

WOLF ON THE BORDER: YAHYAPAŞAOĞLU BALI BEY (?–1527) EXPANSION AND PROVINCIAL ÉLITE IN THE EUROPEAN CONFINES OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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It is an established fact that for a lengthy period the motors of Ottoman expansion into Europe were the so-called “marcher lords” and their extended households, who commanded the so-called *akıncı* troops and controlled the border areas (referred to as *uç kenar yer* in a 1520s document). These clans (the Evrenos, Mihal, Turahan and Malkoçoğulları families) were descendants of state-founding ancestors. Their power was passed on from father to son and they had special rights in many respects.¹ From the reign of Murad II (1421–1451) onwards, the central authority systematically curtailed the power of these clans and compelled them to accept the new game rules of the emerging power

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1 For more on these clans, see Mariya Kiprovska, ‘The Mihaloğlu Family: Gazi Warriors and Patrons of Dervish Hospices’, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 32 (2008) 193–222; Pál Fodor, ‘Akıncı’, in Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*. Leiden, Boston, 2014, 14–16.

structure, which was based on the *kul-devşirme* system.² In this way, the hereditary aristocracy was gradually replaced by a central and provincial ruling élite formed from men of slave origin, who obtained and then monopolized the empire's key positions. In the first half of the sixteenth century, one can still find – in the western marches³ – several *sancakbeyis* from the Mihaloğlu and Evrenos clans, but the more strategic districts on the main frontlines were already assigned to men from the new “dynasties” of *devşirme* origin. These men were often in-laws of the sultans; in other words, they had family ties to the ruling dynasty.

It was from such a family that the hero of this study, Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey, also came. His father, Yahya Pasha – probably a man of Albanian origin with ties to Skopje (known as Üsküb in Ottoman Turkish) – had been raised in the palace of Mehmed II (1451–1481), thereafter making a brilliant career under Bayezid II (1481–1512).⁴ Indeed, during his eventful life, Yahya Pasha served as the governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) of Rumelia three times and of Anatolia two times as well as the district governor (*sancakbeyi*) of Bosnia and of Nicopolis two times each. According to contemporary chronicler Kemalpaşazade, he also served as grand vizier for a short time in 1505, though this claim has not yet been substantiated.⁵ However, it is certain that Yahya Pasha was promoted to the position of second vizier in July 1505 and thus became a member of the imperial council.⁶ He also participated in important military actions in both

2 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1995, 141–150; Kiprovská, ‘The Mihaloğlu Family’, 196, 213–222.

3 Kiprovská, ‘The Mihaloğlu Family’, 214–215.

4 Hazim Šabanović, *Turski izvori za istoriju Beograda. I. Katarski popisi Beograda i okoline 1476–1566*. Beograd, 1964, 647; Hedda Reindl, *Männer um Bāyezīd: Eine prosopographische Studie über die Epoche Sultan Bāyezīds II. (1481–1512)* (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, 75.) Berlin, 1983, 336–345. In early 1525, Bali stated in a letter written to Captain-General Pál Tomori that he had heard from his father that both their families had originated from Bosnia and that they were related. Tomori did not consider this to be impossible. See Vilmos Fraknói, ‘Tomori Pál élete’, *Századok* 15 (1881) 290: note 1, 388.

5 Reindl, *Männer um Bāyezīd*, 341–342.

6 İlhan Gök, *Atatürk Kitaplığı M.C. O.71 Numaralı 909–933/1503–1527 Tarihli İn’âmât Defteri (Transkripsiyon–Değerlendirme)*. PhD Dissertation, İstanbul, 2014, 383, 392 (on this page the year is given as 907/1501, which seems to be an error). The entries from this *defter* pertaining to the year 909/1504–1505 were previously published by Ömer Lütfü Barkan, ‘İstanbul Saraylarına Ait Muhasebe Defterleri’, *Belgeler* 9:13 (1979) 296–380.

