

Venetians and Ottomans in the Early Modern Age

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Festivities of Curfew

Centralization and Mechanisms of Opposition in Ottoman Politics, 1582-1583

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Abstract The Ottoman Empire was a dynastic state, as were its counterparts in Europe and Asia in the early modern period. In order to explain the characteristics of this dynastic governance model, it is essential to focus on how the Ottoman ‘state’ mechanism functioned. One of the prominent aspects of the dynastic state was the integration of politics in household units. Direct or indirect connection of people to these households was the main condition of legitimacy. Thus, the redistribution and succession strategies had a centralized importance in dynastic states. Since being a member of the dynasty was a given category, the state could be reduced to the house of the dynasty at the micro levels. This house transcended those living in it, and in order to sustain the continuity of the house, there was a need to create a ritual showing ‘the loyalty to the dynastic household’. This loyalty was the dominant factor in ensuring the continuity of the house, in other words, the ‘state’, and therefore, the succession strategies in dynastic states had a key importance.

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Keywords Murad III. Mehmed III. Şehzade Mehmed. 16th century centralization. Ottoman household system. Ottoman Empire.


1 Introduction

Mehmed II, who represents the ‘centralization’ of the Ottoman Empire, legalized fratricide in order to sustain this continuity. He attempted to rearrange the redistribution, reproduction and succession strategies in order to create a centralized household system (Peirce 1993, 15-56). The main characteristic of this model was the loyalty of his servants’ households to the house of the sultan. Besides fratricide, the Ottomans also created a multinational ruling elite in order to secure the continuity of their households. Since the early days of the Ottoman principality, non-Muslim subjects of the bey served him; however, after Murad II, Ottomans legalized levying Christian subjects of the sultan from his own territory, and after

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the conquest of Constantinople, Mehmed II institutionalized this system as the *devşirme* (non-Muslim recruits) system (Özcan 1994, 254; Uzunçarşılı 1988, 5-34; Kunt 1983, 7-12).

The main aspect of this system was to create a central army and ruling elite that belonged only to the Ottoman dynasty (cf. Wittek 1971; Köprülü 1994; Gibbons 1916; Lowry 2003; Kafadar 1995; İnalçık 1980a).

Since all kind of property belonged to the Ottoman dynasty, and because of the patrimonial character of the Ottoman government, the *şehzade* (imperial prince) participated in dynastic rule as their birthright (Kunt 2007, 65). The *şehzade* could be appointed as district governor in order to gain ruling experience as the candidate for the throne. Furthermore, this method prevented the princes from creating alliances in the capital to overthrow their fathers. Moreover, it was prohibited for them to stay in the capital, as the protectors of the throne, while their fathers were on campaigns. The retired high-ranking administrators were chosen as the deputies of the sultan while he was on a campaign. They were responsible for protecting the throne and sustaining the continuity of the house. Since the sultan's house represented the 'state', the location of his house represented the 'state authority'. Protecting the house of the sultan, which was located in Constantinople, was more transcendent than protecting the sultan himself; thus, protecting the house of the sultan meant protecting all cultural, economic and symbolic capital forms (Bourdieu 1986). During the transformation and crisis times, the sultan was questioned as the representative of all these accumulated forms.

Since the festivities were one of the most important public affairs in Ottoman history, they can show the political struggles, the rivalries and the query of the imperial order of the time. They also allow examining the mechanisms of opposition since all the groups within the empire represent themselves in this kind of events. In Ottoman history there were two types of celebrations. One of them was held for the important occasions for the royal family, such as circumcisions and weddings and the other was held for political occasions such as celebration of victories. These two occasions, and especially the ones held for the royal family, were important to show the loyalty of the other households to the sultan's one. The festivity of 1582 was the most influential one in terms of its scale; the events that occurred during the festivity show the fragility of the imperial administration during crises while the provincial posting ceremony of Şehzade Mehmed clearly demonstrates the political struggles in the late 16th century Ottoman Empire.

