



JCC: OTTOMAN CIVIL WAR STUDY GUIDE



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Letter of Secretary General

Esteemed participants,

I am honored to welcome you all here as the Secretary General of the first edition of MUNEA'25.

Our Academic team has created these guides to lead a pathway in your journey. They are meant to support your research and make your experience more productive, both during your sessions and throughout the conference. We will be inspired to closely watch your progress in the committees as both the Academic and Organization team.

In addition, I would like to extend my special thanks to my DSGs, Alp Arslan Şahin and Yağız Eren Şahin who helped me a lot and also tired me out. Even though we disagreed on most of the points we discussed, I am really proud of them.

As the Secretary General of the conference, and with our goal of contributing the development of a qualified Turkish youth, I wish all our participants, from first timers to experienced ones, a meaningful three-day journey in advancing their diplomatic skills and knowledge.

Melis Eda Yılmaz

Secretary General of MUNEA'25

Letter of Deputy Secretary General

Esteemed Delegates,

I'm Alp Arslan Şahin, an 11th grade student in Ankara Erman Ilıcak Science Highschool and I will be serving as the Deputy Secretary General in this secretariat special committee. From last year, I started to participate in MUN conferences and it became a great passion and a way to demonstrate my ideas and feelings. While we were planning this committee, we aimed to make you immerse yourself in this passion as we do and much as possible. So, It is a great honour to welcome you all to the Joint Crisis Committee (JCC) of the first edition of MUNEA'25, which is going to be a great journey to the chaotic ambiance of the Ottoman Interregnum.

In addition, I will be extending some special thanks to a few people. Yağız Eren Şahin our dear DSG, for his help while organizing the conference and the committee itself. All of the organization team, especially our Director General Tuna Akar and his deputy Ege Ulubatlı. And especially, our great Secretary General and my faithful companion Melis Eda Yılmaz a.k.a the mother of MUNEA'25. Not just for organizing such a prestigious conference like that but also for being with me every time I need her.

I hope this committee will be enjoyable and a great way to improve yourselves. You can reach for any kind of information via email: alpsahin0619@gmail.com

Alp Arslan Şahin

Deputy Secretary General of MUNEA'25

Letter of Deputy Secretary General

Esteemed Pashas, Begs, Viziers...

I am Yağız Eren Şahin, your serving Deputy Secretary General, I will be responsible for this committee. Honestly, this committee is a reflection of a question ‘How far can we go with a crisis committee?’. My goal is to push the boundaries set by others before us, so we are trying something different here. A crisis with more than 2 cabinets! A long-awaited dream of mine becomes a reality due to your participation, so from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank everyone who will participate in this committee.

I would like to thank our Secretary General Melis Eda Yılmaz, for giving me this opportunity and supporting me throughout the entire process of preparations. I would like to mention my brother (not in law), Alparslan Şahin, for everything he has done for this committee and conference as well.

I am sure we will have 3 busy days at our first edition of MUNEА.

Yağız Eren Şahin

Deputy Secretary General of MUNEА’25

Introduction to the Committee

The Joint Crisis Committee of MUNEA'25 will focus on the agenda "Ottoman Civil War" and it aims to revitalise the events in history. The Ottoman Civil War, also known as the Ottoman Interregnum is a period in the Ottoman Empire lasted from 1402 to 1413, following the defeat of Sultan Bayezid I by Timur at the Battle of Ankara 1402. After the event, the empire was plunged into a civil war by the sons of Bayezid, Süleyman, İsa, Musa and Mehmed.

Three cabinets act on behalf of the factions, whose various shehzades had legitimate claims on the Ottoman throne through their songs. Among these were Süleyman, İsa, Mehmed and Musa. Following the capture of Bayezid by Timur, the once united empire was torn apart by rival regions and with each shehzade doing all that he could to consolidate power, form alliances and impose dominion. This, then, is the core of our simulation of internal power struggles, though not by itself. During this period, foreign forces, such as the Byzantine Empire, the Anatolian Beyliks, the Timurid Empire and European kingdoms, played an important role in supporting and undermining various interlocutors to serve their political gains.

The committee shall commence shortly after the battle of Ankara. The Ottoman administrative center is now anarchy, and regional loyalties are split. The empire has been weakened internally and externally. Although the historical timeline may serve as a guideline, the direction that events take in this committee may deviate depending on the actions of its delegates.

Background of the Ottoman Interregnum

The Rise of Ottoman Empire Under Bayezid I

As the fourth Sultan of the Ottoman dynasty, Bayezid inherited an already expanding empire from his father Murad I, but expanded his ambitions and conquests.

Immediately after the Battle of Kosovo, which saw his father's death, Bayezid ascended to the throne in 1389. This rapid rise to power earned him the title of Yıldırım, and from the outset sought to centralize power and expand Ottoman control over Anatolia and the Balkans. His reign was characterized by fierce military campaigns and daring sieges.

Initially aiming to consolidate power over the fragmented Turkish principalities in his hands, he decided that it was time to end the semi autonomy they had hitherto enjoyed from the Ottomans. Whereas his ancestors had tended to adopt a generally more flexible attitude towards their Anatolian overlords, Bayezid set out to bring these semi autonomous principalities under direct Ottoman control.

So, in a less than glorious manner, he laid siege to Constantinople and held it until 1396, turning the tide for Byzantines. Although his melancholic campaign was unsuccessful, it was a clear indication that the Ottomans were now a present danger. He defeated the Hungarians and the Serbs, from whom he extracted forces for the army at Nicopolis (1396), and under which he won victories over the crusading Europeans, they proved to be a decidedly regional asset.

On the other hand, Bayezid's expansionism came at a high price. His aggressive annexation policy over Anatolian lands created such serious reports that many of the

former rulers of the principalities supported his rivals when the empire fell apart. Also, administrative and military resources were overwhelmed by his far reaching ambitions and his failure to capture Constantinople became a symbol of unresolved longings.

The early 1400s saw the expansion of the Ottoman principality into a new empire spread over a big and diverse range of rich and economically viable territories. But the empire's growing power also caught the attention of Central Asian conquerors Timur, who saw Bayezid's unification of Anatolia as a clear insult. Their engagement would ultimately culminate in the Battle of Ankara in 1402, a monumental turning point that would not only lead to Bayezid's capture but would plunge the empire into internal struggle for the next decade.

While Bayezid's reign marked advances in territorial gain, it also laid the foundations for the heights of Ottoman ambition. His sons would echo his legacy throughout the Interregnum, claiming legitimacy for their attempts to rebuild what had fallen after his death.

The Battle of Ankara (1402) and the Role of Timur

The Battle of Ankara took its place on 28 July 1402, between Sultan Bayezid I and Emir Timur, who was also called Tamerlane, ruler of the Timurid Empire. The battle occurred on the Çubuk Plain, east of Ankara. The battle cannot just be considered as a military rivalry but a turning point that radically affected the balances of Anatolia.

At the core of the Battle of Ankara lies the desire over the Anatolian lands. Sultan Bayezid annexed the Anatolian principalities one by one in order to ensure political unity in Anatolia, which affected the principalities of Karaman, Germiyan, Aydın, Menteşe and Saruhan. However, the ottoman expansion contradicted the goals of Timur and directly entered into Timur's domain of influence. Timur opposed the Ottoman expansion with the purpose of protecting those principalities and some of these principalities took refuge under Timur.

The letters exchanged between the Bayezid and Timur also raised the tension. Bayezid's extremely harsh responses to Timur's covered threats, created a disappearance of respect and it evolved into a conflict. Also some of Timur's enemies such as Kara Yusuf, who was the ruler of Kara Koyunlu took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, leading the way for Timur's direct involvement in the Ottoman lands.

In the early period of 1402, Timur started his campaign against the Anatolian region and entered Anatolia from the east. After capturing the cities of Erzurum, Sivas, Tokat, he started a siege on Ankara. On the other hand, Sultan Bayezid left his campaigns and sieges in order to respond to the attack of Timur and returned back to Anatolia. Timur's army mostly consisted of Turkish, Mongolian, Persian soldiers, but the battle is mostly famous for the *war elephants* brought by Timur. Meanwhile, the army of Bayezid mostly consisted of Anatolian and Rumelian soldiers, also includes the soldiers from beyliks and Kapıkulu.