the west and the east, fighting valiantly against the Mamluks during the Battle of Ağaçayırı in 1488, serving as the supreme commander of the large Ottoman army sent against Shah Ismail in 1507 and leading numerous attacks against the Albanians, Hungarians and Croats. At the turn of the century (or a little later), Yahya Pasha married a daughter of Bayezid II, thereby becoming his son-in-law (*damad*). South Slav scholarly literature generally identifies his bride as Hatice,⁷ though this notion has been contested.⁸ Entries from a list of gifts kept for many years (cited above) clearly show that Yahya Pasha married Princess Aynışah.⁹ Their union took place after Aynışah's first husband, (Göde) Ahmed Mirza, was killed on 14 December 1497, during an uprising in Azerbaijan, where he had gone earlier that year to reclaim the throne of his grandfather, Akkoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan.¹⁰ (Ahmed Mirza was the issue of the marriage between Uğurlu Mehmed, the son of Uzun Hasan who had taken refuge in Istanbul, and Gevherhan, the daughter of Sultan Mehmed II.¹¹ The marriage of Ahmed Mirza and Aynışah took place in 1490 and produced several daughters.) Yahya Pasha died in Edirne sometime after the middle of July 1511.¹²

Yahya Pasha established the family headquarters in Skopje, where he built a mosque, a soup kitchen/inn (*imaret*), a teacher training school (*muallimhane*), fountains (*çeşme*), a mansion (*konak*) and a *türbe*. For their sustainment he used

7 Šabanović, *ibid.*; Dušanka Bojanić, 'Požarevac u XVI veku i Bali-beg Jahjapašić', *Istorisjki Časopis* 32 (1985) 55.

8 Reindl, *Männer um Bâyezîd*, 341; M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*. (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, VII/63^a.) Ankara, 1985², 25; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *XV. ve XVI. Asırlarda Edirne ve Paşa Livası, Vakıflar – Mülkler – Mukataalar* (İşaret Yayınları, 15.) İstanbul, 2007², 475.

9 Gök, *În'âmât Defteri*, 1106, 1156, 1218, 1240, 1377.

10 *Şerefname*. (2. cilt). *Osmanlı–İran Tarihi*. Translated from the Persian by Osman Aslanoğlu. İstanbul, 2010, 117. For the precise date of death, see Roger M. Savory, 'The Struggle for Supremacy in Persia after the Death of Timur', *Der Islam* 40 (1965) 61.

11 Uluçay, *Padişahların Kadınları ve Kızları*, 24–25.

12 Gök, *În'âmât Defteri*, 1300. The last entry regarding Yahya Pasha was dated 14 July 1511. He was formerly believed to have died in either 1509 or 1510. Reindl, *Männer um Bâyezîd*, 344. According to Kemalpaşazade, Yahya Pasha died in early 1511. İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân. VIII. Defter (Transkripsiyon)*. (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, XVIII/10.) Ed. by Ahmet Uğur. Ankara, 1997, 281.

proceeds from the large religious endowment he founded from his vast array of real estate (houses, shops, baths, watermills, baking houses, soap-making workshops, caravanserais, covered markets, abattoirs, storehouses, etc.) and villages in Skopje, Loveç, Hirsovo, Sofia, Nicopolis, Istanbul, Tatarpazarı and elsewhere.¹³ Yahya Pasha also founded a teacher training school and a primary school (*mektebhane*) in Istanbul, which he financed with income from a village around Gallipoli and a few endowments in Galata. He also owned a livestock farm in Plovdiv (known in Ottoman Turkish as Filibe).¹⁴

Kemalpaşazade wrote the following revealing description of Yahya Pasha: “This highly esteemed statesman was among the greatest of those dignitaries who served at the heavenly court. He was among the senior attendants who served at the threshold of the House of Osman which is the abode of sovereignty. He long served in the distinguished harem at the time of Sultan Mehmed Khan. He rose to high rank in the shadow of his grace. ... He first gave him the *beylerbeyilik* of Anatolia. However, he soon removed him from this office, because they accused him of oppressing his subjects. After dismissing him, he conducted an inquiry, and finding him innocent, again honored the commander-in-chief: he benevolently gave him the *beylerbeyilik* of Rumelia. When the sovereign, whose sins are forgiven, died and chaos, rebellion and clamour filled the world’s stage, he became the chief commander of the Rumelian part of the country. He again became the governor-general of Anatolia and Rumelia during the age of the auspicious world conqueror, Sultan Bayezid Khan. The light of the Sun-like [ruler]’s grace filled the candle of his fortune and he glistened as a Sun on the celestial summit of greatness. The multitude of his attendants and goods, the abundance of his servants and household surpassed those of the other great governors and generous viziers.

