family also invested efforts in reviving the estate. Noteworthy in this respect are the trajectories of two villages that were connected to another illustrious ancestor of Süleyman Beg, namely his uncle

[474] BOA, TT 370, p. 518; BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 753–755.
[475] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 753–755.
[476] The village of Su Sığırlık was previously recorded together with Diseviçe-i zir (Dolna Diseviçe), but must have separated due to a population increase. It first appears in the registration of 1555/6, where the inheritance over its property are recorded as follows: it was a *mülk* of İskender Beg, son of Mehmed Beg (the son of Alaeddin Ali Beg). When İskender Beg passed away, the proprietorship rights were transferred to his brother Ali Beg. When the latter died, it was inherited by his son Ahmed Beg. Ahmed Beg died without heirs and the village passed on to his uncle Süleyman Beg, and to Ahmed Beg's mother Mahitab Hatun and others. BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 748–749. Prior to 1579 Süleyman Beg became the sole owner of the village by compensating Mahitab Hatun and the other heirs of Ahmed Beg with his shares in the village of Bohot. In 1579 Su Sığırlık was recorded as part of Süleyman Beg's own endowment. TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 116b–117b.
[477] See the previous chapter.

Mehmed Beg (the son of Alaeddin Ali Beg), who might well have been the administrator of the family endowment following his older brother Hasan Beg/Pasha and preceding his son Hızır Beg, and his nephew Süleyman Beg. The village of Ralyova, which was recorded in the tax registers of the district only in mid-sixteenth century, had been transformed into a settlement prior to this date. According to the records, the landholding was previously within the boundaries of the properties of Alaeddin Ali Beg, but it had become desolate and a place for thieves. To revive this abandoned area, the son of Ali Beg, Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg, most likely in his capacity of the endowment's *mütevelli*, donated and transferred the village of Ralyova, along with all its boundaries, rights, and dependencies, to one of his own men, Halil Voyvoda, who was also his relative. Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg also transferred ownership of twenty-five individuals from among the tenants of the village of Bohot to Halil Voyvoda, who settled them in the area of Ralyova, and established agricultural and grazing activities for them. Hence, Halil Voyvoda acquired full ownership over the village, which was hereafter inherited by his heirs (see Maps 10 and 11).[478]

Another such a collective effort in revivification of the landed estate is observable in the village of Trıstenik, which was likewise recorded in the provincial registers only in the mid-sixteenth century, although its name strongly suggests that it was established by settlers from the Serbian Trstenik (northwest of Alaca Hisar), possibly by Alaeddin Ali Beg himself when he was the governor of Semendire. This supposition, however, remains currently unconfirmed. From the tax records, it appears that Trıstenik, located on the borders of Plevne, was once a deserted place with a spring. In order to revive it, Ali Beg's son Mihaloğlu Mehmed Beg—while governing the district of Hersek and after conquering the fortress of Bilay (possibly Bjelaj in mod. Bosnia and Herzegovina)—, had relocated fifteen married non-Muslim families to the site and settled them there. Later, his son Hızır Beg, upon conquering the fortress of (B)Tresava (unidentified), also relocated ten married non-Muslim families and settled them in the same village. After their father passed away, Hızır Beg and his male siblings shared the inheritance. Following Hızır Beg's death, his daughter, Şehribanu Hatun, and the remaining family reached an agreement regarding the ownership of the mentioned village, according to which the village was confirmed as the property of Hızır's brother, İskender Beg. After İskender Beg's death, with no surviving heirs, the property passed through inheritance to his brother Ali Beg. Upon

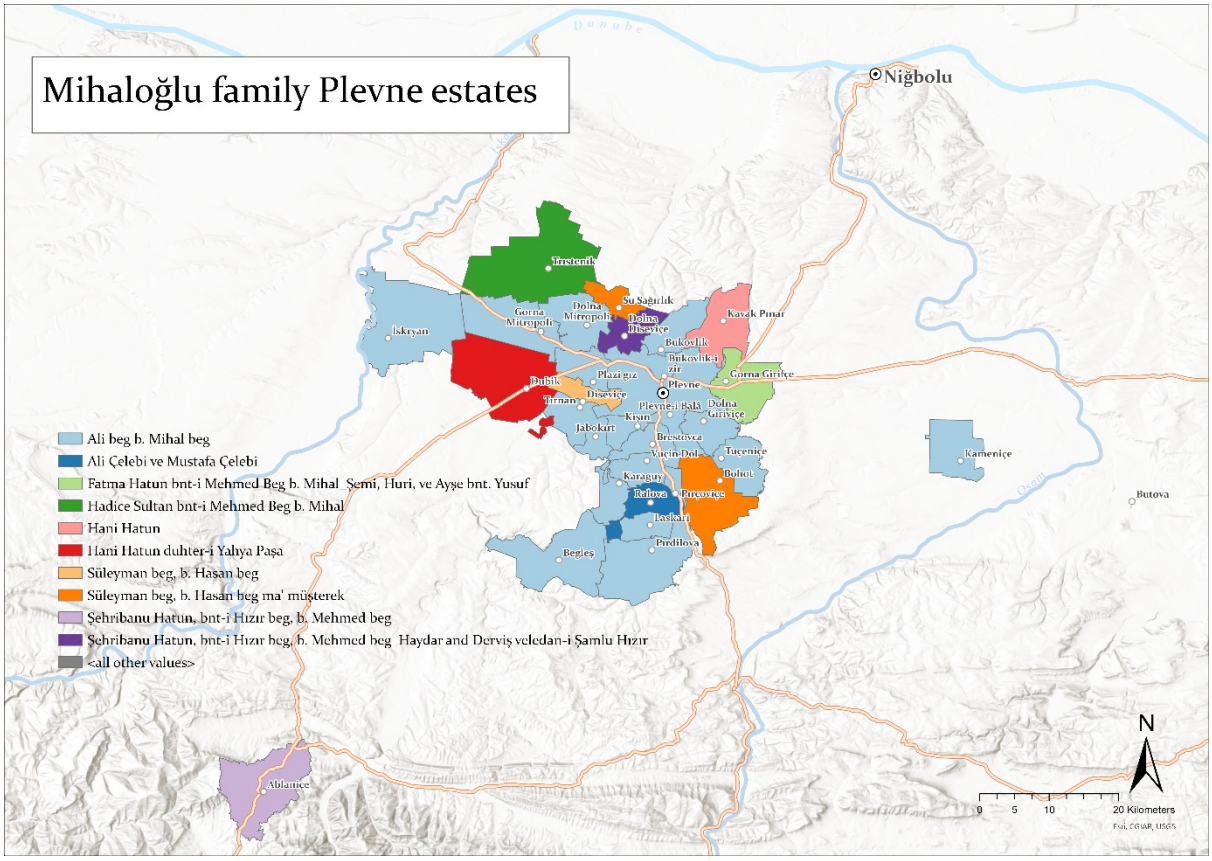
[478] In 1555/6 in was in possession of two of the sons of Halil Voyvoda, Ali Çelebi and Mustafa Çelebi. BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 759–761. When Ali and Mustafa passed away, the share of the deceased Ali has been inherited by his son Halil and his daughter Ayni, while the share of the deceased Mustafa has been inherited by his daughter Hadice and his sister Fahrunnisa. TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 127b–128a.

Ali Beg's death, it was then passed on to his son Ahmed Beg. However, a dispute arose among the heirs, and the property was ultimately ruled to belong to Hadice Sultan, the daughter of Mehmed Beg and sister of Hızır, İskender, and Ali *beg*s (see Maps 10 and 11).[479] Hadice Sultan had subsequently endowed the incomes of the village to the mosque she erected in the heart of Plevne.[480] It is highly likely that this Hadice Sultan, the daughter of Mehmed Beg, was the product of her father's marriage to the unnamed granddaughter of Bayezid II and the daughter of Hersekoğlu Ahmed Pasha. If that were the case, as her name certainly suggests, Hadice Sultan's architectural patronage at the heart of her father's ancestral domain strongly indicates a profound sense of belonging to her family, the Mihaloğulları. Unlike Yahya Pasha's daughter, Hani Hatun, who chose to build her mosque within her father's sphere of influence in Üsküb, Hadice Sultan's decision to establish her mosque in her family's residential center reflects a bold statement of honorable belonging to the Mihaloğlu dynasty while still preserving an honorific title that indicated her lineage from the ruling dynasty. This act not only solidified her position within the Mihaloğlu dynasty and her attachment to the family estate but also reinforced the shared class identity that connected several noble houses, the Hersekoğlu, the Osmanoğlu, and the Mihaloğlu.