The two armies faced each other on the Çubuk Plain, even if the Ottoman forces showed their resistance in the first hours of the conflict, the fate of war suddenly changed when the soldiers of Anatolian beys betrayed and switched their sides to Timur's army including Aydın, Menteşe, Germiyanogulları, and Karamanogulları. Timur's application of the war strategy which also can be mentioned. Cutting of water supplies, bringing the war elephants, recruitment of the beyliks, turned the outcome of war in his favour. As a result of this, the Ottoman army collapsed and Bayezid I was captured.

Disintegration of the Central Authority and the Rise of Shehzades

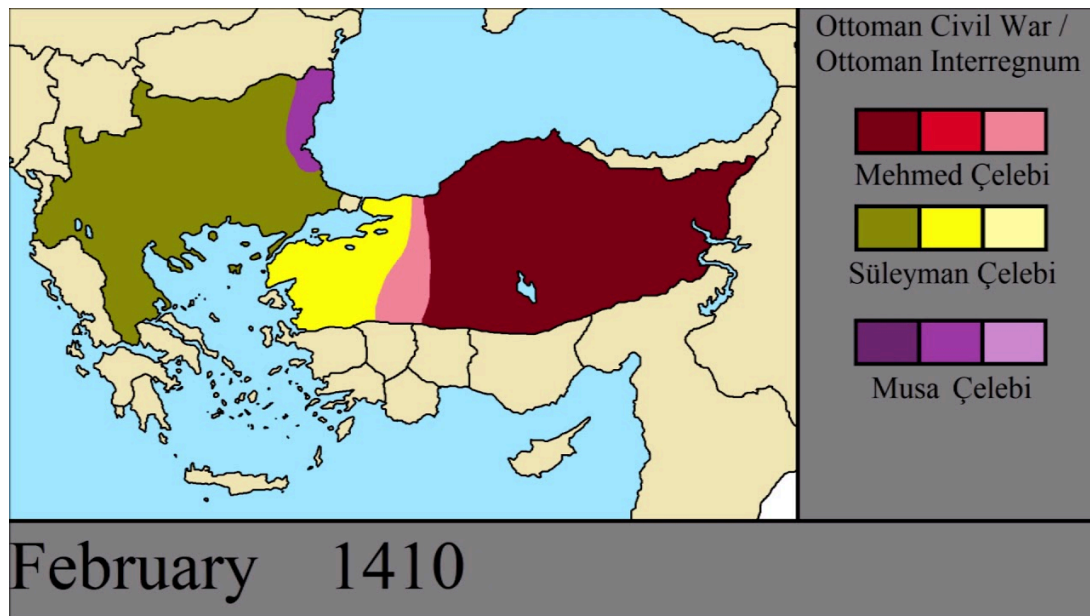
After the defeat of Sultan Bayezid I in 1402, the disintegration of Ottoman power began on an unparalleled scale. With the capture of Timur, Sultan Bayezid I subsequently died in captivity, leaving the empire leaderless and defenseless. In the absence of a suitable successor to the throne, each of Bayezid's surviving sons claimed legal title to the throne, marking the dawn of an extremely long and complex civil war known as the Ottoman Interregnum.

The unfolding events gave Bayezid's sons with the opportunity to expand their influence in certain parts of the empire. Each shehzade established his own center of power and acted as an independent ruler. With civil wars thus fragmenting the Ottoman Empire into a dissipated land where warlords seized upon the instability for their own benefit, the break up of unity sped up. Loyalties across the empire shifted rapidly, and legitimacy was no longer based on the principle of dynastic succession

but on military strength, clever alliances and the ability to govern effectively in mayhem.

The empire's attempts to cope with this new situation were hindered by fragile administrative, religious and military institutions. With the absence of a centralized power, the imperial court fell apart into regional courts centering on each shehzade. Each shehzade nominated his own viziers, judges and commanders, thereby creating nearly parallel bureaucracies contesting the loyalty and legitimacy of its followers. The religious elite, or ulema, became similarly divided, providing theological justifications for whichever claimant they supported. Meanwhile, with the powerful Janissary corps breaking into factions, the former paragon of unity and discipline became virtually a hireling serving the needs of whichever shehzade had the capacity to offer them security or reward.

At the same time, many beylics in Anatolia began recovering their independence, having been subdued or annexed under Bayezid. Some of the beys allied with a particular shehzade, while others acted independently or sought the protection of foreign powers. Throughout, the Byzantines played an intricate diplomatic game, backing different shehzades at different times in the hopes of weakening the Ottomans and safeguarding their own continued existence.



But the rivalry set off among the shehzades was more than simply a military contest, it was a contest for legitimacy and vision. Each presented a different model for restoration of the empire, some advocating diplomacy and stability while others supported daring military campaigns and aggressive consolidation. Territories changed hands rapidly in this period, as alliances came and went with dizzying speed, and by the end of the era, doubts about the very survival of the Ottoman dynasty itself intensified beyond imagination.

The Ottoman state system demonstrated resilience through this period of chaos. While fragmented and weakened, governance in its institutions, the military and the studies of religion survived in altered forms at the several claimants' courts. Ultimately, the Interregnum ended, not through the total destruction of the other, but via the strategic and gradual consolidation of power on the part of one particular shehzade: Mehmed, who would become known as Mehmed I, the restorer of the empire.

The Shehzades and Alliances

Süleyman Çelebi and the Capital in Edirne

Süleyman Çelebi was one of the shehzades during the Ottoman Interregnum, and the elder son of Bayezid I who was also called *Emir* Süleyman because he was appointed as the Governor of Sarikhan by Timur between 1396-1402.

In the Battle of Ankara, Süleyman Çelebi played an important role and commanded the left wing of the Ottoman army. In that battle, the superiority of Timur's forces, forced the right wing and also left wing which was commanded by Süleyman to retreat and the central forces includes the yeniceris and Kapıkulu soldiers which was under command of Bayezid were trapped by Timur and it affected a great casualty of the Ottoman forces and capturing of Bayezid I.

After the catastrophic defeat of Bayezid, Süleyman quickly seized control over the Ottoman territories of Rumelia and he established his power base on Edirne. While he took over the control of the Balkans, he started to act like a *de facto* ruler. During the period, the Turkish beys, yeniceris and the Balkan people around Edirne recognised Süleyman as the legitimate leader, and he gained political and military power by having this support. He also established some diplomatic relations with Stefan Lazarević and who was the ruler of Moravian Serbia, also played an important role in the Battle of Ankara, fighting against the Timurid Empire and also the Republic of Venice, trying to continue the foreign policy left by his father.

Whatever, the most remarkable diplomatic relation of Süleyman is the agreement he made with the Byzantine Emperor, Manuel II Palaiologos in 1403. With this agreement, some territorial concessions were given to Byzantium for receiving political support of Byzantium. In the case of that, the support he received from Rumelian people started to decrease and it prepared the end of his reign. His brother Musa Çelebi, started a campaign against the rule of Süleyman in Rumelia. Musa marched on Edirne and rebelled against Süleyman. In 1411, he was defeated in a battle and was captured while fleeing. Therefore, the reign of Süleyman Çelebi came to an end.

İsa Çelebi and Control over Bursa

Immediately after the Battle of Ankara, one of the older sons of Bayezid I, İsa Çelebi, hurried to secure the claim over western Anatolia. With the authority of the Ottoman state disintegrated, he managed to take control of Bursa, the former capital of Ottomans, a city of great strategic and symbolic value. His control of Bursa, which had been the administrative heart of the empire prior to Edirne, granted him the legitimacy of an heir in the eyes of many Anatolian nobles and religious elites.

Yet, the very same years were marred by instability for İsa, sustained by ever growing pressures from internal and external challengers. While he initially attracted to his side some former bureaucrats and regional beys, he had but a weak support. His power was very much localized and his attempts, at least partly successful, to revive his father's administration found little meaning. Lacking a wider military support, he could hardly project power beyond the Bursa region.



Inevitably, relations between him and his brothers, especially that with Mehmed Çelebi, worsened within a short time. Based in Amasya in eastern Anatolia, Mehmed saw the İsa's control over Bursa as a direct threat to his own ambitions. Thus, it was inevitable that the two would conflict. Civil war erupted in the early years of the Interregnum and several clashes ensued that effectively marked the fleeting influence of İsa. The nature of the support that Mehmed managed to collect from local forces and opened the eye of former Ottoman administrators tilted the balance in his favor.

Besides that, İsa was confronted with attacks from his brother Mehmed. He also had to contend with political disintegration in the Ottoman Empire. The Interregnum provided the Anatolian beyliks, some of which had previously been subdued by Bayezid I, with some opportunity to reassert their position. İsa lacked political alliances necessary to attempt to forge some cohesion among these local powers.