In this paper, I would like to focus on the relationship between Sultan Murad III and his son Şehzade Mehmed, since their relationship was an example of the changing dynamics of the Ottoman reproduction strategies (see Bourdieu 2014, 233-48), by addressing in particular the festivity that was held for the circumcision of Şehzade Mehmed and his provincial

posting ceremony for his *sancak* (district). During the study I will try to answer the following questions.

Why did Murad III need to organize a tremendous festivity for the circumcision of his son Şehzade Mehmed? Why did he make new arrangements in the protocol during the festivities? What was the main reason of the struggles between the cavalry soldiers and the janissaries during the festivities? Why did Murad III postpone the provincial posting of Mehmed III? Why did he apply a curfew for janissaries during the provincial posting ceremony of the *şehzade*?

The main sources for this study will be the Venetian sources because they narrate the incidences in detail, while the Turkish sources and the other European sources usually neglect the problems that occurred during the circumcision festivity of 1582 and the provincial posting ceremony of Mehmed III. The Turkish sources such as the *Surname-i Hümayun* (Imperial Festival Book), *Tarih-i Selaniki*, *Cami'ü'l-Buhur Der Mecalis-i Sur* and *İntizami Surnamesi* gave contradictory dates for the starting day of the festivity and other important days of the festival (Öztekin 1996; Baykal 1992, 65; Arslan 2009; İpşirli 1989, 131; Atasoy 1997; Turan 2004, 288). Foreign sources also dated the important events of the festivity differently (Özkan 2003; Stout 1966. Cf. also And 1982, 259-60; Reyhanlı 1983, 55-9).

2 The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582, or Sultan Murad III's Absolution Show.

In the last quarter of the 16th century, the Ottomans had to deal with a variety of problems, including the need to catch up with new military technology and the transformation of the *timar* (land revenue) system and monetization (Tezcan 2001, 2009, 2010; Kafadar 1986; Börekçi 2010; Ocakçı 2016).

Murad III had to adapt his governance method to these changes. He ascended to the throne on December 22, 1574¹, one week after his father Selim II's death on December 15, 1574² (for the discussions about Selim II's death cf. Emecen 2009, 417). Since the first days of his sultanate, he directly targeted the strengthened household of the Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha and tried to isolate himself from public affairs while transforming the classical administration methods. He consciously targeted the vezirial households and tried to break the power of the *divan-ı hümayun*

1 ASVe (ASVe), *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 7, 22 Dec. 1574, cc. 475-76.

2 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 7, 20 Dec. 1574, c. 469

(central government). The main reason of that struggle between the Ottoman high ranking administrators and Murad III was the rivalry for the control of the tax farming, which became a common practice with the enthronement of Murad III. The *enderun* (inner service) and harem gained huge importance with the distribution of the tax farming while the central government was losing its importance in the administration.

After the assassination of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and the restriction of the authority of the central government, the clients of the high-ranking administrators and the deceased Pasha wanted to use the janissaries as a tool to suppress the authority of Sultan Murad III. In this period, the Ottomans also had been fighting against the Safavids, and they could not achieve any relevant success. In order to show his authority to the public and to foreign states, Murad III decided to celebrate the circumcision of his son Şehzade Mehmed with an enormous festivity. He was planning to use the festival as an instrument to show his authority over his administrators, the janissaries and his son Şehzade Mehmed who was supported by the uneasy factions. It is a common tradition to organize this kind of festivities after military defeats to eradicate their negative effects on people. As Metin And indicated in his ground breaking book *40 days 40 nights*, Mehmed II had married Sitt Hatun with an ostentatious wedding after the defeat of Akçahisar. And after the unsuccessful campaign in Belgrade, he organized a tremendous circumcision festival for his sons Bayezid and Mustafa. Süleyman I had also organized fancy circumcision festivities for four of his sons on June 27, 1530, after the unfruitful siege of Vienna (And 2000, 19). In these cases, the sultans wanted to show their households' power and their generosity to the public even though they had been defeated in military campaigns. Murad III also wanted to show his authority by the help of this circumcision festivity; however, in this case, there was a difference. Murad III had not gained any important success against the Safavids, but the Ottoman army had not been defeated on any border. The main reason for this festivity was to show the absolute authority of the sultan to his own subjects since they were uneasy because of the economic and political transformation of the Ottoman Empire during the last quarter of the 16th century. The problems that emerged during the festivities clearly demonstrate the tension between the sultan's subjects. It would be wrong to say that the sultan was not interested in attracting the attention of the foreign states however, it is plausible to accept that while he was attempting to show his absolute authority to his subjects, he also wanted to ensure peaceful relations with the foreign states especially after the assassination of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who had preferred amicable relations with them.