The cases examined thus far are exemplary in several ways. They illustrate how family members often collaborated on inheritance decisions, frequently favoring one heir over another, and exchanged property shares to strengthen their individual estates. Ultimately, they all invested in the same domain, either by founding their own endowments or by contributing to existing ones. These examples also highlight the collective efforts of multiple individuals to safeguard the estate through deliberate actions, such as revitalizing desolate and unsafe areas, which in turn enhanced the security and prosperity of the entire domain. The experience and skills gained from managing this collective endeavor likely served the family members well in their later careers as district administrators. In any case, the Plevne estate is as a prime example of how family lands, though subject to different inheritance practices and divided among numerous male and female heirs, remained within the family during the period under consideration[481] and endured as a collective private holding within the Ottoman suzerainty for the next

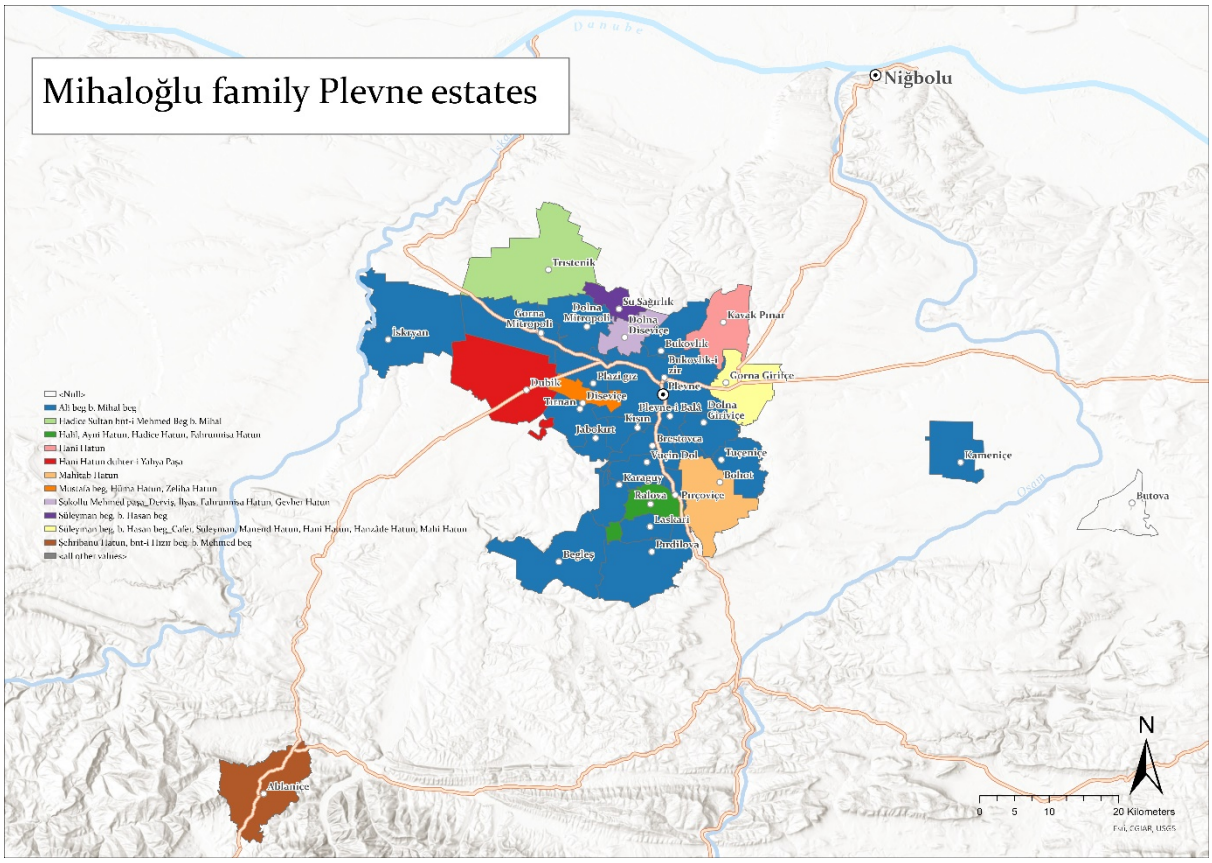
[479] BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 750–752.
[480] TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 74a–74b.
[481] There is only one example of a share of one of the privately held *mülk*s that was sold outside of the family. This was a share from the village of Dolna Diseviçe. The village was initially divided into at least two *mülk*s. One of the shares was in possession of the manumitted slave Şamlı Hızır Beg b. Abdullah, to whom his patron Alaeddin Ali Beg gifted the rights of possession. This *mülk* was later transferred in inheritance to Şamlı Hızır's descendants: first to his sons Haydar and Derviş, and later to Haydar's son İlyas and daughters Fahrunnisa and Gevher. BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 761–762; TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 129a–129b. Another share of the

three centuries. The unalienable lands forming the endowments became the mainstay of this collective identity, reinforcing a sense of belonging to a distinguished class of landed magnates with noble lineage.



Map 10: Multiple ownership within the Mihaloğlu family's Plevne estate, 1555/6.

village was in the hands of Alaeddin Ali's son Mehmed Beg. Mehmed Beg's *mülk* later passed on to his son Hızır Beg. Upon Hızır's death it was inherited by his daughter Şehribanu Hatun and her mother (an unnamed wife of Hızır Beg). Because of the debts of Hızır Beg, however, the two women were forced to sell it out to Sofu Mehmed Pasha sometime in the 1540s. BOA, TT 382 (1555/6), pp. 741–743; TKGM, KuK 559 (1579), fols. 125b–126a. Sofu Mehmed Pasha in turn endowed the so acquired *mülk* to the foundation he established in support of the complex he built in Sofia during 1447/8. Cf. [Paulina Andonova] Паулина Андонова, *Османският елит и благотворителността в центъра на провинция Румелия: имаретът на Софу Мехмед Паша при Черната Джамия в София, XVI – XIX век [The Ottoman Elite and Charity in the Centre of the Province of Rumelia: the Imaret of Sofu Mehmed Pasha at the Black Mosque in Sofia, 16th – 19th centuries]* (София: ИК "Гутенберг," 2020), 51–54.



Map 11: Multiple ownership within the Mihaloğlu family's Plevne estate, 1579.

Constructing Governance: Imprinting Piety and Benevolence on the Townscapes

Ottoman administrative and financial records reveal that several cities within the pious endowments and private properties in the province of Rumeli were controlled by private individuals who had established charitable foundations there. While it is unsurprising that most of the towns were held by Ottoman sultans, with their revenues supporting sultanic endowments such as mosques and *imaret*s, it is noteworthy that three privately owned urban settlements were under the control of the Mihaloğlu family. These towns—Pınarhisar, İhtiman, and Plevne—were granted to the Mihaloğlus in full proprietorship and remained their ancestral domains for centuries, while the development of these settlements was entirely shaped by their owners. These towns not only served as venues for the family's public construction projects—such as buildings, fairs, and infrastructure—but also as places where the Mihaloğlus demonstrated their piety and generosity. Through these efforts, they left a lasting imprint on the townscapes and engaged with the social groups that populated their centers of power. Most importantly, however, these ancestral strongholds and their associated estates became the stage where the Mihaloğlu family honed the art of governance. In the absence of personal documents from the governors about

their own domains, however, I propose interpreting the buildings they sponsored as ego-documents. These structures can be seen as reflections of the family's governing intentions and their relationship with the social fabric of the spaces they controlled.