Besides, unlike Süleyman or Mehmed, İsa garnered no significant support from external actors thus remaining isolated as conflict intensified.

His hold on Bursa was to be much short lived. Defeats tacitly followed in the wake of advances upon the city by Mehmed's army, until these advances seized quite tempting. In due course, İsa was captured and executed, one of the earlier contract killings executed in the succession struggle. Apart from being one of the few clear events of İsa's unended accession affirming effort, his short reign also maps out the chaotic and personal dimension of the Ottoman Interregnum, which allowed every prince to formulate his own method of resaving the empire.

This clearing of the ground in favor of Mehmed would let him build himself up across Anatolia for the renewed struggle with his remaining rivals. İsa's story is also a reminder that legitimacy at that time depended upon one's ability to contend with military, political and diplomatic problems in an imperial order that was collapsing rapidly and not only on the basis of birthright or title.

Mehmed Çelebi's Bid for Legitimacy in Amasya

Mehmed Çelebi was one of the shehzades during the Ottoman Interregnum. Before the Battle of Ankara, he was appointed to the Sanjak-beg of Amasya because of his great success in the campaign of Canik, he took over the city administration and established order. He served as the sanjak-beg of Amasya between 1391 and 1402, and learnt state affairs. He also went on campaigns with his father Bayezid I and mostly served as rearguard/reserve forces commander of the Ottoman army.

In 1402, during the Battle of Ankara he also served as the rearguard commander, because of that duty, he managed to survive the battle with few casualties. After the defeat of Sultan Bayezid, as one of the four shehzades who were aspiring for the Ottoman throne, he chose Amasya as his power base. With the opportunity of Mehmed being the sanjak-beg and Amasya being one of the central cities in Anatolian region, also called “City of Shehzades” because of shehzades taking their education there, Amasya was a great choice with a strategic opportunity as a base. Also there were powerful local beys and influential persons in Amasya, so Mehmed Çelebi established his control by forming alliances with the important groups in Amasya. Therefore he both gained support of Anatolian people and managed to establish power against his rivals.

Mehmed Çelebi also tried to take care to base his administration on the Islamic Law, principles of the Sharia in order to gain religious legitimacy. He established strong relations with religious authorities and the ulema class which is a religious group formed by *âlim*’s which plays an important role in the class system of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore by gaining the support of some religious orders he reached his aim to gain religious legitimacy.

During the period of Ottoman Interregnum, Mehmed Çelebi considered İsa Çelebi as his biggest rival, İsa çelebi had declared himself as Sultan in Bursa which is a strong central city. So Mehmed moved from Amasya to Bursa and encountered İsa Çelebi near *Armenian Bazaar*. Mehmed’s forces managed to claim superiority and won the

battle against his brother İsa and captured the city of Bursa. İsa was defeated and had to flee. This event was Mehmed's first important success.

After he gained the victory against İsa, he found his new rival as Musa Çelebi, who became a stronger rival after his previous victories. Mehmed Çelebi was also seeking to gain power in the Balkan regions. So Mehmed advanced to Ulubat to prevent Musa from passing Rumelia. He managed to stop the advance of Musa Çelebi and achieved a victory against him. Musa fled after the battle and this event enabled Mehmed to establish his rule in Anatolia and prevented Musa from regaining power.

Mehmed Çelebi mostly avoided a conflict with Süleyman Çelebi, but he supported his brother Musa with his struggle with Süleyman. Although at the end of the Interregnum, there was lastly Musa and Mehmed. Mehmed was planning to take control over Rumelia, to defeat his brother, Musa. On his march to Bursa, Mehmed gained troops from western Anatolia and upon reaching the straits, Mehmed's army was given passage by ships loaned from the Byzantine emperor who supplied Mehmed with troops. Mehmed marched his army from Constantinople to Edirne and then Kosovo, he gained information from Evrenos Bey about the Serbian forces.

In addition, the Serbian Despotate, which was ruled by Stefan Lazarević, has an important role in the age of Ottoman Interregnum. After the first conflict in Ulubat, Mehmed Çelebi also allied with Stefan Lazarević, which defeated Musa once in Kosovo. At the start of the conflict, the battle was in favor of Musa but with the

alliance of Serbian and Byzantine, Mehmed Çelebi provided a major superiority in the fields of Çamurlu, and Musa Çelebi fled during the battle but it did not last too long because the forces of Mehmed caught him while he got injured on the battlefield and killed by strangulation.

On 5 July 1413, the Ottoman Interregnum ended with the Battle of Çamurlu, after 11 years of civil war. The collapsed empire after the Battle of Ankara, started to regain its power under the reign of Mehmed Çelebi, now called the Mehmed I also known as the second founder of the Ottoman Empire.

Musa Çelebi and the Rise of Opposition

Musa Çelebi, one of the sons of Sultan Bayezid I, emerged as one of the great shehzades aspiring to power during the initial phase of the Ottoman Interregnum. His efforts to grab control of essential places in Anatolia would thus place him at the very center of the most fierce power struggle against his brothers.

Musa's ambition soared high, as he sought to end the fragmentation of Ottoman lands and restore the strength of their empire shattered by defeat at Ankara. He based his initial power at Rumelia, Ottoman Balkan territory, securing a stronghold in the pre-eminent city of the region Edirne, which would later serve as the focus of his endeavors. His position in the Balkans allowed him to tap extremely important resources, a very capable military infrastructure, as well as the political and social base, to put the pieces together for the effort on both internal and external resources.



Nonetheless, it was Musa's claim to the throne. His eminent rival faction was represented by his brother Mehmed Çelebi, ruler of Amasya. The fight between the two shehzades, Musa and Mehmed, would enter a protracted internal war, as they strive for legitimacy and claim the Ottoman crown. In the beginning, Musa had a multitude of key Anatolian beyliks, whose allegiances tended to be governed many times by political or military consideration. He had a good political force among the Greek Orthodox communities, as he promised to bring them back to a centralized country.

Opposition to Musa's power involved not only his brothers but also foreign interference. The Byzantine Empire and its neighbors in the Balkans and the Timurids continued to play pivotal roles in the shifting alliances and conflicts that characterized the interregnum period. These external powers often viewed Musa as a potentially strong leader, capable of restoring Ottoman supremacy, prompting them to sometimes form temporary alliances and shifting positions depending on the circumstances of the interregnum period.

Gathering military support, especially from mercenaries and local lords, formed one of the major angles in Musa Çelebi's strategy. However, his initial successes, his claim to power would soon suffer the evident drawback of not being able to consolidate his rule in the face of mounting opposition. His forces battled against his brothers, with the most notable contention centering on the Battle of Ulubad (1410), which would mark a decisive turning point in the civil conflict.

Musa's claim for the empire continued despite the fierce opposition he faced from his brothers. Though he did succeed in one aspect, that of greatly extending his chances, his inability to firm up lasting alliances and himself overextension for military effort would ultimately lead to his destruction by Mehmed I. The final downfall of Musa occurred due to his failure to completely unite the empire and the opposition both within the Ottoman family and outside powers.

Foreign Powers and Alliances

During the Ottoman Interregnum, the fragmented state of the Ottoman Empire provided opportunities for foreign powers to exploit the situation for their own good or to take part in the political and military struggles of the Ottoman shehzades. The Byzantine Empire played an important role with its nearness to the Ottoman territories and ever existent threat from Ottoman expansion.

Byzantium

The Byzantine Empire found itself in a precarious position within the weak rule of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos during the Interregnum period. After the destroying defeat of Sultan Bayezid I by Timur at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, which divided the Ottoman Empire and fostered a power tussle among Bayezid's sons creating an arena of political instability, the already declining Byzantine Empire sought to exploit this internal Turkish chaos to recover some of its territories in pieces and political glory.

The immediate concern of the Byzantine Empire was it might loose the last remains of its strongholds in Anatolia and Rumelia to the contesting Ottoman shehzades. The most favorable candidate for the Byzantine rulers appeared to be Musa Çelebi, who after the Battle of Ankara held Rumelia in his grasp. He was known to have given statements on restoring to the Byzantines lands the Ottomans had taken in Thrace, this made him a promising ally for Byzantines, who saw in him would-be protector against further Ottoman Expansion.

On the other hand, Mehmed Çelebi, who was in control of Amasya and sought to centralize the power of the empire in Anatolia, had more to do with direct aspirations for the unification of the Ottoman Empire that would not have put much ground for negotiation compromise with the Byzantine was aligned almost entirely with Musa Çelebi and his efforts at maintaining a divided Ottoman Empire.