Murad III scheduled the celebrations for March 1582, the overlap of two festivities: the arrival of *surre-i Hümayun* (Rebi'ülevvel 12; Buzpınar 2009) from Mecca and the arrival of *nevruz* (spring); however, due to the delay of

the arrival of the ships from Egypt bringing materials for the festivity (cf. Oku 2017), everything was postponed until the end of May (Terzioğlu 1995, 84). The invitations had been sent one year earlier to the Holy Roman Empire, Russia, Poland, Georgia, Persia, Morocco, Tunisia and the Ottoman vassals of *Transylvania* (Erdel) and *Ragusa* (Dubrovnik), whereas to Venice the invitation letter had been brought by the *çeşnigir* (Imperial Taster) of the Sultan Hasan Agha.³ High-level Ottoman administrators had also been invited to the celebrations (cf. Öztekin 1996, 98-100 for a copy of the Imperial edict). The sultan also appointed the *Rumeli beylerbeyi* (the general governor of Rumelia) İbrahim Pasha as the *düğünçübaşı* (supervisor of the wedding); the *Anadolu beylerbeyi* (the general governor of Anatolia) Cafer Pasha, who was the son-in-law of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, as the *serbetçi başı* (supervisor of the sherbet and the watchman); the *kapudan-ı derya* (grand admiral) Kılıç Ali Pasha as the *mimar başı* (supervisor of the architects); and the *yeniçeri ağası* (the chief of the *janissaries*) Ferhad Pasha as the *muhafız başı* (supervisor of the guardians) (Uran 1941, 12).

Before the official starting day of the festivity, the *valide sultan* (Queen Mother) Nurbanu organized festivities in the old palace or Bayezid Palace for the sultan and Şehzade Mehmed. After the celebrations in the palace, the sultan returned to the Topkapı Palace on May 26, 1582, with his retinue.⁴ Two days after their arrival at Topkapı Palace, the sultan and Şehzade Mehmed went to Ibrahim Pasha Palace at *At Meydanı* (the Hippodrome),⁵ where the festivities were to be held. There, the sultan oversaw the preparations for the forthcoming festivity.

On May 29, 1582, Şehzade Mehmed went to the old palace once again in order to visit his mother Safiye Sultan, and then he returned to *At Meydanı*, where his father was waiting. During this short journey, it was clear that Sultan Murad III wanted to prove that he was the only authority in the empire. Şehzade Mehmed rode his horse alone on this journey, and the high-ranking administrators were not allowed to accompany him. It was a usual procedure to send the princes to their *sancaks* after their circumcision with their retinue; however, Murad III still had not decided who would accompany the prince in his *sancak*. Also, nobody advised him as usual during his trip. During the ceremonies, it was understood that Murad III would not send his son to his *sancak* after his circumcision. Moreover, the janissaries who were accompanying him were disarmed; this could be understandable in the ordinary conditions since the prince did not have any right to rule before his circumcision; however, the idea arisen during the festival shows that the sultan made this decision consciously because

3 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, disp. 20, 28 May 1582, c. 86.

4 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, disp. 20, c. 86.

5 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, disp. 20, c. 87.

the janissaries were supporting Şehzade Mehmed against him. In addition, the *şehzade* was not allowed to adorn his horse, his dresses and his men.