Pınarhisar

Although Pınarhisar was originally part of Mihal Beg's endowment supporting his monumental complex in Edirne—which included a T-shaped *zaviye*/*imaret*, a *hamam*, and a bridge over the Tundja River, established in the first half of the fifteenth century—the town saw significant development only in the sixteenth century. It became the seat of one branch of the Mihaloğlu family and rapidly grew from a village into a sizable town, thanks to the construction of several public buildings under the patronage of Yahşi Beg and Mahmud Beg, the two sons of Mihaloğlu İskender Beg. As already mentioned, İskender Beg had been granted *mülk* lands in the neighboring Edirne district (in the *nahiye* of Kızıl Ağaç) by Bayezid II as a reward for his loyalty and military success, which were passed down in inheritance to his two sons, who in turn bequeathed them to their own progeny. It was not, however, these hereditary *mülk* lands, that were chosen by the family for their ancestral seat. It appears that, much like his more renowned brother Alaeddin Ali Beg—who established the family's largest pious foundation in the region of Plevne and made it an ancestral residence for his descendants—İskender Beg and his heirs selected the town of Pınarhisar as the center of their own ancestral domain, transforming it into another family seat.

It is unclear why the two sons of Mihaloğlu İskender Beg chose not to invest in their father's *mülk* estates, opting instead to develop the neighboring town of Pınarhisar. It is likely that they served as managers (*mütevelli*) of Gazi Mihal's vakf, from which they received income, and thus focused their investments on the foundation's estates to increase their profitability. Another plausible reason for their preference for Pınarhisar as a residence could be its history as a relatively important regional urban center, evidenced by remnants of its fortifications that still exist today. This would have made Pınarhisar a more prestigious location for establishing a residence compared to the sparsely populated villages near Edirne. Additionally, Pınarhisar's strategic position on a key route connecting Eastern Thrace and Istanbul to the Black Sea ports, along with its proximity to the Strandža Mountain iron mines, may have further influenced their decision.

Whatever the exact reason for their choice, it is clear that the two brothers were responsible for transforming the previously underdeveloped area, bringing prosperity to the region.

Yahşi Beg, in particular, was the main architectural patron of Pınarhisar, funding the construction of essential social and religious buildings, including a mosque, bath-house, and a *zaviye*/*imaret*. These projects not only elevated the status of the settlement but also made it a natural residence for his descendants. Among those who settled in Pınarhisar were Yahşi Beg's sons. One of them, Hüseyin Beg, owned plots of land within the town and a mill in the nearby village of Küçük Gerde.[482] Additionally, three individuals from Hüseyin Beg's close circle, referred to as *merdüm-i* Hüseyin Beg (Hüseyin Beg's trusted men), also settled in Pınarhisar and were listed in the tax registers.[483] Another son of Yahşi Beg, Hızır Beg, likely resided in the town but seems to have passed away before the 1569 registration, as only his wife (*zevce-yi Hızır Beg*), one of his freed slaves (*atik-i Hızır Beg*), and several associates (*merdüm-i Hızır Beg*) were recorded as residents.[484] A third son, Ahmed Beg,[485] probably also lived in Pınarhisar, and although he is not listed in the tax records, his son—another Yahşi Beg, likely named after his grandfather—owned a small plot of land in one of the town's quarters, further indicating the family's connection to Pınarhisar.

In 1530, Pınarhisar had three distinct neighborhoods: Mahalle-i Cami, Mahalle-i Silâhdar Ali (also known as Aşağı Mahalle), and Mahalle-i Yahşi Beg. The town had a main Friday mosque, although its name is not mentioned directly. However, its location and patron can be inferred from other evidence. The mosque appears in the tax registers from the second half of the sixteenth century as Cami-i Şerif.[486] Its operation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was supported by the revenues of a pious foundation established in the names of Yahşi Beg, Hüseyin Beg, and Hundi Hatun.[487] This evidence strongly suggests that the main Friday

[482] BOA, TT 541 (from 1569), p. 134, 164; TKGM, KuK No. 548 (from 1569) (an exact copy of BOA, TT 541), fols. 70b – 71b and 85b.
[483] BOA, TT 541 (from 1569), p. 135; TKGM, KuK 548 (from 1569), fol. 71b.
[484] BOA, TT 541 (from 1569), p. 134–136; TKGM, KuK 548 (from 1569), fols. 70b–71b.
[485] It is certain that Yahşi Beg had at least three sons, whose names are recorded in the *defter*s. The three brothers—Hızır Beg, Ahmed Beg, and Hüseyin Beg—appear to have jointly inherited their father's ancestral *mülk* properties north of Edirne, which were originally owned by Mihaloğlu İskender Beg. It is evident that İskender Beg's private domain was passed down through at least three generations, though part of it was eventually sold to the vizier Ferhad Paşa, which makes me think that, in analogy with the Harmankaya estate, the latter might well have been from the Mihaloğlu family line, but this remains unconfirmed for the time being. Cf. BOA, TT 498 (from 1570), 623–624; Gökbilgin, *XV.-XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livâsı*, 432; Gökçek, *Türk İmparatorluk Tarihinde Akıncı Teşkilâtı ve Gazi Mihal Oğulları*, 25; Yaşar Gökçek, *Türk İmparatorluk Tarihinde Akıncı Teşkilâtı ve Gazi Mihal Oğulları* (Konya: Alagöz Yayınları, 1998), 25.
[486] BOA, TT 541 (from 1569), p. 134; TKGM, KuK 548 (from 1569), fol. 70b.
[487] In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents concerning the appointments of personnel for the mosque, the pious foundation is referred to as *vakf-i cami-i şerif merhum Gazi Yahşi Beg ve Hüseyin Beg ve Hundi Hatun*. Cf. BOA, Cevdet Evkaf [hereafter: C.EV.], dosya 80, gömlek 3970 (from 1727); BOA, C.EV. dosya 204, gömlek 10166 (from 1785); BOA, C.EV. dosya 157, gömlek 7822 (from 1795); BOA, Cevdet Belediye [hereafter: C.BLD.], dosya 30, gömlek 1488 (from 1819); BOA, C.EV. dosya 137, gömlek 6832 (from 1819); BOA, C.BLD, dosya 60, gömlek 2989 (from 1829); BOA, İradeler, Evkaf Kayıtları [hereafter: İ.EV.], dosya 10, gömlek 10 (from 1895).

Mosque of Pınarhisar, around which a town quarter developed (still known today as Cami-i Kebir Mahallesi), is actually the present-day Hundi Hatun Mosque, located just below the medieval fortifications (See Fig. 9). Although it is now simply referred to as Hundi Hatun Camii,[488] it is clear that she did not build it. Rather, the mosque was likely supported by several family members, most probably connected through a descending family line—Yahşi Beg, his son Hüseyin Beg, and his granddaughter Hundi Hatun.[489] It can also be reasonably assumed that the person who originally built the mosque in Pınarhisar was Yahşi Beg's father, İskender Beg. Given that both of İskender Beg's sons later settled in the town, it is likely that İskender Beg chose Pınarhisar as his residence and constructed the first mosque there. This theory is supported by the fact that Yahşi Beg himself financed the construction of an entire complex in the town, which included a *zaviye*-mosque, an *imaret* (soup kitchen), and a *hamam* (bath-house). This complex is first mentioned in the Ottoman tax register of 1541, suggesting it was built between this and the previous registration, dating it to the period between 1530 and 1541, when indeed Yahşi Beg was active.[490] The complex included a mosque with its own *imam*, *hatib*s, and a *müezzin*. According to the seventeenth-century traveler Evliya Çelebi, one of the mosques in the town, likely the one built by Yahşi Beg, was a relatively small structure, though it attracted a large congregation. According to Evliya, the most significant structure was the *imaret*, which was covered with lead and stood out as the most monumental building in Pınarhisar.[491] The public kitchen within Yahşi Beg's complex prepared and distributed food to residents of the town and likely provided meals and shelter to travelers passing through.[492] The operation and maintenance of the complex, including the salaries of the mosque staff and the expenses for food served at the soup kitchen, were partially funded by the income from a small bath-house (*hamam*), which generated an annual revenue of 1,500 *akçe*.[493] According to Evliya, the *hamam* was a small building that was not commonly used by the locals, as most residents of

[488] The original design and appearance of the mosque remain uncertain. The current structure dates from the nineteenth century, when it was entirely rebuilt after falling into disrepair. An Ottoman document from 1895 grants permission for the mosque's repair, funded by the *vakf* of Yahşi Beg, Hüseyin Beg, and Hundi Hatun. BOA, I.EV. dosya 10, gömlek 10 (from September 19, 1895).