Since the Ottomans forged diplomatic ties with Byzantium, the Byzantines also sent military assistance to Musa Çelebi for his promise of lands and protection. Troops and resources were sent to help Musa in sustaining an equal position against his brothers. But the Byzantines were not strong enough to significantly affect the outcome of the civil war. They continued to be dependent on the vicissitudes of fortunes favored to the shehzades of Osman.

Anatolian Beyliks

Timur's victory and his careful partitioning of Ottoman domains allowed the beyliks to reemerge as critical players. Priority were the Karamanids, Germiyanids, Aydinids and Menteşe, rulers of various territories of Anatolia who acted along the lines of dynastic interests. Their motivations were a mix of survival and opportunism regarding the regional politics, however they became quickly complex in the Ottoman civil war as they support different shehzades.



The *Karamanids*, centered in Konya, were the fiercest enemies of the Ottomans and posed the greatest threat throughout their history. They did an ally with shehzade İsa at one point, and later on with Musa, as the Ottomans were becoming divided within themselves, hoping a disunited Ottoman polity would preserve their independence as far as possible. Any concerted efforts of their was against any movement towards Ottoman unification.

The *Germiyanids* around Kütahya, were bound by marriage ties to Ottomans, they used the opportunity of the weakening centralized authority to assert their own autonomy. While passive, they were of enough importance that their role in controlling access to central Anatolia could not be disregarded.

The *Aydinids* and *Menteşe*, situated at the western coastal zones of Anatolia, sometimes involved themselves in seafaring endeavors and kept European connections with more or less success. Less concerned about the civil war, they were more engrossed in protecting their own trade interests and independence, but when

persuaded with the right amount of promise or territory, could be enlisted to provide a helping hand.

By the end of the Interregnum, it was understood by Mehmed Çelebi that to achieve permanent stability for the Ottoman Empire, these beyliks had to be subdued once more, thereby eliminating the internal force and reestablishing central authority over Anatolia.

European Kingdoms

Hungary

Hungary was arguably the most threatened of any European kingdom prior to that of the Interregnum by Ottoman expansion. It was, of course, personally acquainted only too well with Ottoman power through the disaster at Nicopolis in 1396. It surveyed the disintegration of Ottoman unity as an opportunity not only to regain lost prestige but also to assert a revived Hungarian dominance in the Balkans. With great difficulty, Hungary cooperated with various Ottoman shehzades, typically siding against those who opposed Ottoman consolidation. The first stage of their approach combined direct assistance to dissident lords in the Balkans with discreet diplomatic efforts to fan rivalries among competing shehzades. The Hungarian crown did not really want a total Ottoman collapse, it just wanted to see them remain divided long enough to give Hungary some strategic depth to stave off any future invasion.

Venice

The Ottomans' civil war wrought havoc on Venice's trading. Where there was unrest, there was the chance for Venetian gain in eastern Mediterranean territories and eastern

Mediterranean islands, including Greece and Aegean coast. The Republic favored any outcome that would disengage the Ottomans from centralized control, thus allowing the Ottoman free rein to strike deals on more favorable terms with rival warlords. Their diplomatic envoys would periodically shift between different shehzades, usually supporting the one controlling a strategic port or one that would deter Venetian access. While not actively engaging in direct hostilities, Venice was adept at exploiting the political chaos to further its strategic interest and to enjoy undisturbed trade.

Genoa

Like Venice, Genoa was primarily a commercial entity. The Genoese were present in colonies such as Galata across from Constantinople, where they could exert much influence upon Ottoman and Byzantine affairs. In so doing, the Genoese would swing in favor of one or other Ottoman faction according to the changing balance of power giving naval support, intelligence, financing a faction in return for port access and trade concessions. Unlike Venice, however, Genoa retained more dispersion in its strategy, different Genoese daily factions and trading houses were free to pursue their own agendas, often in opposition to one another. Their role was disorderly, but importantly, this allowed European economic interests to be sustained in significance throughout the war.

Serbian Despotate

Under Despot Stefan Lazarević, it became a regional power that could tip Rumelia off balance during the Ottoman Civil War. In the background was a catastrophic defeat at Kosovo in 1389 and subsequent vassalage under Bayezid I.

Despot Stefan, the son of Prince Lazar, was a capable commander as well as a diplomat. Though he was nominally a vassal of the Ottomans, he had also been conferred the Byzantine title of “despot” and had a closely attached link through King Sigismund to Hungary. This allowed Stefan to maneuver skillfully during the Interregnum, the period when he exchanged support between Ottoman shehzades to realize Serbian autonomy and territorial gains.

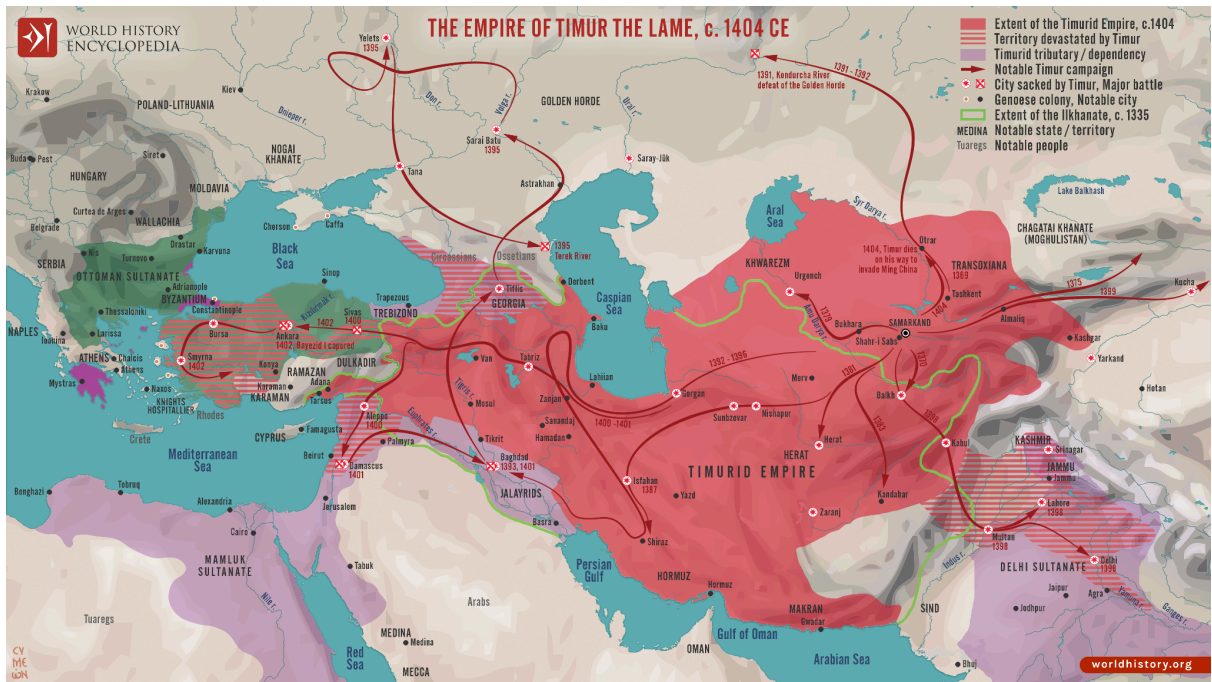
At first Stefan sided with Süleyman Çelebi, who ruled the European parts of the Edirne from which Süleyman granted him nearly unlimited freedom in return for military support. The Serbs raised troops for him and helped him settle this rule in the Balkans. But this was later altered when Süleyman’s power began to crumble.

As the battle moved in another direction, Musa Çelebi challenged his brother, and Stefan had to reanalyze his position again. He supported Musa for a short while before pledging allegiance to Mehmed Çelebi because he considered Mehmed the most appropriate choice to reunite the Empire. In return, Mehmed granted confirmation regarding the Serbian privileges and territorial possessions, thus creating the right environment in which the final victory of Mehmed could be realized.

Timurid Empire

The finale of the drama that has played its part in Anatolian state politics through the victory at Ankara in 1402 by Timur did not merely cause the temporary Indian fall of centralized Ottoman authority, but also reshaped the entire regional power structure. The defeat and capture of Sultan Bayezid I left a fractured empire behind, opening the

door for both internal contenders and external actors to assert their influence. But even so, it seems Timur had no intention of ruling Anatolia directly. His campaign was never designed to be for permanent occupation. It was rather an exercise to reclaim full dominance over the Turkic people and subdue a rival empire that had been emerging to challenge its superiority.