On the 30th of June, the sultan had planned to go to Edirnekapı in order to sacrifice animals and to watch the race, which would take place from Çatalca to Edirnekapı in honour of his son Şehzade Mehmed, and afterwards, he was planning to return to the Topkapı palace. However, he was warned that the janissaries felt uneasy because they were not allowed to join the festivity. The sultan postponed his trip to Edirnekapı, as he was afraid that the janissaries could attempt a revolt against him; he wanted to find out more about these rumours. One night while the festivity was going on at *At Meydanı*, the janissaries set fire to three different parts of the city. The grand vizier Koca Sinan Pasha and the chief of the janissaries Ferhad Agha immediately left the festivity and went to the neighbourhoods which the janissaries had set fire to. They were hoping to extinguish the fire before it started to spread all over the city. They called the janissaries in order to negotiate with them; however, the soldiers refused the offer, saying that they could call the buffoons and the kind of people who were represented in the festivities and taken into consideration by the sultan. The janissaries knew that being included in a parade during a festivity represented their belonging, as a community, to the sultan's household. However, the sultan did not allow them to represent themselves as a separate entity since he suspected their actions against him, and because he knew they were supporting Şehzade Mehmed. This time, the tumult was suppressed by the help of the people before the fire spread to the other sides of the city; however, the grand vizier and Ferhad Agha knew that this was just the beginning. They wanted to find the responsible ones for the tumult and bribe them; however, they could not manage it.⁶

On July 15th, the 4th vizier Cerrah Mehmed Pasha, who was a surgeon and the barber of the sultan circumcised Şehzade Mehmed in the inner chambers of the Topkapı Palace as the official records had cited. Actually, the prince had been circumcised three years before this festivity. The reason for this postponement of the celebration was the sickness of Sultan Murad during that time. However, as it is made clear later, the real reason of the late celebration was the rivalry of the Sultan Murad and Şehzade Mehmed in the imperial administration (Pedani Fabris 1996, 268-70).

The sultan was planning to end the festivity two days after the circumcision but he was afraid that the janissaries might revolt. Even though the pashas suppressed their earlier attempt, these unruly *kuls* (servants) of the sultan were still restless. In order to satisfy them, the sultan prolonged the festivity for another ten days, thinking to make the chiefs of the janissaries happy during that time. Moreover, he was expecting news

6 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, 2 July 1582, c. 112

from Persia since his grandees such as the *beglerbegs* (general governor), *sancakbegs* and others were present in Constantinople for the festivity. In case of bad news from Persia, he was thinking to assign the grandees to the war. Meanwhile, a son of the sultan was born and his birth celebrated with fireworks at *At Meydanı*. Although it was done with the intention of being a good sign, the baby died the next day.

A couple of days after the prolongation of the festivity, a skirmish occurred between the janissaries and the cavalry soldiers. The cavalry tied up *subaşı* (superintendent) Bilmez Ahmed Çavuş and took him to *At Meydanı*, where the Sultan was watching the ceremonies, and after that, the chief of the janissaries Ferhad Agha came to the square with the janissaries. At that point, the soldiers started to fight and in this turmoil, the janissaries killed two cavalymen. The fight continued all night, and Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha held responsible Ferhad Agha for the disorder, therefore the *agha* was dismissed. In his place, the *emiralem* (chief of imperial band and tentsetters) of the sultan was appointed, and the *subaşı* was arrested and immediately sent to prison together with the others who were held responsible for this turmoil.⁷ After this, the sultan wanted to end the festivity, and on July 22 he returned to Topkapı Palace with Şehzade Mehmed.⁸ After a short while, queen mother Nurbanu appointed Ferhad Agha, who was dismissed during the festivity, as the *Rumeli beylerbeyi*, and the previous *Rumeli beylerbeyi*, İbrahim Pasha, was appointed as the fifth vizier.⁹