[489] This occurrence is not unique. A similar example is the mosque of Hacı Evrenos Beg in Yenice-i Vardar (mod. Giannitsa, Greece), which later became known as İskender Beg Camii after a subsequent sponsor. See Heath W. Lowry and İsmail E. Erünsal, "The Evrenos Dyansty of Yenice Vardar. Notes & Documents on Hacı Evrenos & the Evrenosoğulları: A Newly Discovered Late-17th Century Şecere (Genealogical Tree), Seven Inscriptions on Stone & Family Photographs," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 32 (2008): 54–67.

[490] For his identifiable governorates see the previous chapter.

[491] Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi. 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, 71.

[492] A record of the foodstuffs used in Yahşi Beg's soup kitchen, along with the daily expenditures for them, is preserved in the Ottoman registers. See BOA, TT 286, p. 86; BOA, TT 541 (from 1569), p. 165; TKGM, KuK 548 (from 1569), fol. 86a.

[493] BOA, TT 286, p. 86; BOA, TT 541 (from 1569), p. 165; TKGM, KuK 548 (from 1569), fol. 86a.

Pınarhisar had their own baths at home.[494] Additionally, the income from the town's inns likely contributed to the upkeep of the *zaviye*. Evliya Çelebi mentions that in the seventeenth century, there were three hans in Pınarhisarı, capable of accommodating 100 to 150 horses and mules.[495] It is probable that these inns were also constructed by members of the Mihaloğlu family, since the town was in their possession.

Fig. 9: The mosque of Hundi Hatun in Pınarhisar.

Fig. 10: The türbe of Binbir Oklu Ahmed Baba.

In addition to their involvement in rebuilding their ancestral residence in Pınarhisar and revitalizing and repopulating their family's rural domain, the Mihaloğlu patrons also appeared to have exerted influence over a dervish hospice (*tekke*) near the town (Fig. 10). Ottoman tax records from the sixteenth century reveal that the architectural patron of the *zaviye* of Binbir Oklu Ahmed Baba was Yahşi Beg's brother, Mahmud Beg.[496] The exact building date of the

[494] A photograph of the building before its demolition is kept in the Municipal Archives in Pınarhisar. It was published by Mustafa Özer, "Pınarhisar Çevresindeki Osmanlı Dönemi Yapıları," *Yöre Dergisi* 8, no. 86–87–88 (2007): 57.

[495] Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi. 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, 71.

[496] The *türbe* (mausoleum) of Binbir Oklu Ahmed Baba, which was once the nucleus of a bigger dervish convent, is situated in the modern village of Erenler, about 15 km east of Pınarhisar. For further details see Mariya Kiprovska, "Legend and Historicity: The Binbir Oklu Ahmed Baba Tekkesi and Its Founder," in *Monuments, Patrons, Contexts: Papers on Ottoman Europe Presented to Machiel Kiel*, ed. Maximilian Hartmuth and Ayşe Dilsiz (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2010), 29–45.

zaviye remains unclear, but it should be linked to the career of its patron, who was the district-governor of Çirmen in the early 1520s.[497] It seems also likely that it was erected between 1542 and 1569, as it is first mentioned in the registers from the latter year.[498] The records specifically refer to it as *zaviye-i* Ahmed Baba, and it was part of Mahmud Beg ibn-i Mihal Beg's endowment, with the income from a village allocated to the dervish convent. There is compelling evidence that the patron saint of the convent was not originally a venerated figure from the Bektashi or any other dervish order, but rather a historical member of the Mihaloğlu family, certain Ahmed Beg. The tekke appears to have been built around Ahmed Beg's mausoleum (*türbe*), which likely included a family graveyard. Ahmed Beg, later canonized into the Bektashi saintly pantheon, was venerated as a saint by both his descendants and the local community.[499]

İhtiman

The founding of the town can be attributed to Mihaloğlu Mahmud Beg, whose pious foundation (*vakıf*) in the region from the time of Bayezid II supported the charitable complex he built in the newly established town of İhtiman.[500] Although the available sources do not provide further details about the personality of the Mihaloğlu benefactor, it is clear that Mahmud Beg's sizable pious endowment was created to support the upkeep of the *zaviye* in the town of İhtiman (See Fig. 11). This *zaviye*, for which the endowment was established, seems to have been the central feature of the newly founded town. Around it, the family built several other public structures, including a *hamam*, inns (*han*s), a *mekteb*, and a *medrese*, forming the core of the urban area. The now neglected and ruinous structure represents an early example of a distinct type of building in early Ottoman architecture, variously referred to as a *zaviye*-mosque, *eyvan*-mosque, reverse T-shaped mosque, Bursa-type mosque, *imaret*-mosque, or cross-axial mosque. These were initially constructed as multi-functional buildings – offering shelter for the dervishes and

[497] See the previous chapter.
[498] As the registration from 1569 is the first, in which the *zaviye* of Binbir Oklu Ahmed Baba appears, it is likely that it was built sometime between 1541, when the convent was not included in the tax records of the province (i.e. in BOA, TT 286), and 1569, when its existence was already put on record in the *defter*s from that year. BOA, TT 541, p. 14; TKGM, KuK 548, fol. 8a.
[499] Kiprovska, "Legend and Historicity: The Binbir Oklu Ahmed Baba Tekkesi and Its Founder."
[500] Mainly based on the architectural features of the preserved buildings, Machiel Kiel is firmly convinced that the founding of the endowment should be referred to the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century. He believes that the endowment was abrogated by
Mehmed II and only restored to its previous owner during Bayezid II's rule. Cf. Kiel, "Kiel, "İhtiman," 572; Kiel, "Four Provincial Imarets in the Balkans and the Sources about Them," 106–7; Kiel, "The Zaviye and Külliye of Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey in İhtiman in Bulgaria, Second Oldest Ottoman Monument in the Balkans."

travelers, feeding the needy and providing a prayer space for Muslims – and were only later, in the course of the sixteenth century, used exclusively as mosques, as in most cases a minaret was added to the original structure.[501] The distinctive architectural style of T-shaped buildings, constructed exclusively during the early Ottoman period until the end of the fifteenth century, led Semavi Eyice to conclude that the *zaviye* in İhtiman was built by Mahmud Beg during his lifetime in the fifteenth century.[502] However, certain architectural features of the building—specifically, the barrel-vaulted prayer hall—prompted Machiel Kiel to suggest that its construction dates back to between 1380 and 1395/1400.[503]

Fig. 11: Mihaloğlu Mahmud Beg's *zaviye/imaret* in İhtiman.

[501] Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453," 159–91; Grigor Boykov, "The Borders of the Cities: Revisiting Early Ottoman Urban Morphology in Southeastern Europe," in *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, ed. Maria Baramova, Grigor Boykov, and Ivan Parvev (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 243–56; Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, "Lives and Afterlives of an Urban Institution and Its Spaces: The Early Ottoman *ʿİmāret* as Mosque," in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Boston; Leiden: Brill, 2020), 255–307.

[502] Semavi Eyice, "Sofya Yakınında İhtiman'da Gaazî Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey İmâret-Câmii," *Kubbealtı Akademi Mecmuası* 2 (1975): 59–61; Semavi Eyice, "Gazi Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey Camii," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), 462–63.

[503] Kiel, "İhtiman," 571; Kiel, "The Incorporation of the Balkans into the Ottoman Empire, 1353–1453," 167; Kiel, "Four Provincial Imarets in the Balkans and the Sources about Them," 106; Kiel, "The Zaviye and Külliye of Mihaloğlu Mahmud Bey in İhtiman in Bulgaria, Second Oldest Ottoman Monument in the Balkans."