13 His 1505–1506 endowment deeds were published in Serbian translation and (in the case of the first one) in the original by Gliša Elezović, *Turski spomenici. 2 vols.* Beograd, 1940–1952, I/1. 384–411, 420–525; I/2. 120–123. Cf. Vera Moutaftchieva, ‘Du role du vakıf dans l’économie urbaine des pays balkaniques sous la domination ottomane (XV^e–XVII^e s.)’, in Eadem, *Le vakıf—un aspect de la structure socio-économique de l’Empire ottoman (XV^e–XVII^e s.)*. Sofia, 1981, 206–207; Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 56.

14 Gökbilgin, *Edirne ve Paşa Livası*, 456–458; Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 56; cf. Reindl, *Männer um Bāyezīd*, 344; Aleksandar Fotić, ‘Yahyapaşa-oğlu Mehmed Pasha’s Evkaf in Belgrade’, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54:4 (2001) 438–439.

... His illustrious children, who were the lions of the reeds of the fight for faith (*gaza*), as a spear and drawn sword proceeded behind him and before him.”¹⁵

All seven of Yahya Pasha’s sons – Bali, Mahmud, Mehmed, Sinan, Ahmed, İskender, and Mustafa – were adults at the time of his marriage into the sultan’s family and therefore had no royal blood.¹⁶ Bali Bey was the eldest son and he became the recognized leader of the clan after his father’s death. Although Bali Bey is mentioned in a relatively great number of sources (compared to other major actors of the period), the year of his birth is not known and there are gaps in our knowledge of his career. Some Hungarian sources describe him – and this seems to have been the source of subsequent misunderstandings – using the attribute *Küçük* (‘little, shorter, lesser’),¹⁷ while Ottoman sources occasionally use the attribute *Koca* (‘great, elder’).¹⁸ Perhaps the first word was used to distinguish him from the “Great” Bali, that is, Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey, while the second was used at the Ottoman court as a mark of respect, since by that time Bali had proven himself to be a great warlord. The first mention of Bali Bey dates to 1485, when he is recorded as the holder of a large prebend (*ziamet*)¹⁹ in Bosnia, and he is subsequently identified as the commander (*subaşı*) of the *Yürüks*, a peasant military organization in Rumelia.²⁰ In 1498, he obtained an immense amount of plunder during his participation in the great

15 İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân. VIII. Defter*, 281–282.

16 Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 55; Gökbilgin, *Edirne ve Paşa Livası*, 458: note 729, and Reindl, *Männer um Bâyezîd*, 345. The latter work specifies only five sons.

17 Istvánffy Miklós *magyarok dolgairól írt históriája Tállyai Pál XVII. századi fordításában. I/1: 1–12. könyv.* (Történelmi források, 1.) Ed. by Péter Benits. Budapest, 2001, 154. According to Istvánffy, the “exceedingly eminent strong man” received this name as a result of “the child-like condition of his body”, though this was obviously not the main reason.

18 See the entries of the 1526 campaign journal on 30 July and 20 September: *Török történetirók. Vol. I.* Translated and annotated by József Thúry. Budapest, 1893, 310, 319; Feridun Ahmed Bey, *Münşeatü’s-Selatin. Vol. I.* İstanbul, 1274/1858², 559, 563–564; Anton C. Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher des ersten und zweiten ungarischen Feldzugs Suleymans I.* (Beihefte zur Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 8.) Vienna, 1978, 73, 88.

19 Šabanović, *Turski izvori*, 646; Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 56.

20 Ömer Lütfi Barkan, ‘Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak İstilâ Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zâviyeler’, *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2 (1942) 342: No. 183; Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 56.

incursion into Poland, which was led by Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey.²¹ It seems that Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali, whom Kemalpaşazade referred to as a “freshly matured adult” (*taze yetişmiş*),²² held the rank of *sancakbeyi* at the time (probably commanding one of the districts on the Lower Danube). The evidence for this is that the Rumelian *beys* had been ordered to participate in the foray into Poland and that Hoca Sadeddin – another, though much later, chronicler who gave an account of the event – also referred to Bali as a *bey*.²³ But in 1504 he was undoubtedly a member of the élite club of provincial governors (*ümera*): an entry in the above-mentioned *defter* dated 8 September 1504 states that he had “become the *bey* of the *liva* of Küstendil”.²⁴ In 1506, he was appointed to head the *sancak* of Avlonya in Albania.²⁵ Bali Bey spent the year 1507 at the latter location²⁶ and perhaps most of 1508 as well. On 18 June 1509, he was said to be the district governor of Silistra.²⁷ Bali Bey still filled the latter position on 8 August 1511,²⁸ though by 10 October of this year had become the *bey* of the *sancak* of Nicopolis.²⁹ In the latter post, Bali Bey faced a grave challenge: he had to take sides in the struggle for the throne between Sultan Bayezid and Prince Selim.³⁰ Whereas most of the Rumelian *beys* gave their support to Selim,³¹ Bali Bey played a duplicitous game for some time. According to several reports stemming from 1511–1512, he repeatedly informed Bayezid about Selim’s