There had been tension between the cavalry soldiers and the janissaries for a long time since they represented the different groups within the empire. The cavalry had investments in tax farms after the 1560s; moreover, they were supported by the viziers, especially after the death of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha in 1579. When Murad III attempted to strengthen the power of the 'palace administration', he diminished the power of the 'central government', and in order to put pressure on Murad III's politics, the viziers started to use the cavalry soldiers. Since tax farming had started to become dominant in the Ottoman economy in the control of the palace administration toward the end of the 16th century, these soldiers became a balance factor between the Ottoman dynasty and the ruling elite (Akdağ 1947, 19; 1999, 89; İnalçık 1980b, 290-1; Turan 1997, 150-2; Ocakaçan 2016, 86-90). The janissaries also started to become tradesman at the end of the century, and due to the unfruitful campaigns, they were putting pressure on the Ottoman government since they could not earn money. As was common in the last quarter of the 16th century, they revolted against the changes in the Ottoman administration. During the reign of Sultan Murad

7 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, 21 July 1582, cc. 123-25.

8 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, disp. 31, cc. 133-34.

9 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 16, c. 182.

III, he tried to keep them out of the imperial politics in order to protect his household. As will be seen later, the janissaries always supported Şehzade Mehmed against Sultan Murad III hoping to regain their old privileges, and threatened the sultan.

During the festivity, it was observed that many changes were made by the sultan in the administration after his accession to the throne. It was not a coincidence that the janissaries were not involved in the festivity. The sultan consciously wanted to isolate them from the dynastic politics along with the ruling elite and the other important groups of the administration. The historian Mustafa Ali states that the sultan did not eat with the other important figures of the time, such as the *ulema* (the doctors of the holy law), viziers and other administrators of the Ottoman Empire and blames the grand vizier for not warning the sultan to eat with his officials (Öztekin 1996, 239-348). However, Sultan Murad III made all these actions consciously during the festivities. He preferred not to eat with his subjects as his grandfather Süleyman I always did during the festivities (Şahin 2018, 463-92). He wanted to show his subjects that he was the only authority in the administration of the empire by isolating himself from them. He was trying to eliminate those who were sharing his authority. One year after the assassination of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, he tried not to give the imperial seal to the grand viziers; however, he was forced to cancel his decree¹⁰ and after interrupting any direct connection with the grand viziers he put into effect the *telhis* practice. According to that, the results of the meetings of the *divan-ı hümayun* (central government) would be given to the sultan in written form by the palace administrators, mainly by the *kapiağa* (chief white eunuch) (Pal [1994] 2000). These changes in the imperial administration were the result of the centralization attempts of the empire. These changes also can be observed more easily in festivities and important days, as was seen during the circumcision festivities of Şehzade Mehmed.

3 Şehzade Mehmed's Provincial Posting Ceremony

Murad III also changed the imperial tradition of sending the princes to their *sancaks* after their circumcision. Şehzade Mehmed had to wait until his grandmother Nurbanu's death in order to be allowed to go to his district in Manisa. He was the last *şehzade* who went to a district in order to gain government experience, and also, he did not have any rival prince candidates for the throne. In fact, Murad III as well did not have

10 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 14, cc. 109, 139.

any rival while he was a prince in Manisa; however, he was aware of the rivalries between his uncle Bayezid and father Selim; moreover, he knew how the different *loci of power* supported the *şehzades* for the throne. One of the most important problems of the *şehzades* was the integration of their households into their father's household while they were being enthroned (Kunt 2007, 63-71). While Murad III isolated the dynasty from his ruling elite, he knew that a variety of powers would support Şehzade Mehmed against his absolute rule. One of the main reasons for not sending the prince to his district after his circumcision was to establish his own sultanic authority over his subjects; meanwhile, he was showing to his servants that he could change all the traditions without consulting anyone. The ceremony of Şehzade Mehmed before going to his *sancak* was also proof of the fact that Sultan Murad feared him. The janissaries demanded Sultan Murad to lead them in the Persian campaign but he did not want to leave Constantinople. After that, Şehzade Mehmed wanted to be the commander of the army and he asked permission to his father for that. However, the queen mother Nurbanu convinced the sultan not to allow the *şehzade* to lead the army since she was afraid that the *janissaries* might overthrow Sultan Murad in alliance with Şehzade Mehmed (Pedani Fabris 1996, 268-70).