Regardless of whether it was built by Mahmud Beg in the fifteenth century or by one of his ancestors at the end of the fourteenth century, the *zaviye* became the central point of the emerging urban center. By the mid-sixteenth century, it continued to provide shelter and food for travelers, who were likely numerous given İhtiman's strategic location at the junction of two important roadways—the main diagonal route from Istanbul to Belgrade and the road leading to the Adriatic coast via Samokov and Kyustendil. Guests at the *zaviye* were served wheat gruel, with a rice dish offered on Friday nights.[504] The operation and upkeep of the *zaviye* were partially funded by the revenue from a nearby *hamam*,[505] which is thought to have been built by the same patron, as it features similar masonry techniques and brick decoration, indicating a common construction date (See Fig. 12).

Fig. 12: Mihaloğlu Mahmud Beg's *hamam* in İhtiman.

In the seventeenth century, Evliya Çelebi noted the presence of three *han*s in İhtiman, specifically highlighting the large Beg *hanı*, which likely had a Mihaloğlu family member as its patron. Another frequently used *han* was known as Mihal, indicating that at least one additional inn was built, either by Mahmud Beg himself or one of his descendants. The Mihaloğlu family also

[504] Kiel, "Four Provincial Imarets in the Balkans and the Sources about Them," 108–9.
[505] BOA, TT 492, 725; TKGM, KuK 61, 357a.

sponsored two educational institutions in the town—a *mekteb* and a *medrese*—both of which are mentioned in sultanic decrees held by the last manager (*mütevelli*) of the foundation, Mihaloğlu Yusuf Ragıb Beg. Of these, only the location of the *medrese* is certain, as its substantial stone foundations were still visible in 1921 beneath the newly built elementary school across from the *zaviye*.

Today, the only surviving remnants of the Mihaloğlu family's extensive architectural patronage in İhtiman are the ruins of the *zaviye* and the well-restored *hamam*, which until recently was functioning as an art gallery.[506] The town's existence and development over the centuries were largely the result of the Mihaloğlu family's authority and administrative skill, which were effectively expressed through their architectural contributions. Yet, unlike Pınarhisar, the members of the family seem to have chosen as a place of residence not the town center, but one of the surrounding villages, namely Havlı (mod. Zhivkovo). It seems that the village was essentially created by some of the relatives of the founder of the İhtiman pious endowment, Mihaloğlu Mahmud Beg, and by his emancipated slaves. It appears in the sources as *karye-i Havlı – azadgan-i ve hʿişavendan-i merhum Mahmud Beg* (the village Havlı, manumitted slaves and relatives of the late Mahmud Beg).[507] Given the volatility to which İhtiman was exposed, being situated along the military road Via Militaris, it is reasonable to assume that the Mihaloğlu governors deliberately selected this specific location—on a slightly elevated hill overlooking the entire domain—as the site for their residential mansion. This strategic choice offered both a commanding view and a position of security for that specific branch of the family.

Plevne

The city of Plevne (modern-day Pleven) in Northern Bulgaria, where the Mihaloğlu family carried out their most extensive architectural patronage, served as the primary residence of the biggest family branch. The driving force behind the development of the urban center and its most significant benefactor was Mihaloğlu Alaeddin Ali Beg. He initiated the construction of the first buildings in the small settlement and attracted many new settlers by offering them tax exemptions. At the end of the fifteenth century, he ensured the maintenance of these structures

[506] Although designated as a monument of regional cultural significance, the bath was purchased by private entrepreneurs. Initially serving as the town's art gallery, it was later converted into a funeral agency. However, this decision was challenged by a competing funeral agency. When I last visited the town in the summer of 2023, I learned that the bath was up for sale by its current owners.
[507] BOA, TT 82, 336–337; BOA, TT 130, 604; BOA, TT 409, comp. p. 298; BOA, TT 370, 202; BOA, TT 236, 609–610; BOA, TT 492, 734–735; TKGM, KuK 61, 361b–362a = BOA, TT 539, 714–715 = BOA, TT 566, 686–687.

by endowing the income from the surrounding villages, granted to him by Bayezid II, to support his foundation. By the time the endowment charter was drawn up in 1496, Ali Beg had already constructed a bath-house (*hamam*), a mosque (*mescid-i cami*), a dervish convent (*zaviye*), a soup kitchen (*imaret*), a teachers' training school (*muallimhane*), and a college (*medrese*) in Plevne, funding their upkeep through the income from his privately owned land estates in the area (See Fig. 13). Before establishing the endowment, as it becomes clear from the endowment deed itself, Ali Beg significantly increased the income from his landed properties, adding new land through purchase or reviving previously uninhabited places.[508] He then divided these revenues, allocating one portion for the upkeep of his mosque and *imaret*, and another for the maintenance of his *zaviye* in Plevne. This careful distribution ensured that both institutions would be adequately funded and would not suffer from financial shortages.

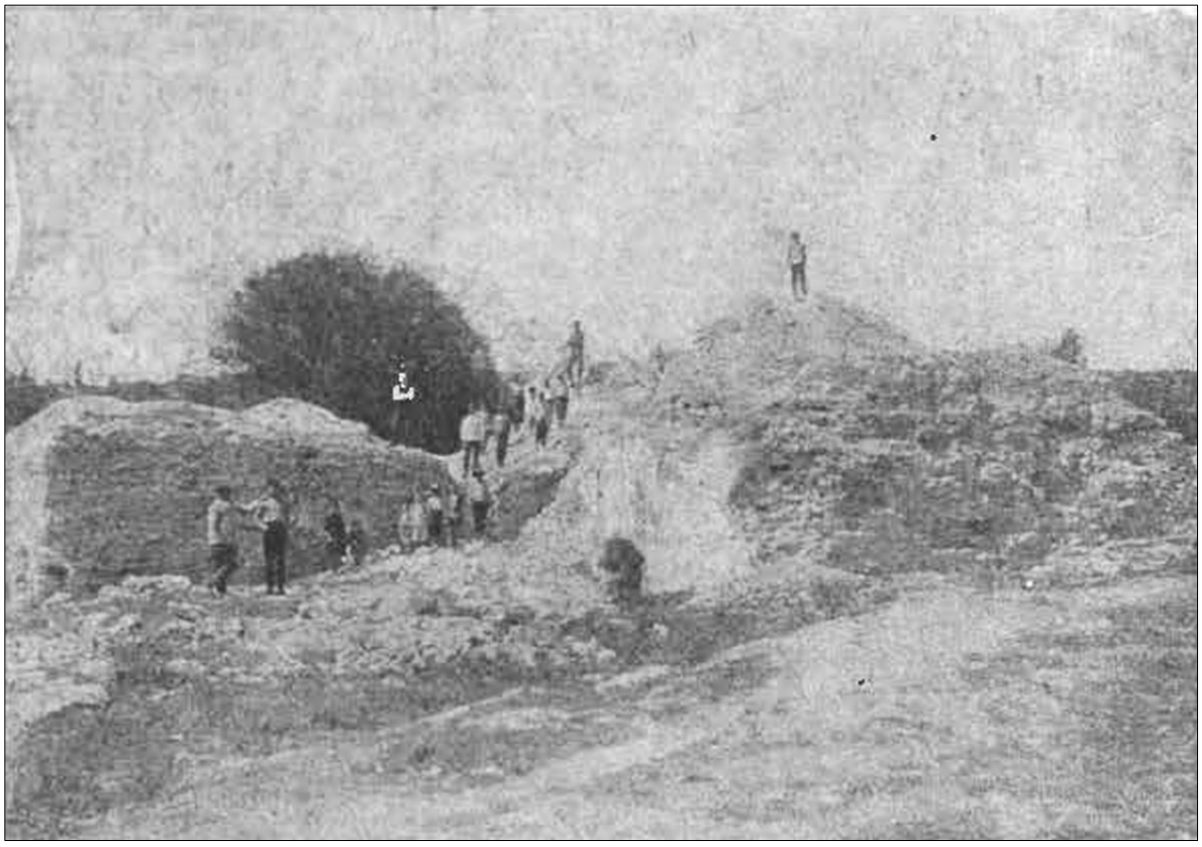


Fig. 13: Mihaloğlu Ali Beg's *hamam* in Plevne at the time of its destruction.
Photo: Bulgarian Central State Archives, archival fond 3 K, inventory 7, archival unit 344, sheet 40, year: 1877–1907.