21 Hoca Sadeddin, *Tacü't-Tevarih*. Vol. II. Istanbul, 1280/1863, 81–84. On the Polish–Ottoman war and its international correlations, see Alexandru Simon, ‘Habsburg Politics at the Border of Christendom in the Early 1500s’, *Banatica* 21 (2011) 55–71.

22 İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*. VIII. *Defter*, 167.

23 Hoca Sadeddin, *Tacü't-Tevarih*, II. 84.

24 Gök, *İn'âmât Defteri*, 261.

25 Šabanović, *Turski izvori*, 646; Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 56.

26 Gök, *İn'âmât Defteri*, 619, 678, 705.

27 *Ibid.*, 956.

28 *Ibid.*, 1129, 1284, 1301, 1310–1311.

29 *Ibid.*, 1343.

30 On this recently, see H. Erdem Çıpa, *The Making of Selim: Succession, Legitimacy, and Memory in the Early Modern Ottoman World*. Bloomington, Indianapolis, 2017, 29–107. Specialists harshly criticized this book; the length of one review of the book is revealing in itself: Fikret Yılmaz, ‘Selim’i Yazmak’, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 51 (2018) 297–390.

31 Çağatay Uluçay, ‘Yavuz Sultan Selim Nasıl Padişah Oldu?’, *Tarih Dergisi* 7:10 (1954) 124–125 and notes 15 and 17.

movements (for example, his arrival to Akkerman), but then gave his backing to Selim, initially supporting him in secret and then doing so openly.³²

Bali was soon rewarded for his timely switch of allegiance: in late 1513, the new padishah appointed him as the *sancakbeyi* of Semendire.³³ This appointment amounted to a recognition of his merits, for the post was the most significant in the Ottoman border organization. As its holder, Bali could exert – in conjunction with the *bey* of Bosnia – critical influence over Ottoman plans and actions in relation to Hungary. Apart from a few short intervals (during his redeployment to İskenderiye in 1518–1520, to Bosnia in 1521 and to Vidin in 1523–1524),³⁴ it was in this post that Bali strove unremittingly to destroy the southern defense system of the Kingdom of Hungary and to conquer the Hungarian and Croatian lands by means of uniting the military forces stationed in Bosnia and in the other frontier sub-provinces (İzvornik, Alacahisar, Vidin, etc.). In the period until his death in 1527, hardly any major attacks or coordinated incursions were undertaken without his direct or indirect involvement. A striking success came in late April–early May 1515, when by means of a ruse Bali crushed the army of the Voivode of Transylvania John Szapolyai as the latter lay siege to the Ottoman fortress of Havale (Zsarnó in Hungarian, Avala in Serbian) that was blockading Hungarian Belgrade.³⁵

32 İstanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (henceforth TSMA), E 6306, 6329 (?). According to İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı (*Osmanlı Tarihi. Vol. II.* [Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, XIII/16^{b1}.] Ankara, 1975³, 238: note 2), this report was written by Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey, though this is almost certainly inaccurate. Selahattin Tansel, *Sultan İkinci Bâyezid'in Siyasi Hayatı*. İstanbul, 1966, 274–276. In one of his reports (TSMA E 5082), Bali expressed his veneration as follows: “For this poor servant of yours there is no joy and support beyond the happiness-yielding threshold of the felicitous padishah... Whenever they command and request service from us, we go humbly into this high service and place our souls and bodies at risk. We hope that the merciful glance and high grace of the felicitous padishah will not distance itself from this servant of his...”

33 Šabanović, *Turski izvori*, 646; Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 56.

34 In addition to the previously cited works, see also Olga Zirojević, *Tursko vojno uredjenje u Srbiji (1459–1683)*. Belgrade, 1974, 261–264.