After the circumcision festivity of Şehzade Mehmed, the queen mother Nurbanu fell sick with a stomach infection. On December 6th, 1583, her health worsened, and the next day, after seeing her son Murad III, who came to visit her at Topkapı Palace in the morning, she died.¹¹ Actually in this period, the sultan wanted to get rid of the clients of his mother Nurbanu in the imperial palace. Two days before the death of his mother, Murad III had dismissed 30 important *aghas* from the palace, and one of them was banished to Cairo. As an excuse, he said that these men got extraordinarily rich. After the death of Nurbanu Sultan, Murad III ordered the preparation of the provincial posting ceremony of Şehzade Mehmed. Even though everyone was expecting the death of the *queen mother* to postpone his leaving, the sultan expedited the preparations. He ordered the construction of a pavilion in Üsküdar for his son's leaving, according to the tradition, and wanted him to leave the capital on Friday, December 16, 1583.¹² The Venetian bailo tells that the queen mother had willed for the sultan to send Şehzade Mehmed to his *sancak* immediately after her death. He also added that the sultan was suspicious of his son Mehmed. It is really difficult to understand why Murad III had waited for the death

11 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 18, disp. 25, 13 Dec. 1583, cc. 241-45.

12 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 18, disp. 26, 13 Dec. 1583, cc. 252-64.

of his mother Nurbanu Sultan to send the prince to his *sancak* if it was not a coincidence. Most probably, it was the result of the rivalry between Nurbanu Sultan and the mother of Şehzade Mehmed, Safiye Sultan. Nurbanu Sultan was the first *valide sultan* who used this title in Ottoman history, and she was acting independently since she was responsible for the administration of the imperial harem. She created many alliances in the imperial palace, including the clients of the ex-network of the deceased grand vizier, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, thanks to her daughter Esmahan Sultan's marriage with him. Moreover, as a result of Murad III's attempts to organize the imperial palace as a *locus of power*, the population of the *enderun* and harem tripled (Necipoğlu 1991, 165). In this new period, Nurbanu Sultan was ruling the empire with her son. As stated above, she could appoint or dismiss the high-ranking administrators in the empire. Most probably, Sultan Murad was afraid of her empire-wide clients, since they hated Safiye Sultan, who would be the most powerful woman in the imperial administration after the *valide sultan's* death. It is likely that Murad III did not want to allow his son to establish new networks with the clients of Nurbanu. This hurry to send him to his *sancak* after waiting more than a year after his circumcision could be explained by that fear.

Şehzade Mehmed could not start his voyage for his *sancak* on Friday the 16th as had been determined before. Grand vizier Siyavuş Pasha, after discussing with the *ulema*, warned the sultan that it was not suitable to send his *şehzade* on Friday since this day is sacred and dedicated to God. It would not be decent to prevent people from going to the mosques and listening to the orations of the holy men since the *şehzade's* leaving ceremonies would disturb the daily life of people. Actually, Murad III, who strongly believed in predictions, had decided upon Friday with his astrologers and predictors. After hearing the pasha's advice, he consulted again his predictors for any other day, and the next day, Saturday, was decided upon for the prince to leave the capital. Murad III called his *haseki* (favorite), Safiye Sultan, to join him at Topkapı Palace so that he could spend some time with her and Şehzade Mehmed while the *kaptan-ı derya* was arming ten ships to accompany the *şehzade* first to Üsküdar and then to the Gulf of İzmit. On Saturday, all the high-level administrators, including the grand vizier and the *şeyhülislam* (grand mufti), went to Topkapı Palace to kiss the hand of the sultan and accompany the *şehzade*. The sultan was waiting for his son on his throne, and when the prince approached his father, the sultan noticed that Şehzade Mehmed was crying. Then he stood up and sat on the floor with his son and recommended that he should listen to his advisors, who would be near him in his *sancak*. It is worth noticing that while Sultan Murad advised his son to be obedient to his advisors in his *sancak*, he did not have any reputable and important figure near him.