[508] BOA, Hariciye Nezareti, Siyasi (HR. SYS.), dosya 310, gömlek 1, vesika No 51, vr. 1–6; Pir Muhammed bin Evrenos [Zaʿifi], *Külliyāt-ı Ẓaʿīfī*, BnF, Département des Manuscrits, Supplément turc 572, fols. 316v–319r.

In the sixteenth century, Süleyman Beg, the grandson of Ali Beg and the son of Hasan Beg, sponsored the construction of a *mekteb*. According to Evliya Çelebi, this school, along with Gazi Ali Beg's *mekteb*, was among the most notable of the seven schools in the town.[509] Süleyman Beg also patronized one of Plevne's most prominent Friday mosques, known locally as Kurşunlu Camii (See Fig. 14). As indicated by its dedicatory inscription, the mosque was built between 11 September 1561 and 30 August 1562 (See Fig. 15).[510] A whole city quarter, Mahalle-i Cami-i Süleyman Beg, developed around the mosque, as its name clearly suggests.[511]

Fig. 14: Mihaloğlu Süleyman Beg's mosque (Kurşunlu Camii) in Pleven (left). A postcard from the 1930s. Courtesy of Kaan Harmankaya.

[509] Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi. 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, 96.

[510] Yurdan Trifonov reports that Süleyman Beg Camii was also known as Koca Süleyman Beg Camii or Kadı Süleyman Beg Camii. At the time Trifonov was writing, early 1930s, the building was still intact, and he could see the dedicatory inscription above the entrance. [Trifonov] Трифонов, *История на града Плевен до Освободителната война* [*History of Pleven until the War of Liberation*]. Trifonov was the first to calculate the numerical value of the chronogram in the inscription, which encoded the mosque's construction date. He presented the chronogram as "mescid-i aksa-i sani oldu," with a numerical value corresponding to the year 927 H. (1521). Trifonov's interpretation was later questioned by Machiel Kiel, who proposed a later construction date of 981 H. (1573/4). Despite the building being demolished long ago, its dedicatory inscription is preserved in the Historical Museum in Pleven. Although the left bottom corner of the inscription is broken, the chronogram is still legible. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that there is an additional small word at the end of each line, leading to a revised reading of the chronogram as "mescid-u aḳṣa-ī sanī oldu, bīl," which corresponds to the year 969 H. (11 September 1561 – 30 August 1562). Felix Philipp Kanitz, *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan: historisch-geographisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1860 - 1879*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Renger, 1882), 198.

[511] This neighborhood appears for the first time in the registration of 1579. BOA, TT 713, 155.

Figure 15: Dedicatory inscription of Mihaloğlu Süleyman Beg's mosque in Plevne, 1561/2. Pleven Historical Museum.

The construction of several other mosques (*mescid*s) in Plevne can also be attributed to members of the Mihaloğlu family. Sixteenth-century Ottoman registers for the Plevne region document the existence of various city quarters named after the mosques around which the neighborhoods were centered. For example, there is a quarter called mescid-i Halil Voyvoda, whose patron was also a member of the family.[512] Halil Voyvoda, most probably a cousin of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg's son Mehmed Beg, played a key role in securing the previously uninhabited village of Ralyova (mod. Ralevo). This village had become a hideout for robbers, and Halil Voyvoda populated it with nearly three dozen of his own men, who were granted certain tax-exempt privileges.[513]

At least four additional neighborhood mosques were endowed by other members of the family, three of whom were women. One of these benefactresses was the wife of certain Hızır Beg, which makes it plausible to suggest that she was either the the wife of Mihaloğlu Ali Beg and the mother of his son Hızır Beg, or, more certainly, the wife of Ali Beg-oğlu Mehmed Beg and hence mother of their son Hızır Beg, who was active around the the time his unnamed

[512] BOA, TT 382 (from 1555/6), 681.
[513] BOA, TT 382 (from 1555/6), 759; Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler"; Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları (XV.–XVI. Yüzyıl)," 174.

mother established her endowment in Plevne. She appears as the patron of *mescid-i valide-i Hızır Beg*,[514] located in the city quarter that bears the same name.[515] One of Ali Beg's daughters, whose name is also unknown, built her own mosque in Plevne. Like the mother of Hızır Beg, her identity is overshadowed by the prominent men of the family, particularly her renowned brother Mehmed Beg, as her mosque was referred to as *mescid-i hemşire-i* [sister of] Mehmed Beg.[516] Part of the mosque's interior also housed a *tekke*,[517] making it likely that the daughter of Ali Beg was the patron of one of the six *tekke*s described by Evliya Çelebi in Plevne. The only woman to leave her personal name on Plevne's urban landscape was Hadice Sultan, the granddaughter of Ali Beg and daughter of Mehmed Beg from his marriage with Hersekoğlu Ahmed Pasha's daughter (and a granddaughter of Bayezid II). Hadice Sultan built a mosque in Plevne and endowed the income from her hereditary *mülk* in the village of Trıstenik for its upkeep.[518] This mosque also became the center of a neighborhood named after her.[519]

The family members continued to construct buildings in Plevne in the centuries that followed. In 1663, another mosque was built by Süleyman, the son of Mahmud Paşa from the Mihaloğlu family.[520] Although it was a large structure, it was demolished after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, along with most other Ottoman buildings in the town.

In addition to the religious and civic buildings, the erection of several commercial structures, if not all, can also be attributed to the family members. When Evliya Çelebi visited Plevne, he recorded the presence of six caravanserais, specifically mentioning one belonging to Gazi Mihal Beg. This caravanserai had been damaged during an attack by Wallachian leader Michael the Brave at the end of the sixteenth century but was later restored by the family to its

[514] From a *vakıf* register from 1540 (NBKM, OAK 217/8, fols. 34b–35a) it becomes clear that the mother of Hızır Beg created a pious foundation in support of her mosque, endowing the income from six shops for the salary of the *imam* and for the maintenance of and repairs to the building. Cf. [Tsvetkova] Цветкова, *Турски извори за българската история*, 467.
[515] BOA, TT 382 (from 1555/6), 678.
[516] NBKM, OAK 217/8, fols. 34b; [Tsvetkova] Цветкова, *Турски извори за българската история*, 456 (facsimile), 467 (Bulgarian translation). In the published edition the word *hemşire* is missing from the translation, but is clearly readable from the poorly reproduced facsimile.
[517] In 1540, the income from twenty-five shops in Plevne was designated to cover the salaries of the *imam* and *muezzin* for the small complex built by Mehmed Beg's sister. Additionally, these funds were allocated for the repair costs of both the *mescid* and the *tekke* within it. NBKM, OAK 217/8, f. 34b; [Tsvetkova] Цветкова, 456 (facsimile), 467 (Bulgarian translation).
[518] See the previous section of the current chapter. Cf. Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "İslâm - Türk Mülkiyet Hukuku Tatbikatının Osmanlı imparatorluğunda Aldığı Şekiller III. İmparatorluk Devrinde Toprak Mülk ve Vakıflarının Hususiyeti," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Mecmuası* 7, no. 4 (1941): 906–42; Sabev, "Osmanlıların Balkanları Fethi ve İdaresinde Mihaloğulları Ailesi (XIV.–XIX. Yüzyıllar): Mülkler, Vakıflar, Hizmetler," 238; Kayapınar, "Kuzey Bulgaristan'da Gazi Mihaloğulları Vakıfları (XV.–XVI. Yüzyıl)," 175.
[519] BOA, TT 713 (from 1579/80), 155.
[520] The dedicatory inscription is preserved and exhibited in the Pleven Historical Museum.

former grandeur. The name used by the Ottoman traveler strongly suggests that the *han* was originally built by a member of the family, possibly by Mihaloğlu Ali Beg himself.[521]

The architectural legacy of the Mihaloğlu family in their residential power base at Plevne was the result of an ambitious building program. Different members of the family sponsored a wide range of religious and secular structures, including mosques, dervish convents, public soup kitchens, baths, elementary and theological schools, and caravanserais (*hans*). Alongside their absolute ownership of vast hereditary lands in the surrounding area, the Mihaloğulları's extensive architectural patronage established Plevne as their most prominent ancestral domain.