35 Ludovicus Tubero, *Kortörténeti feljegyzések (Magyarország)*. (Szegedi Középkortörténeti Könyvtár, 4.) Published by László Blazovich and Erzsébet Sz. Galántai. Szeged, 1994, 280–283; *Istvánffy Miklós magyarokról írt történetje*, 154–156. There also exists a contemporary Ottoman account of the event: the letter that Prince Süleyman wrote to the pashas of the imperial council based on Bali Bey’s reports (TSMA E 5438). For the English translation of this letter,

Bali Bey was also closely involved in the great turnabout in Ottoman “grand strategy” in 1520–1521, when the new sultan, Süleyman, abandoned his father’s eastern-oriented policy and launched an offensive against Central and Western Europe.³⁶ During preparations for the campaign, Süleyman requested the opinion of Bali, who had been transferred to Bosnia in early 1521. In accordance with the interests of the military establishment in Rumelia, Bali argued for an attack against Hungary and the occupation of Buda, since – in his view – the Hungarians were no longer capable of resistance.³⁷ After the initial success of the campaign (the occupation of Szabács/Šabac/Böğürdelen on 7 July), Bali received the unprecedented honour of being invited to express his opinion on further military action in a personal meeting with the sultan.³⁸ Bali unexpectedly advised the ruler to capture Belgrade rather than go as far as the original target of Buda. He seems to have concluded that it would be dangerous for the Ottoman forces to penetrate the heart of the country without first acquiring this key fortification. Süleyman accepted Bali’s advice and turned against Belgrade despite his ardent desire ride through the streets of Buda on his horse at the end of his first military campaign.³⁹

see the Appendix (No. 1). On the Ottoman–Hungarian relations and frontier conflicts in the late 1510s, see Tamás Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács: A History of Ottoman–Hungarian Warfare, 1389–1526*. Leiden, Boston, 2018, 248–268.

36 On this, see Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire: The Ottomans in Central Europe – A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*. Budapest, 2016², 56 ff.

37 “It should not remain a secret for the high throne that damned Hungary has no position or strength that would have to be taken into consideration.” Pál Fodor, ‘Ottoman Policy towards Hungary, 1520–1541’, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 45:2–3 (1991) 335. In this work, I concluded that this undated report had been written in 1524 or 1525 rather than the likewise considered 1521, though in light of subsequent findings regarding Bali Bey’s tenures of office, it has become clear that it was written in the spring of the latter year.

38 TSMA E 6060: Bali’s report to the sultan in response to the command of the latter received on the date on which Szabács was occupied (7 July). This report reveals that the sultan had ordered Bali take up position on the Syrmian side of the Sava across from Szabács, and if he could not cross the river there, to move on to the imperial encampment. Bali informed the ruler that he would arrive to the Syrmian crossing in three days. According to the campaign journal, he finally arrived on 15 July to the camp of the *beylerbeyi* of Rumelia, whom the sultan had first sent from Szabács to the Syrmian side of the Sava.

39 17 July entry from the campaign journal: “Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey, appearing before the padishah, held consultations regarding the campaign and they decided to move against Bel-

Bali Bey caused considerable destruction on Hungarian soil on his way to the camp. The campaign journal describes Bali Bey's depredations as follows: "Returning from Hungary with six-seven thousand people, he captured three castles along the way; he brought two of them under his dominion through siege and put their inhabitants to the sword, while one [castle] voluntarily surrendered. The infidel named Deli Marko – as he set off to take 'tongues' [captives] bragging of his valour – appeared in his pathway; they fought fiercely, though in the end he captured the accursed alive, while he took the heads of sixty unbelievers and brought the accursed to the high court along with his armor."⁴⁰ On 24 July, Bali Bey entered the northern part of Syrmium and after capturing Szalánkemén (Stari Slankamen; between 24 and 27 July), which had been abandoned by its defenders, he kept watch over the Danube crossings from here at the command of the sultan and took care not to let the Hungarians take by surprise the besieging Ottoman military corps that were conducting raids in Syrmium.⁴¹ Bali Bey's reports and the campaign journal reveal that he continually sent captured "tongues" (prisoners) to the sultan – sometimes just a few, sometimes several dozen at one time.⁴² He attempted to draw close to Pétervárad (Petrovaradin), once requesting that the sultan provide him with 15