The sultan left Topkapı Palace after giving precious gifts to his *şehzade* and went to the seaside palace in order to see his son passing by to Üsküdar

with the imperial armada. The Venetian bailo cites that the sultan was crying nonstop, since he would not have any other chance to see his son again. Şehzade Mehmed came out of his room and approached the *divan-ı hümayun*, where all the grandees were waiting for him. He mounted a horse adorned with precious jewels and started to go towards the harbour in Eminönü where the *kapudan-ı derya* was waiting to convey him to Üsküdar. During this short voyage, the grandees, in turn according to their rank, accompanied the prince and gave advice to him, which was actually a common provincial posting ceremony for the Ottomans. However, as Metin Kunt (2007, 64) quotes from both the Ottoman historian Selaniki, who was an eyewitness of the event, and Mustafa Ali, the narratives about the protocol differ. Selaniki tells that the first one who advised the *şehzade* was the grand mufti; however, Mustafa Ali says that grand vizier Siyavuş Pasha was the first one who approached the *şehzade* (Kunt 2007, 64). In this respect, the Venetian bailo's narrative matches with that of Selaniki Efendi. He also told that the prince first called the grand mufti and then the *hoca* (advisor) of Murad III and then the other grandees accordingly. These differences in the Ottoman chronicles are important since they allow one to see the problems of the late 16th century. Most probably, as a strong critic of Murad III, Mustafa Ali changed the places of the grand mufti and the grand vizier in order to show how Murad III had changed the traditional functioning of the state (cf. Fleischer 1986). It is also interesting to observe that Şehzade Mehmed first talked with the grand mufti. If it was not a sign of the sudden islamisation of the Ottoman policy, it shows the dynasty's attempts to isolate itself from its ruling elite by adopting the Islamic law (Tezcan 2010, 19-45).

When the *şehzade* arrived in Eminönü, *kapudan-ı derya* Kılıç Ali Pasha was waiting for him. He did not overdo anything regarding the preparation of the ceremony in order not to make the sultan angry. He knew that a pompous preparation for the prince could damage the absolute authority of the sultan. Actually, the *kapudan-ı derya* was right: the sultan was wary of being overthrown by the janissaries in favor of Prince Mehmed. That day, he prohibited the janissaries to go out; he did not want even one Janissary to accompany the prince because of his fear. He knew that the people loved Prince Mehmed, and there would be a huge crowd on the streets in order to see him, and there would be a problem if the Janissaries targeted Sultan Murad with the support of the public. The prince boarded the ship with the other grandees who were accompanying him, and the ships sailed toward the sea palace of the sultan in order to salute him, then turned back toward the *tersane* (shipyard) and sailed to Üsküdar. The ships did not do any salvo as was done traditionally in the provincial posting ceremonies of the princes. When the ships arrived at Üsküdar, the *şehzade* went directly to the huge pavilion with his retinue that was prepared for him in Üsküdar. The viziers and the other grandees gave precious gifts to the prince, and

then they returned to Constantinople. The same night, Şehzade Mehmed went to the palace located in Üsküdar, where all the sultanas and his mother Safiye, who got sick because of her grief, were waiting for him. All the sultanas gave precious gifts to the *şehzade*, including 120 beautiful women. On Saturday, the prince returned to his pavilion and accepted the gifts presented to him. After the grand vizier Siyavuş Pasha returned to Constantinople, he immediately told the sultan what had happened in Üsküdar and said that Şehzade Mehmed requested him to say to his father that he was not the son of the sultan but was the most insignificant slave of him, and he would be obedient to him forever. Apart from being a ritual, most probably Prince Mehmed said these words to his father since he felt his father's uneasiness toward him. The Venetian bailo says that the hurry to send the *şehzade* to his *sancak* after the death of Nurbanu Sultan, the curfew for the janissaries and the modest preparation of the *kapudan-ı derya* to convey him to Üsküdar made the *şehzade* think that his father was distrustful of him.