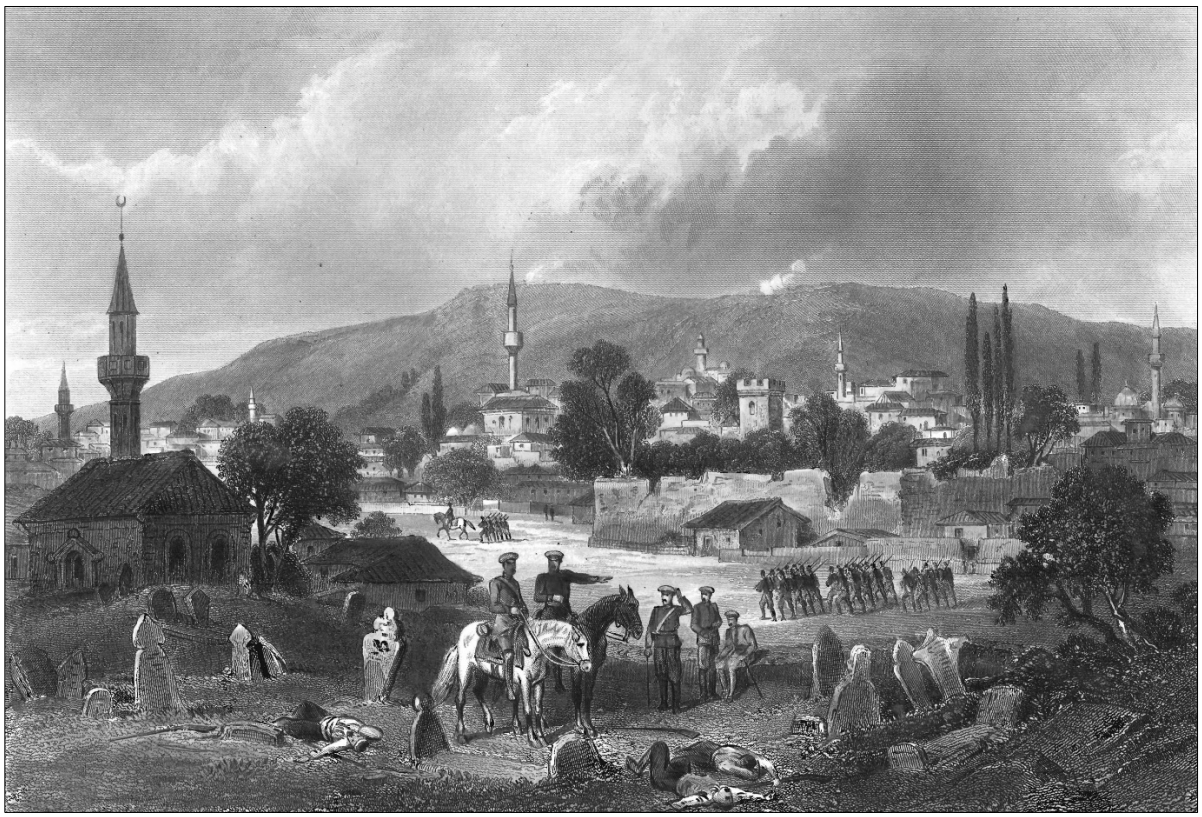


Fig. 16: The walled palace (saray) of the Mihaloğulları at Plevne.
Steel engraving from 1878 representing the siege of the city during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877/8 (engraved by Edward Paxman Brandard, printed by J. Ramage, William Mackenzie, publisher, London). Courtesy of Kaan Harmankaya.

The Mihaloğulları family residence in Plevne appears to have been a symbol of their authority in the city and a representation of their regional dominance. Remnants of their private dwelling were still visible at the beginning of the twentieth century and were referred to as "the Saray"

[521] It is likely that this was the same caravanserai where Felix Kanitz stayed in 1871. He described it as an old building located in the heart of the *çarşı* (market district), offering a magnificent view of Plevne's most beautiful mosque—Süleyman Beg Mosque. From his window, Kanitz sketched the mosque. See Kanitz, *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan*, 2: 197–98.

(Palace) until the 1930s (See Fig. 16).[522] While the exact date of the residence's construction is unknown, it likely dates between the late fifteenth century, when Alaeddin Ali Beg commissioned the surrounding structures, and the mid-seventeenth century, when it was described by Evliya Çelebi. Evliya noted that the Saray was a quadrangular fortification, with a multi-story palace within its walls, where the Mihaloğulları resided and governed the area.[523] The palatial house was evidently lavish and, along with the Mihaloğulları's architectural patronage, symbolized their dominance in the region. Today, only the northeastern and parts of the southern sections of the walls surrounding the family mansion remain (See Fig. 17). These remnants are clearly lower than the original structure, as the local historian Yurdan Trifonov noted in the early 1930s that a marble lion's head was prominently displayed near the main entrance at a height of 7–8 meters. The prominent placement of this sculpture at the entrance to the Mihaloğlus' residence in their key Balkan power base suggests that the family adopted the lion as their emblem. This symbol not only conveyed their unchallenged authority as regional rulers but also reflected their boundless courage on the battlefield and their military identity as provincial magnates. The lion also served a broader triumphalist message of victory.

[522] [Trifonov] Трифонов, *История на града Плевен до Освободителната война* [*History of Pleven until the War of Liberation*], 61 (plan of the walled part of the palace), 62–63.

[523] "Mihaloğulları çâr-kûşe handaksız bir küçük kapulu kal'a şekilli bir sûr inşâ edüp içinde kat-enderkat sarây-ı azîm binâ etmişler kim ta'rîf ü tavsîfden müstağnî bir sarây-ı mu'azzamdır kim içine beş âdem girse yerim dar demez. Cümle Mihaloğlu beğler bunda sâkin olup hükm-i hükûmât ederler." Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehemmed Zıllî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi. 6. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, 95.

Fig. 17: Remnants of the wall once surrounding the Mihaloğulları palace in Pleven.

A similar triumphalist intent can be seen in the conspicuous display of other reused objects at the mansion's entrance gate. Trifonov recorded that four iron relief plates were affixed to the large oak door, with the best-preserved one depicting the wedding at Cana (from the Gospel of John) with a caption in German, indicating that it was likely taken as war booty during one of the Mihaloğlus' raids in the Saxon-dominated regions of Transylvania (See Fig. 18).[524]

[524] Currently the plate is kept in the National Archaeological Institute with Museum in Sofia (Inv. No. 504) and it appears to have been once part of an iron stove, most certainly produced in the 16th century. I express my gratitude to Metodi Zlatkow, who helped me locate the plate and facilitated my access to it in the depot of the Museum. Biblical motifs on items of everyday use were a phenomenon of 16th-century Protestant milieu, reflecting the social, cultural and political effects of the Reformation and were used as objects of instruction, guidance, and persuasion during the age of confessionalization. Biblical scenes were also commonly cast on iron stoves from that period, which, however, being rather urbane and expensive items, were in use by the members of the highest strata of the society. See S. Funck and Ch. Otterbeck, *Bibel in Eisen – biblische Motive auf Ofenplatten des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Kassel: Evangelischer Medienverband, 2015).

Fig. 18: One of the iron relief plates once nailed to the entrance gate of the family mansion at Plevne, depicting the biblical story (from the Gospel according to John) of the wedding at Cana. National Archaeological Institute with Museum in Sofia (Inv. No. 504)

This use of spolia as a war trophy visibly carried triumphalist meaning, representing a bold claim of superiority over conquered peoples, territories, and traditions. Yet, a depicted tower in the middle of the enclosed palace, which might, by way of comparison with the Ottoman palaces, be identified as an *Adalet kulesi* (Tower of Justice), strongly suggests a symbolism of governing authority and the governor's role as the ultimate arbiter of justice, reinforcing the image of the Mihaloğlus as the protectors of law and order within their realm.