Following victory, Timur performed strategic dismantling of Ottoman dominion. He enfranchised the previously subjugated Anatolian beyliks from their vassalage, thereby restoring their autonomy, ensuring that no one Turkish-Muslim power could quickly rise again. This decision did more than fracture Anatolia, but turned the local beyliks into renewed active political players, which in turn influenced the succession disputes among Bayezid's sons. With his defeats now spread by the Ottomans, Timur now moved east, all happy that the empire was unstable enough.

Shehzades scrambled to gather regional allies and assert their claim, often appealing to former beyliks that Timur had liberated. Although the Timurids did not have a

direct presence in Anatolia after the initial invasion, their shadow loomed large over the politics of Interregnum. The chaos they left behind allowed for a period of fierce decentralization, in which no shehzade could secure the throne without navigating the complex network of loyalties that Timur had inadvertently fostered.

By the time of the few ultimate victories of Mehmed Çelebi, the Timurid effect had almost disappeared from Anatolia, but the results of such interventions were everlasting. The refragmentation of the region had also prolonged the civil strife and complicated the reunification effort of the Ottomans. To him, real restoration of Ottoman power would only mean unwinding the partition Timur had created by reabsorbing the beyliks and thereby eliminating the internal competition the Timur campaign allowed.

Key Events of the Civil War

Early Conflicts and Balance of Power

Captivity and Death of Yıldırım Bayezid (1403)

After the Battle of Ankara, Ottoman Sultan Yıldırım Bayezid became a captive of Timur. Bayezid, who was exposed to harsh conditions and torture during this period, suffered both psychological and physical collapse. In 1403, while he was still a captive, he passed away. With the loss of their sultan, the Ottoman Empire lost the dignity of central authority and urgently needed a new ruler. This tangled situation led to a power struggle for the throne between Bayezid's four sons. Timur, who wanted the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, took advantage of this situation. First, he took the lands belonging to the Anatolian lords from the Ottomans and returned them

to their former owners, and then divided the remaining lands among Bayezid's sons. Thereupon, the Ottoman Empire was divided into parts, although not officially.

Status of Schehzades

İsa Çelebi: İsa Çelebi first gained dominance around Balıkesir. Timur marched his army to the city and captured it, but İsa Çelebi was acquitted by Timur. Following this acquittal, İsa began to take orders to fight against his brother Musa Çelebi for control of Bursa. Although Musa Çelebi showed a short-term superiority, İsa Çelebi was victorious in the battles around Balıkesir. İsa Çelebi began to reign in Bursa with the acquittal he received from Timur. He received a letter from his brother Mehmed Çelebi in 1403. Mehmed Çelebi was offering his brother to divide the Anatolian lands between himself and İsa Çelebi in this letter. İsa Çelebi refused this offer because of the belief that he must be the only ruler of Anatolian. Thereupon, Mehmed Çelebi walked with his army towards Bursa. During this period, a large army was given to the order of İsa Çelebi, who was under the shelter of his brother Süleyman Çelebi in order to face the army of Mehmed Çelebi. The two brothers faced each other at Battle of Ulubat but İsa Çelebi was the one who lost the battle with heavy casualties. After this defeat, İsa Çelebi disappeared from historical records.

Süleyman Çelebi: After the Battle of Ankara, Süleyman Çelebi, accompanied by Çandarlı Ali Pasha—his father's vizier—escaped Timur's oppression and advanced toward Rumelia. Süleyman wanted to establish dominance over the Ottoman lands in Rumelia. To achieve this, he asked for support from Byzantium. As a result of this call for help, a peace agreement was signed between Süleyman and the Byzantine

regent, along with Venice, Genoa, the Knights of St. John from Rhodes, Serbian ruler Stefan Lazarević, and the Latin Duchy. According to the agreement:

- Byzantium would stop paying annual compensation to the Ottomans, and in return, Süleyman Çelebi's rule would be recognized as a superior sovereignty by Byzantium.
 - Süleyman Çelebi would give back Thessaloniki and its surroundings on the Aegean coast, the Athos Peninsula (Aynaroz), some Aegean islands, and the land stretching from the entrance of the Bosphorus to Varna on the Black Sea coast.
 - Ottoman ships would need to get permission from Byzantium to pass through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.
 - The prisoners held by the Ottomans would be returned.
- Every country that signed this agreement would now officially recognize Süleyman Çelebi as the ruler of the Ottoman Empire.

All the countries that signed the agreement now officially recognized Süleyman Çelebi as the ruler of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1402, Süleyman Çelebi became the sultan, and his grand vizier was Çandarlı Ali Pasha. With the support of neighboring states, Süleyman managed to legitimize his rule.

After 1403, Süleyman Çelebi got quite caught up in the palace lifestyle. He started living a life full of feasts and pleasure inside the palace.

Even in this state, as the Ottoman sultan, he never gave up on the lands in Anatolia.

To reclaim those lands for the empire, he gave a strong army to his brother İsa Çelebi, who had sought refuge with him, and sent him to Anatolia.

However, İsa Çelebi failed and was defeated by their brother Mehmed Çelebi.

Mehmed Çelebi: After the Battle of Ankara, Mehmed Çelebi started moving with the soldiers under his command, heading towards Amasya. But on the way, his path was

blocked by the troops of the Candaroğulları, so he had to fight his way through. After winning those battles, he turned first to Tosya, then changed direction towards Bolu to reach Bursa. But some of his advisors, especially Bayezid Pasha from Amasya, were not really in favor of this plan — so they gave up on going to Bursa.

At that time, Amasya was ruled by Kara Devletşah, who was appointed by Timur. But the people of Amasya were not happy with the situation and wanted change. So they invited Mehmed Çelebi. He came with a sudden attack and a thousand soldiers, defeated Kara Devletşah, and entered the city.

Since Timur had returned Anatolian lands to the old beys, Amasya was not officially Ottoman territory anymore. That meant Mehmed Çelebi was not acting as a regular Ottoman ruler — he was now the head of a semi-independent Amasya Emirate that still recognized Timur as the main authority. But Mehmed Çelebi was not going to stop there. He wanted to expand his land. He managed to save Niksar from a siege by Kubadoğlu Ali Bey and added it back to his territory. Then he pushed forward and gained control over Tokat and Sivas. By 1403, Amasya had turned into a strong and semi-independent state.

Timur, who was still in Anatolia, called Mehmed Çelebi to meet him. But on the way, Turkmen Beys blocked his route, and he had to turn back. Even though he did not go, Timur treated the situation kindly and sent him gifts — like a crown and an official document confirming his rule over the Rumiye-i Sugra region. After that, and with the advice of his close advisor Eyne Bey, Mehmed Çelebi wrote a letter to his brother İsa Çelebi and offered to share Anatolia. But, like I mentioned earlier, İsa did not accept. That left Mehmed Çelebi with no option but to fight. In 1404, he marched towards Bursa, defeated İsa Çelebi at the Battle of Ulubat, and claimed the throne. But to

avoid angering Timur, he minted coins with both his own name and Timur's on them — trying to play it safe politically.

Musa Çelebi: Right after the Battle of Ankara, Musa Çelebi was sent to Bursa. At that time, the city was still under Timur's control, but Musa started ruling with Timur's decree. That same year, İsa Çelebi came close to the Karesi region and started threatening him. Musa tried to strike back, and at first he seemed successful — but then İsa Çelebi took over Bursa. After losing, Musa escaped to Germiyan (Kütahya), and later took shelter under Karamanoğlu Mehmed Bey. In 1409, he managed to take back Bursa for a while, but this did not last either. He lost again — this time to his brother Süleyman Çelebi — and had to leave Bursa once more.

The Battle of Ulubad

The Battle of Ulubad took its place in 1403 and was fought between Mehmed and İsa Çelebi and its an important turning point in the Ottoman Interregnum because it indirectly caused the death of İsa Çelebi.

İsa Çelebi was in the rule of Balıkesir (Karesi) during the interregnum, after he settled in Balıkesir, sent an envoy to Timur, declaring his allegiance to Timur and assumed the administration of Karesi region, received a *hil'at* and valuable gifts. Meanwhile the army of Timurlane marched to the city of Bursa and took over the control of the city, and he chose Musa Çelebi as the emir of Bursa. After that, İsa Çelebi tried many times to capture the city of Bursa and managed to take over after a couple of ineffective attempts and started to rule it with the warrant of Timurlane.

Meanwhile Mehmed Çelebi sent a letter to Isa Çelebi by following the suggestion of Subaşı Eyne Bey, and asked to divide the Anatolian territories between two brothers Mehmed and Isa. But Isa Çelebi refused the offer and argued that he has the right to the throne. After that, Mehmed Çelebi gathered his army and marched to Bursa.