The *şehzade* was right about his feelings. While the grand vizier told the *şehzade's* words to the sultan, he added that it would have been better if the sultan had accompanied the *şehzade* until his pavilion in Üsküdar and advised him as Sultan Süleyman did for his *şehzades* during their departure from Üsküdar. However, the sultan responded to the vizier as if he could not hear his words about accompanying his *şehzade* and responded that if the *şehzade* would do what he had said to the vizier, it would be better for him and then ordered that the prince had to depart immediately to his *sancak* without stopping at any point. The grand vizier Siyavuş told the sultan's words to the prince, who said that it would be better to depart immediately since his father was jealous to see him in Üsküdar. On the 19 December 1582, the prince started his voyage to his *sancak* with the *kapudan-ı derya*, who would ferry him with 10 galleys until the Izmit Gulf.¹³

Şehzade Mehmed left Constantinople with a huge group of men. As Mustafa Ali cited, his household included 1,500-2,000 men. As was mentioned before, however, Sultan Murad did not allow important figures of the Ottoman administration to be near Şehzade Mehmed. This was just the beginning of the tension between Sultan Murad III and Şehzade Mehmed. During the reign of the sultan, he was always wary of his prince trying to dethrone him. For instance, he did not allow his viziers to visit the prince in his *sancak* because of his fear. The Venetians' demand to see the *şehzade* in his *sancak* was another example of the tension between the sultan and the *şehzade*. The Venetian bailo had asked the grand vizier to visit the *şehzade* in his *sancak*, saying that it was a tradition. The bailos had visited Princes Selim, Beyazid and Mustafa while they were in their

13 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 18, disp. 29, cc. 281-85.

sancaks, so this time they wished to visit Şehzade Mehmed. However, Murad III rejected their demand, saying that they did not visit him while he was in his *sancak* in Manisa. Even though the Venetian bailo responded to the sultan by saying that they were at war while he was ruling his *sancak* and that it was the only reason they could not visit him; despite the long negotiation, the sultan was not convinced and said that the Venetians could not visit the *şehzade* even though they had tight relations with his mother, Safiye Sultan.¹⁴

4 Conclusion

The worldwide economic and political changes during the last quarter of the 16th century forced the Ottoman dynasty to adapt to the new conditions. The high tension between Şehzade Mehmed and Sultan Murad III was the result of these changing dynamics of the Ottoman ruling methods. In order to cope with the new military technology and monetization in the economy, Murad III attempted to isolate the dynasty by strengthening the imperial palace as a *locus of power* while restricting the authority of the 'central government'. The transition from the classical Ottoman fief system to tax farming also disturbed the balance of the economic forces in the empire. When the palace administrators started to sell the revenue grants, they benefited from this transaction. The viziers and other grandees wanted to regain their authority against the palace administration. To do that, they used the janissaries and six cavalry regiments as a tool to suppress Sultan Murad III's attempts to create a more centralized government. Murad III's isolation from the public and from his own administrators was not a coincidence. He knew that he had to reorganize the administration without sharing his authority with the others. And on any occasion, he wanted to show the public and his administrators and, if there was a possibility, the foreign states that he was the only authority in the empire. Şehzade Mehmed's circumcision festival and his provincial posting ceremony were important occasions for the sultan to show his absolute authority to the public. He wanted to give a clear message to his servants by not eating with them during the festivity, not allowing the janissaries to accompany the prince in his provincial posting ceremony and not advising the prince in Üsküdar while he was waiting for departure to his *sancak*. He was the only ruler of the Ottoman house and Şehzade Mehmed was a servant of him.

14 ASVe, *Senato, Dispacci Ambasciatori, Costantinopoli*, filza 21, 16 Aug. 1585, cc. 557-59; 22 Aug. 1585, cc. 589-91.

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