Conclusion

Besides skillful governors of a number of bordering districts that allowed the patrons of the family to practice their governmental, diplomatic, and military skills, their territorial estates were part and parcel of the family's elevated position in the overall Ottoman societal structure,

and allowed the formation of what could safely be called hereditary nobility. Surely, the successful military exploits of different family members were a prerequisite for the acquisition of lands (granted with certain immunities as private properties on the part of the reigning sultan) but a successful military-administrative career of a given member of the family was not enough to secure the inheritance of military-administrative posts, and, hence, hereditary social standing. It seems, however, that the hereditary private landed estates, parts of which were transformed into endowments by different family members, secured the heritability of a noble status that family members strived to preserve collectively. This collective endeavor, which depended on the successful management of the hereditary family pious endowment and the augmentation of its revenue-raising assets (mainly landed properties, but also tax-paying subjects who would augment the productivity of the lands, i.e. taxable produce, as well as income-producing buildings), resulted in the establishment of clearly distinguishable territorial enclaves within the imperial domains, governed by their respective benefactors. The creation of these lordships, it seems, was not only a common enterprise but it bolstered the creation of a collective identity centered on the regional family estates.

CONCLUSION

The historiographical debate on the relationship between the Balkan frontier lords and sultanic authority during the Ottoman state-building processes—often framed through the tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces—reflects a prevalent center-periphery model that dominates the study of pre-modern empires across Eurasia. This focus has led many Ottomanists to undervalue the role of these frontier lords in the broader Ottoman socio-political fabric. Frequently "marginalized" in contemporary interpretations of state-building, these powerful provincial elites, as I have argued, were far from being mere office-holders on the empire's periphery, subsumed by the centralizing ambitions of the Ottoman sultans. By employing a micro-historical approach, this study has not only "demarginalized" these elites but shed new light on the power dynamics and governance structures within the empire. Each section of the dissertation revisited long-standing historiographical frameworks, advancing the knowledge of Ottoman history by challenging key assumptions and introducing new evidence.

The first part of this study challenged the conventional historiographical view of Ottoman imperial consolidation, which typically highlights Mehmed II's centralization policies as a means to curtail the influence of the Rumelian frontier lords, asserting that the rise of centralized absolutism after 1453 marginalized these figures. However, by examining the involvement of the Mihaloğlu family in the political and diplomatic affairs of the post-fifteenth century Ottoman world, I demonstrated that these frontier lords were far from sidelined. They remained crucial in both domestic governance and inter-state diplomacy, actively shaping the political and diplomatic landscape of the Ottoman Empire and the wider region. The Mihaloğlu family's ability to impact political events reveals that the imperial center did not maintain exclusive control over governance. Instead, the interactions of these social elites, especially in managing regional politics and forging alliances with neighboring elites, suggest a dynamic of mutual dependence between the imperial center and the provinces, rather than a simple hierarchical relationship. This reframing of center-periphery relations contests the longstanding binary of centripetal versus centrifugal forces that has dominated Ottoman historiography and beyond. Moreover, the intricate interdependencies between sultanic authority and provincial elites indicate that the Ottoman state was far more decentralized than previously understood. Power was distributed among a variety of socio-political actors who operated within both regional and supraregional contexts. This new perspective opens fresh avenues for exploring the complex

balance of power in the Ottoman Empire and its broader implications for governance and diplomacy. It also calls for a reevaluation of the structural capacities of non-dynastic actors, emphasizing the need to recognize social elites as active participants in shaping the Ottoman political landscape.

The second part of this study confronted the long-dominant patrimonial governance model, which positions the sultanic dynastic household and its corps of slave-servants at the core of Ottoman state-building. Traditionally, this model assumes that, after the mid-fifteenth century, the semi-autonomous governance of frontier lord families, like the Mihaloğlus, was gradually supplanted by the centralizing efforts of the Ottoman sultans. These efforts are thought to have replaced regional power structures with military and administrative figures directly tied to the sultan. However, this entrenched historiographical paradigm loses credibility when regional dynamics and social compositions are considered. Through an examination of the Mihaloğlu family and its extensive military-administrative household, it becomes evident that provincial governance was not exclusively controlled by the sultanic center. The Ottoman socio-political landscape appears to have been far more decentralized, with powerful provincial elites like the Mihaloğlus wielding significant authority over local social and administrative processes and structures. This authority was not conferred by the central state but was instead grounded in the infrastructural power of these elites, who maintained their own governing apparatus through vast patron-client networks. By analyzing the Mihaloğlu household as a distributive power node, I demonstrated that provincial elites, through their household servants and military entourages, effectively managed local governance and played a substantial role in the administration of the empire. Furthermore, the Mihaloğlus' marriage alliances revealed that matrimonial unions strengthened the power of provincial elites and contributed to the formation of a distinct echelon of Ottoman governors who dominated the military, administrative, and social hierarchies well before the traditionally recognized period of "decentralization." These strategic alliances, combined with their loyal household retainers, positioned the Mihaloğlus as key actors in shaping social mobility within the Ottoman provinces. They were critical nodes in supplying the broader imperial socio-political, cultural, and military structures. This analysis departs from the binary understanding of Ottoman governance as a system where the sultan and his palace-based servitors held exclusive control over provincial officials. Instead, it advocates for an integrated approach that accounts for regional developments and dependency networks, offering a new framework for understanding the Ottoman governance model.

Similarly, the third part of this study challenges the conventional historiographical perspective on land tenure in the Ottoman Empire, which predominantly emphasizes centralized control of land as the domain of sultanic authority. Contrary to the prevailing narrative that links the growth of large private estates and the rise of provincial notables with the post-seventeenth-century deterioration of "classical" Ottoman institutions, my findings asserted that the accumulation of land as a source of power and wealth—and the corresponding formation of a powerful provincial elite—began much earlier. A detailed exploration of the Mihaloğlu family's estates revealed that private land ownership played a pivotal role in shaping provincial governance and the social hierarchy long before the seventeenth century. This challenges one of the most entrenched myths in Ottoman historiography: the denial of the existence of an Ottoman nobility. My analysis underscores the critical role of private land in consolidating not only economic power but also hereditary noble status. The successful management of these estates by the Mihaloğlu family enabled them to create enduring social and political influence, positioning them as part of a distinct aristocratic class within the empire. Their landholdings became both a source of wealth and a foundation for social continuity, allowing the family to preserve and expand their noble status across generations, in effect creating hereditary lordships that echoed feudal structures. Furthermore, these estates were instrumental in the formation of patronage networks, the forging of social connections, and the accumulation of governmental authority, all of which contributed to the broader "infrastructural" power of the empire. The creation of territorial enclaves governed by powerful provincial families like the Mihaloğlus illustrates that the Ottoman Empire was far more decentralized and polycentric than previously recognized, with multiple loci of power extending beyond the sultanic court. Revisiting the dominant historiographical framework, which marginalizes the role of private landowners in pre-seventeenth-century Ottoman history, and exploring more deeply how land, wealth, and power intersected to shape the imperial landscape, ultimately provides a richer understanding of Ottoman provincial governance and the significant role elite families played in the empire's socio-political order.

Finally, the findings of this study offer a refined analytical framework for understanding state-building processes in the Ottoman Empire, diverging significantly from the traditional view of a highly centralized, patrimonial sultanic authority consolidated through centrally orchestrated mechanisms, clients, and structures. Moreover, the study challenges the "hub-and-spoke" model proposed by Karen Barkey and embraced by much of the recent histriography, which characterizes Ottoman rule as a vertical integration of elites controlled by the imperial

center. Instead, the evidence points to a more decentralized and collaborative model of governance, where provincial elites operated within complex networks that extended beyond both Ottoman imperial boundaries and traditional state-centric frameworks. This shift not only deepens our understanding of the power dynamics within the Ottoman state but also broadens the analytical approach to Ottoman state-building, offering a more nuanced perspective. By situating the Ottoman case of state consolidation in its proper historical and contextual framework, the study aims to integrate it more accurately into broader comparative studies of imperial and state formations. These studies, which often rely exclusively on Barkey's framework, tend to overlook the complexities of Ottoman governance. Furthermore, the evidence presented in this dissertation has broader implications for the study of imperial governance in pre-modern states. It provides a comparative model for exploring the role of regional social actors in the governance structures of early modern empires, expanding the analytical lens beyond the Ottoman context and offering new insights into the participation of provincial elites in shaping imperial rule.

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