The two shehzades encountered each other in the fields of Ulubad town near Lake Ulubad. The two brothers engaged in battle and among them Mehmed emerged victorious. Mehmed occupied Bursa where he was enthroned to succeed his father. Meanwhile, Isa fled to Constantinople to regroup and reinforce his army. Isa then faced Mehmed again at Karasi and was defeated again. This time Isa took flight to the Karamanids where the agents of Mehmed assassinated him in a bath.

The Struggle for Rumelia

In the beginning, Süleyman Çelebi was dominant. Though he was the eldest son of Bayezid, after the loss at Ankara, he acted hastily to secure Edirne while the Balkans enjoyed relative stability and while rival claimants were all confused. His rule over Rumelia was characterized by pragmatism with the Byzantines, who bestowed on him a measure of political legitimacy with logistical support in exchange for promises and some land concessions. The court of Süleyman borrowed most of its tradition from that of his father and relied on experienced viziers, military commanders and Balkan vassals who were vested in preserving the status quo.

Still, although Süleyman ruled in Rumelia as though it were his won bought estate, he did not do so without opposition. His dependence on Byzantine support and haughty

and indulgent behavior alienated certain groups within the Ottoman elite from him. More seriously, his indifference to Anatolian affairs allowed his brother Mehmed Çelebi to consolidate there. To other brother, Musa Çelebi, once serving under Süleyman, broke away and thus began raising his own power base in the Balkans with Mehmed's support. Hence, the birth of a dangerous triangle rivalry was created that turned Rumelia into a zone of ever shifting loyalties and open warfare

Musa's campaign into Rumelia was that turning point because, in his first days, Mehmed sent him against Süleyman, but he soon became much more than a proxy. He was a man of warfare, a populist in spirit, and he made panel audiences because he was obviously virulently opposed to Byzantine influence. While he gained ground in appeal to the lower ranks of the military and to the dispossessed segments of the Musli populace, the image of him as "ghazi" shehzade defending Islamic lands from Christian encroachment helped him to generate momentum as he marched west. Many local commanders defected to his side, believing he offered a more independent vision of Ottoman rule.

In and of itself, it spells ruin, having a campaign that saw the end Edirne in 1411 and the death of Süleyman Çelebi. In fact, Musa crowned himself as sultan over Rumelia, seemingly accomplishing what Mehmed had started already. Not longer after, however, Musa, whose reign descended swiftly into an atmosphere of mistrust and vindictiveness, turned against his erstwhile allies, particularly the Byzantines plus certain Balkan nobles who had formerly sided with Süleyman. His harsh policies and uncompromising attitude further limited him tactically.

Thus, at this juncture, Mehmed Çelebi, no longer content with operating only in Anatolia, saw fit to intervene. Once comrades, Mehmed and Musa now stood opposed. Gathering support from Stefan Lazarević of Serbia, with whom he had been long involved, Mehmed moved into Rumelia, supposedly to restore order. The preparation for a great encounter that would seal the fate of the Empire began.

To struggle for Rumelia, therefore, represented not just a contest between armies, it was a war of competing paradigms for the Ottoman state. On one hand, Süleyman represented an elite diplomacy oriented model of rule; on the other, Musa stood for a radical martial ghazi ideal, while Mehmed considered himself the one that would sustain the empire through a rather cautious rationale of legitimacy and renewed central authority. So much would depend in that region and even on that dynasty on whose conception prevailed.

The March of İsa Çelebi and the Siege of Edirne

Sultan Bayezit I died at the hands of Timur and the empire was divided into rival claimants and a loose collection of vassals. Among the first to declare himself was İsa Çelebi; to say he was the second son of Bayezid, and hastened from the turmoil into a position as the true prince successor in the throne because it was based on seniority and experience in administration, is pretty well an understatement.

Bursa, the Ottoman capital in Anatolia, was where İsa built up his headquarters, controlling it with all swiftness and then declaring his claim. Along with the western beyliks still undecided in their allegiance, he marched northwards to bring into the

fold Rumelia, the European heart of the empire. The goal was clear: capture Edirne, the imperial Babylon in the Balkans, and legitimize his rule.

Measured yet ambitious was the march of İsa. He got logistic support from loyal Anatolian forces and passive neutrality from the Germiyanids, accompanied by some cautious cooperation from local notables. He crossed into Thrace, met with scattered resistance as this area had lately committed itself to either one of the competing Shehzade. His army though small was well-organized and included seasoned provincial troops and remnants of bayzeid's disbanded kapıkulu corps.

He laid siege to the city, hoping for an early capitulation after moving up to the edges of Edirne. But then, his siege operations became almost entirely laborious. For Süleyman Çelebi had been the defender of Edirne, who had buried himself under considerable support from Balkan nobility and European vassals at that point as a ruler in Rumelia. Tension was the atmosphere set up in that standoff between them.

İsa lacked both the naval power to cut off Edirne's river supply lines and the siege equipment he would need to mount a decisive assault. He put his faith in political persuasion-sending emissaries into the city, promising leniency and stability in return for loyalty. These overtures were largely rebuffed, as Süleyman's influence remained dominant in the city, with regional alliances strengthened by the tacit approval of nearby Christian lords who viewed Süleyman as the more pragmatic and stable claimant.

After several weeks of attrition, and news of Süleyman mobilizing his army in the south, İsa found it again to be untenable. He lifted the siege and withdrew rather than risk losing morale and running low on Anatolian support, leaving Edirne in the hands of Süleyman. This failure to besiege Edirne laid the boundary of İsa's dreams of Rumelia, as well as strengthening Süleyman Çelebi's hold over the European parts for an age of extended friction and conflict between the brothers.

There were going to be days of political competition and propaganda because, from then on, an almost viable ground would be obtained from which to perform future manipulations. Feeding into prophecies as deep as possible is already made possible through changes in what already is or is about to be with respect to the vantage point of partisan wheels.

The Last Confrontation: Mehmed vs. Musa

Later, Musa received a letter from Mehmed Çelebi, who had pulled back to Amasya. This letter brought the two brothers together at Cemele Castle near Kırşehir, with one big goal: to take down Süleyman Çelebi. According to their plan, Musa would head from Rumelia to Wallachia and march toward Edirne, while Mehmed would take advantage of Süleyman leaving Bursa and strike there. If it worked, Musa would rule Rumelia, and Mehmed would control Anatolia. So Musa sailed from Sinop to Wallachia. He even married the daughter of the Wallachian ruler, and that gave him a lot of soldiers — both Wallachians and Turkmens. With this new army, he came down south from the Balkans in 1410 and began small raids and surprise attacks near Edirne and Kosmidion (Eyüp), trying to wear Süleyman's army down. Then, on February 17,

1411, he launched a sudden attack on Edirne. At that exact time, Süleyman Çelebi was in the bath, relaxing and not really taking the danger seriously. But once he realized the attack was real, he tried to escape. He managed to get out of Edirne, but was recognized by villagers and sadly killed. Musa was crowned in Edirne right after that. That moment, the Ottomans were split again — Musa ruled Rumelia, and Mehmed was in charge of Anatolia. At first, Mehmed supported Musa. But after seeing him grab power, it started to bother him. Musa was not treating the other beyliks well, and people around him — even his own army — did not like him. So Mehmed decided to act. He asked the Byzantine emperor and the Serbian despot for help and built a powerful army. In 1413, he faced Musa at the Battle of Çamurlu. Musa's army totally collapsed. He tried to run, but was caught not long after and killed.

The Rise of Mehmed I

After this final victory, Mehmet Çelebi became the one and only ruler of the Ottoman Empire — both in Rumelia and Anatolia. The state was reunited at last. He reorganized the army, strengthened the government, and brought stability back. That is why historians today call him the “Second Founder” of the empire — because he managed to bring the Ottomans back together after 11 years of chaos.

Key Points

Ottoman Land System

The largest factor of the Ottoman economy -ever since the empire's founding- had been agriculture. Since agriculture requires a lot of land the need for conquest became inevitable. As conquest gained traction, the call for centralization came along with it.