grade." *Török történetírók*, I. 289; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 510; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 36. Bostan (known in previous Hungarian scholarly literature as Ferdi) attributes this change in concept even more resolutely to Bali: "When they conferred in the presence of the sultan, the decision to occupy the fortress of Belgrade was taken, upholding the words of Bali Bey." *Török történetírók. Vol. II (1521–1566)*. Translated and annotated by József Thúry. Budapest, 1896, 50. Celalzade Mustafa wrote, to the contrary, that Second Vizier Mustafa Pasha convinced the sultan to seize Belgrade. *Török történetírók*, II. 135–136; Petra Kappert (ed.), *Geschichte Sultan Süleymân Kânünis von 1520 bis 1557 oder Tabak at ül-Memalik ve Derecât ül-Mesâlik von Celâlzâde Muşţfâ genannt Koca Nişâncı (Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplementband, 21.)* Wiesbaden, 1981, 56b–57a. The campaign journal does not suggest that Mustafa Pasha, who returned to the camp on the date of Bali's arrival after an incursion into Syrmium that lasted for several days, met with the sultan. On the Hungarian side, they regarded it as fact that the Turks had seized Belgrade based on the recommendation of Bali: Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 407.

40 *Török történetírók*, I. 288; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 509; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 35.

41 *Török történetírók*, I. 290; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 510; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 37–38.

42 *Török történetírók*, I. 293, 295; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 512; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 42, 45–46; TSMA E 5717, 6613.

horse-transport vessels and 15 boats (*şaykas*) so he could cross the Danube at Titel in search of prisoners, since “the news from ‘tongues’ taken on this side of the Danube is not worth anything; those good, mounted infidel soldiers who possess knowledge have all crossed to the other side.”⁴³ Although Hungarian sources claim that the troops of Palatine Stephen Báthory once crossed the Danube and defeated Bali Bey,⁴⁴ the latter reported that he managed to disperse the 300-man élite cavalry unit of the palatine and the *bans* in the vicinity of Pétervárad (capturing 47 of them and sending them to the sultan with another Bali Bey, whom he recommended for an award).⁴⁵ Following the occupation of Belgrade, he received the mission of repatriating the surviving Hungarians who had received clemency and had been sent by boat to Szalánkemén.⁴⁶ However, according to certain Hungarian sources, Bali’s men massacred Vice-*ban* Balázs Oláh and his men as the result of a dispute they had had on the previous day or perhaps due to some old offense.⁴⁷

On 1 September, in the aftermath of the victorious campaign that culminated in the occupation of Belgrade,⁴⁸ the sultan rewarded Bali with a robe of honour and 30,000 *akçes*.⁴⁹ Then, on 15 September, Süleyman appointed him as the district governor of Semendire and Belgrade, granting him an exceptionally

43 TSMA E 6328.

44 Kiss Lajos, ‘Nándorfehérvár bukása (1521); *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 2 (1889) 569.

45 TSMA 7184. This may have been Küçük Bali Bey, a relative who will reappear later in this study. In another report, Bali recounts an interesting incident that provides a clear illustration of the circumstances that prevailed at this time: “Previously, an infidel named Yovan from among the Sarmian infidels was in the captivity of this servant when he submitted and went away to bring his family across with a safe-conduct. Somehow it became known and he was unable to bring them out in any way. In fact, he was forced to suffer grave harassment on the part of the accursed Hungarians. Now he has finally found the opportunity and has come to this servant. Since he possesses detailed and reliable information about the position, movements and armies of the king and the *ban* of Transylvania and the other *bans*, we sent him to the felicitous threshold.” TSMA E 5296.

46 *Török történetírók*, I. 297; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 514; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 49.

47 Ferenc Szakály, ‘Nándorfehérvár, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary’, in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian–Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Süleyman the Magnificent*. Budapest, 1994, 69–70.

48 For further information about this campaign, see Ferenc Szakály’s excellent article cited in the previous footnote (47–76).

49 *Török történetírók*, I. 297; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 514; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 49.

large annual prebend of 900,000 *akçes*.⁵⁰ In subsequent years, the troops of Bali Bey and Hüsrev Bey of Bosnia advanced in a coordinated fashion in the Lower Danube region, in Bosnia, Croatia, and Dalmatia.⁵¹ In 1522, they seized and destroyed the fortresses of Orsova, Pét and Miháld, occupied Knin and Scardona; then, in 1523, they captured Ostrovica and in 1524 Szörény (Severin) – to which they laid waste only to replace it with the newly built Feth-i İslam (Kladovo) on the other side of the Danube. They sought on several occasions to take Jajce, the last stronghold of the Hungarian defence in Bosnia.⁵² However, some of the military operations that Bali Bey conducted during this period ended in failure: for instance, in the years 1522–1523 he was unable to prevent the restoration of partial Hungarian dominion in Wallachia;⁵³ and in August 1523 the armies of Bali Bey and Ferhad Pasha suffered an enormous defeat at the hands of the Hungarians in Syrmium near Szávaszentdemeter (Sremska Mitrovica) and Nagyolaszi (Mandélos).⁵⁴