The Ottomans reformed their land system to a more centralized and efficient form. This system was called **timar** or **timariot**. The move of the Ottoman dynasty on centralization proved dangerous as powerful land-owning families of Anatolia, Levant and the Balkans saw it as a threat to them and their profits. As the army of **Tamerlane** advanced through Anatolia, some powerful families found it advantageous to ally themselves with **Tamerlane** - who granted autonomy to his subjects. Although centralization had some downsides it also proved vital in the empire's struggle for its existence. Taxation became easier and the constant influx of soldiers fueled the empire's wars. The strengthening of the military class -**the sipahis**- in society was also a result of this endeavour. When it comes to the Ottoman Interregnum, many sources indicate agricultural and economic activity continued but the process of taxation became much harder as the war was waged.

Rank System and Purposes

Ottomans had lots of ranks, lots of positions and lots of people assigned to those. As we do not want to choke you with words that seem like they do not even have a meaning, we will be simplifying and decreasing the number of the mentioned respective positions.

Grand Vizier (in Ottoman Turkish Sadr-ı A'zam) is the highest rank a commoner can reach in the sultanate. During many periods (especially when the Sultan was young, weak, or disinterested), the Grand Vizier effectively ruled the sultanate. In Ottoman legal theory, the Sultan was supposed to conduct affairs of state exclusively via the

Grand Vizier, but in reality, this arrangement was often circumvented. A Grand Vizier's authorities include:

- *Issued orders (fermans) in the Sultan's name.
- * Chaired the Imperial Council (Divan-ı Hümayun) and made decisions on domestic and foreign policy.
- *Had the final say in legal matters discussed in the Imperial Council.
- *Could override decisions made by kadıs (judges), though usually with care.
- *Oversaw imperial justice and the implementation of laws.
- *Appointed provincial governors (beylerbeyis, sancakbeys).
- *Supervised taxation, public works, infrastructure, and land administration (timar system).
- *Controlled the imperial bureaucracy, especially the scribal class.
- *Commander-in-Chief in the Sultan's absence.
- *Negotiated treaties and dealt with ambassadors.
- *Wielded the imperial seal (mühr-ü hümayun), allowing him to act in the Sultan's name.
- *Could hold audiences, issue orders, and even sign death warrants—though execution of high-ranking individuals required the Sultan's approval.

As you could imagine, a Grand Vizier can save the empire or destroy it. So, our dear sultans' soon-to-be padishahs need to appoint this position very carefully throughout the conflict.

Pasha, is a high-ranking official in the Ottoman government. Each Pasha's actual power varied by rank, local circumstances, and the strength of the central government at the time. Their authorities include:

- *Raised and led the timar-armed sipahi cavalry and any limited standing troops in his province.

- *Responsible for the maintenance, staffing, and garrisoning of key fortresses within his jurisdiction.

- * Organised levies (*avarız-ı divaniye*) or ennobled irregulars when the Sultan called for war.

- * Supervised collection of land taxes (*öşür*, *haraç*), extraordinary wartime levies, and market dues.

- *Oversaw *kadis* (Islamic judges) to ensure local justice aligned with imperial law, could override minor verdicts. Commanded local forces to suppress banditry, settle tribal disputes, and enforce public order.

- *: Regularly sent reports (*hulasas*) and tribute to the Grand Vizier's office; could be recalled or reassigned at any time by Grand Vizier or Padishah.

At our committee, some of you may not start with the Pasha title. As mentioned before, Grand Vizier's and Sultans have the authority to promote each of their delegates to Pasha title. We advise you to use this authority wisely, as the Ottoman government saw many unsuccessful Pashas in its history.

Subasi, they were the Sultan's "peace-keepers," bridging civilian order and military readiness at the grassroots. The authorities they possess include:

*Organized night watches and ambushes to root out thieves, highwaymen, and rogue factions.

*Executed the kadi's judgments such as arresting suspects, bringing parties to court, carrying out corporal punishments or property confiscation

*Raised and led the town's timar-levies or irregular auxiliaries (yamaks) when the sancak was called to campaign.

*Took his orders directly from the sancak bey or beylerbey, but coordinated daily with the kadi's office.

Beg, Beg's real influence varied with the wealth of his sancak and the strength of the central government. Sanjak begs were more autonomous, while coreland begs were tightly controlled. Commanded the sipahi cavalry whose timars he oversaw, mobilising them for campaigns and ensuring each spahi met his service obligations.

There were independent Begs at the time as well, some of the delegates will be representing them at our committee. They were the head of their government with nearly ultimate authority over their beylik. Some of the examples are Candarli, Karamanoglu and Germiyanoglu beyliks. They had their own unique government, ruled as they saw fit. Delegates who have the honor to represent them will have the same authorities they possess.

Beylerbeg, combined the roles of a modern governor-general and commander-in-chief of a province, acting as the Sultan's chief representative across civil, military, fiscal, and judicial spheres. Led all timariot sipahis, irregulars, and fortress garrisons in his province. Responsible for the maintenance and staffing of major forts and castles;

directed strategic troop deployments. Collected and managed all provincial revenues—land taxes, customs, extraordinary levies—and forwarded the Sultan's share to the imperial treasury. Preached the khutbah in the Sultan's name at provincial capitals, authorized coinage strikes bearing his name alongside the Sultan's (in especially important provinces), and received visiting dignitaries. This position usually had two main parts, Anatolian Beylerbeg and Rumelia Beylerbeg. Our sultans can assign them as they see fit.

Seyhulislam, the Sultan's chief religious judge and head of the ulama. Appointed, reassigned, or removed kadıs (judges) across the empire in coordination with the Sultan. Set curricula for state madrasas and certified graduates (müderris) to teach and serve as judges. Sat in the Divan-ı Hümayun when religious or moral sanction was needed for policy. His endorsement (through fetva or khutbah) was required to legitimize new taxes, wars, or legal reforms. Even sultan has to get the endorsement from Seyhulislam. Held office purely at the sultans decision, could be deposed or replaced by sultan if his fetvas conflicted with state interests. But replacing an endorsed Seyhulislam can cause some shocking actions across the sultanate.

Ghazi, combined religious prestige and frontier-combat prowess, forming the vanguard of Ottoman expansion and embodying the sultanate's claim to be the true champion of Islam. Possessed no authorities and was used for prestige.

Kadi, formed the backbone of Ottoman governance at the local level, combining the roles of judge, notary, administrator, and social guardian to uphold both law and order

in town and countryside alike. They had to report their actions to the Seyhulislam.

Was assigned by Seyhulislam himself.

Character Roles

İzmiroğlu Cüneyd:

İzmiroğlu Cüneyd was one of the most important and brightest people at the end of the Aydın Beylik. Once Timur took his hand off the throne, he started to support Süleyman Çelebi and fight against Mehmet Çelebi. However, he lost his power with the rise of Mehmet Çelebi.

Cüneyd Bey is known as an unruly frontiersman who acts in accordance with his own interests. His personality was never centered around loyalty. He focused on profit rather than loyalty; he went to wars, formed alliances, but always fought for his own interests.

Kara Timurtaş Paşa:

Kara Timurtaş Paşa had been an important figure in the Ottoman Empire since the reign of Bayezid. He was a quiet but efficient leader. He was not very talkative but did his job very well. He ruled important cities and suppressed rebellions very easily.

Even though he did not take the spotlight, he had quite a major role in regulating the peace and politics throughout Rumelia. He supported Süleyman Çelebi in the background and prevented rebellions. He was the reason why Rumelia did not fall apart.

Umur Paşa:

Umur Paşa was not only a warrior but also known for his calmness and intelligence. He was able to stay calm in crises and would find the right move without panicking. That is why those around him trusted him and listened to him. He played a great role while Süleyman Çelebi was working on organizing his army. He would not show off, most likely, but he did his job with dignity.

Ali Paşa:

Ali Paşa was a critical figure in the Interregnum. He was known for his political sharpness and strategic mindset. Instead of the battlefield, his role was more about holding things together behind the scenes—helping Süleyman keep his grip on Rumelia through plans, talks, and negotiations. He worked with his brother Oruç Paşa for the same purposes, but his focus was on maintaining political balance and the diplomacy part.

Oruç Paşa:

Oruç Paşa is the brother of Ali Paşa. Even though his brother worked on politics, he had a place for himself on the military front. Although he worked for the same purpose as his brother, his way was through the sword and conflict. He directly contributed to protecting Süleyman Çelebi's authority on the front. Without his efforts, it would have been difficult to maintain regularity.

Çandarlı İbrahim Paşa:

Çandarlı İbrahim Paşa came from one of the most established vizier families. With the experience that he earned from his family, he became great and experienced in his affairs. He stood with Süleyman Çelebi and helped him consolidate his political power. He worked on both inner problems and outer relations. He was especially influential in diplomacy, administrative affairs, and intra-palace balance policies. He was not only a vizier for Süleyman Çelebi but also a solid supporter that Süleyman Çelebi could count on.

Orhan Çelebi:

Orhan Çelebi was a member of the Ottoman dynasty who had a place with Süleyman Çelebi. He never became a candidate for the throne. Instead of this he accepted the authority of his brother Süleyman Çelebi and decided to move together with his brother. His support was important for Süleyman Çelebi for mentally, militarily, politically and strengthening his legitimacy within the dynasty.

Demetrios Laskaris Leontares:

Demetrios Laskaris Leontares was a general and diplomat from the Byzantine Empire. While the empire was weakening, he was one of those who tried to make wise moves. He supported Süleyman Çelebi and he gave the opportunity of safe pass from Byzantine lands. In return, a few castles changed hands back to the Byzantines. But this was not some friendly gesture—Leontares was thinking purely in terms of what was best for Byzantium. His support gave Süleyman a leg

up in the chaos, and at the same time, it gave the empire a shot at turning the civil war to its own advantage.

Çandarlı Ali Paşa:

Çandarlı Ali Paşa is a powerful statesman who comes from one of the established vizier families. He knew how to keep things in order and was good at thinking ahead. That is exactly why he mattered during a messy time like the Interregnum. He mostly stayed in the background and worked on politics. He tried to keep things running and stop the system from falling apart. He had an important role in both diplomacy and inner affairs. He was one of the names who helped Süleyman Çelebi look more legitimate.

Subaşı Eyne Bey:

Eyne Bey was in charge of security and ensuring the order of the Ottoman army. He was a strong figure at the local level and was also active in wartime. Eyne Bey was known for his loyalty to Mehmet Çelebi. When Mehmet Çelebi was moving into Rumelia, he helped him both with soldiers and supplies. Since he was trusted and had power in the region, things got easier for Mehmet. Local figures like Eyne Bey made a big difference in helping him stay ahead of his rivals.

Beyazıd Paşa:

Beyazid Pasha was an important name who served in both military and civilian fields in the Ottoman Empire. He showed his loyalty to Mehmet Çelebi from the beginning and helped him both in the war and in state affairs. He was known as a

quiet but influential leader since he worked in both the military and politics. He worked actively to prevent the collapse of the state.

After the Fetret Era ended, Mehmed Çelebi ascended the throne, Beyazıd Pasha became one of his most trusted viziers. He worked as a manager during the recovery of the state and contributed to the suppression of rebellions. Thanks to his loyalty and hard work, he became an important figure that strengthened Mehmed's authority.

Osmancıklı İmamzade Halil Paşa:

Halil Pasha was from Osmancık and had both a religious and political side. He studied in a madrasah and was known for being knowledgeable. He also had a role in running things, so he could both influence people and have a voice in the government.

His support for Mehmet Çelebi mattered a lot, especially in the eyes of the people. Because of his religious background, he helped gather support around Mehmet. He played a role in making Mehmet look more rightful as a leader and helped keep things calm inside the state. He also worked in the administration and helped keep the balance between religion and politics.

Osmancıklı Mehmed Nizameddin Paşa:

Mehmed Nizameddin Pasha was an eminent statesman and scholar from Osmancık. His support was given to Mehmed Çelebi during the Interregnum, while also sharing in-depth knowledge about Islam and administration. His

presence helped bring legitimacy to Mehmed's cause, especially among the ulema and in Anatolia.

Molla Fenari:

Molla Fenari was reputable as a religious scholar, who advocated for having Mehmed Çelebi, during the Interregnum. His influence was neither by sword nor by political tactics, but through and through on religious legitimacy.

His words became effective among the people as well as the learned, for he lent help in shaping Mehmed's emergence as divinely tactical. He was instrumental in shaping the image of Mehmed as a just and legitimate leader, especially in the chaotic civil war period.

Yapaoğlu

He was a local scion into being a follower of Mehmed Çelebi. Without being a top level political figure at the level of the empire, he did have an effect at the local level. He helped in consolidating areas occupied and constantly being used during his time as a local governor. Such were the type of people who mattered in Mehmet's slow but inevitable return to the empire.

Vilkoğlu Brankovic:

He was a Balkan aristocrat whose proclivities changed during the Interregnum. often did he turn sides with the regional leaders of the times from whom he drew power because he had nothing but unstable loyalty.

At times he was inclined toward Mehmed Çelebi's cause, although he could not be considered entirely committed, chiefly when Mehmed began to gain power.

Brankovic exemplifies the opportunistic yet decisive kind of frontier leader who could tip the scales with a timely alliance.

Evrenos Bey:

Evrenos Bey was among the legendary ghazi commanders of early Ottoman time. By gaining recognition for his achievements in the Balkans, Evrenos earned a long standing loyalty to the cause, the Ottomans, and even supported Mehmed Çelebi during his reign as the Interregnum ruler.

His experience and fame made him a key actor in legitimizing Mehmed's leadership in Rumelia. He was continuity and tradition amid chaos.

Paşa Yiğit Bey:

Another veteran commander who had taken part in early Ottoman campaigns in the Balkans, he aided Mehmed Çelebi with military contingents that secured key areas. Known for his strictness and martial prowess, he was one of the many reasons that made it possible for Mehmed to assert authority in the lands torn by war. He was a hit most of the time in Lands of Akıncı, those during the Interregnum. He raided spoiling the other powers siding with Süleyman Çelebi. His raids did not always make headline news but did weaken enemies and bolster Süleyman's dominance over the borderlands.

Akıncı Tunahan Bey:

Alas, this one was akıncı, belonging to the side of Mehmed Çelebi. His understanding of terrain and the art of guerilla warfare usefulness made him a valuable fighter in Mehmed's campaign in Rumelia.

He was instrumental in hit and run activity that vexed opponents before summoning.

Mihaloğlu Mehmed Bey / Gazi Mihal Pasha:

All from the most powerful Mihaloğlu family, these were the major frontier commanders known for their military skills. Mihaloğlu Bey, particularly was a vehement warrior supporting Musa Çelebi at a time and later on came to conflict with Mehmed. Gazi Mihal Pasha, was the most famous one among these, ultimately switched sides to Mehmed Çelebi and became the bridge between early frontier culture and the burgeoning centralized state.

Börklüce Mustafa / Börklüce Mehmed:

Two of Sheikh Bedreddin's major disciples who helped him in later religious revolutionary movements, the pair were thus at the forefront of the social uprisings demanding basic equality and religious reform. In the face of encroachment from central Ottoman power, these two were put down, yet they have come to occupy the role of symbols of resistance and ground level reform.

Şeyhülislam Bedreddin Simâvi:

A mystical and radical thinker, Bedreddin Simavi represents one of the most illustrious figures of the Interregnum. He favored Musa Çelebi and was his kadiasker (chief judge), but switched allegiance to Musa's adversaries and thereafter led one of the major socio-religious uprisings in Ottoman history. He worked for the unification of religions and classes, thus causing dread in the

minds of the ruling elites. Defeated and executed, he left the legacy of a heretic and a visionary.

Karamanoğlu Mehmed Bey:

Known to be an opponent of the Ottomans, his rule extended into Interregnum, which he adopted for his own interest. During this time, he allied with competing Ottoman shehzades to weaken their central authority.

Germiyanoglu II. Yakup Bey:

The prince of the Germiyanid Beylik, II. Yakup Bey kept a steadier path during the Interregnum. While his region was being absorbed into the ottoman space, he tried to retain some degree of autonomy.

He then shifted toward Mehmed Çelebi as it became clear that the latter would reunify the empire. His coming out for Mehmed secured the seamless incorporation of his lands.

Candaroğlu İsfendiyar Bey:

The head of the Candaroğlu Beylik, İsfendiyar Bey was too careful. He supported Mehmed Çelebi, particularly now that Mehmed was beginning to consolidate Anatolia. He assured his alliance would mean relative peace in the north during Mehmed's campaigns, contributing further to the great unification of the Anatolian beyliks under Ottoman control.

Kapıkulu Alp Bey (fictional):

Alp Bey was a commander from the elite Kapıkulu corps. He was noted for his discipline and strict obedience to the central authority. During the Interregnum, he sided with Musa Çelebi and helped restore order and discipline the army.

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Further Research

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hWq4Jl1tX0> - *The Ottoman Interregnum - Ottoman Rulers #5*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2z6XZ46jsc> - *The Ottoman Interregnum (1402–1413)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjPLi7hKYlQ> - *Ottoman Interregnum P5 Civil War + Mehmed 1st*