50 *Török történetírók*, I. 298; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 514; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 51. Bostan states that 3,000 men were detailed to guard the fortress (*Török történetírók*, II. 55). According to an official list prepared at the end of the year or the beginning of the following year, the annual prebend of Bali Bey was 622,000 *akçes*: Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, H. 933–934 (M. 1527–1528) Malî Yılına Ait bir Bütçe Örneği. *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 15:1–4 (1953–1954) 303. This suggests that the sultan soon regretted his generosity, perhaps because he did not want a district governor to earn as much as a governor-general.

51 For Hüsrev Bey and his activity, see Behija Zlatar, *Gazi Husrev-beg*. (Orientalni Institut u Sarajevu. Posebna izdanja, 32.) Sarajevo, 2010, 11–65. For an account of the conquests, see Dino Mujadžević, ‘The Other Ottoman *Serhat* in Europe: Ottoman Territorial Expansion in Bosnia and Croatia in [the] First Half of the 16th Century’, *GAMER* 1:1 (2012) 99–111; Nenad Moaçanin, ‘The Ottoman Conquest and Establishment in Croatia and Slavonia’, in Pál Fodor (ed.), *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)*. Leiden, Boston, Budapest, 2019, 287–296.

52 Szakály, ‘Nándorfehérvár 1521’, 71–72; Zlatar, *Gazi Husrev-Beg*, 30–34; Pálosfalvi, *From Nicopolis to Mohács*, 395–415.

53 Norbert C. Tóth, ‘Szapolyai János erdélyi vajda 1522. évi havasalföldi hadjáratai. Havasalföld korlátozott függetlenségének biztosítása’, *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 125:4 (2012) 987–1014.

54 András Kubinyi, ‘The Battle of Szávaszentdemeter–Nagyolaszi (1523). Ottoman Advance and Hungarian Defence on the Eve of Mohács’, in Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe. The Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 20.) Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000, 94–115.

(According to the contemporary chronicler György Szerémi, Bali Bey, who was jealous and furious at the arrogance of Ferhad Pasha, the sultan's son-in-law, actually set a trap for Ferhad and greatly contributed to his execution one year later.)⁵⁵ In spite of the fiascos, by 1526 the frontier *beys* had effectively deprived the Kingdom of Hungary of its southern advance positions (with the notable exceptions of Jajce and Klissa) in preparation for the decisive Ottoman attack that had been put on hold in 1521. Bali's military expertise, advice and troop movements then also played a crucial role in the Battle of Mohács, which resulted in the collapse of the medieval Hungarian state that had stubbornly resisted the Ottoman Turks for more than 130 years.⁵⁶ The death of Bali in the spring of 1527 thus represented the departure from this world of one of the gravediggers and fiercest enemies of Hungary.⁵⁷ The previously mentioned Kemalpaşazade wrote the following about Bali Bey: "His awesome name is known throughout the accursed Hungary."⁵⁸ Kemalpaşazade also described the unrivalled "hero" as follows: "Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali Bey ... whose sword is a net cast upon the enemy; whose house is a convent, the lantern of which burns the grease of the enemy gone astray; whose table holds bread kneaded with the blood of the wicked infidel; whose morning and evening food is cooked on the fire of battle; whose occupation both winter and summer is the plundering foray onto the soil of the enemy; and who by virtue of the number of his fighters and abundance of his implements of war is the most commanding and formidable of the frontier *beys*. The aforementioned was the *bey* of Belgrade and Semendire and the frontier infidels were so frightened of him that they did not even dare to go out to their gardens and vineyards; if the rebels living on

55 See Dávid Csorba, 'Orális török néphagyomány egy magyar krónikában', in Pál Ács and Júlia Székely (eds.), *Identitás és kultúra a török hódoltság korában*. Budapest, 2012, 327–337. It must be noted that the author of the latter article on several occasions utilizes his sources very loosely in order to support his concepts; see p. 331 in particular.

56 János B. Szabó, *Mohács. Régi kérdések – új válaszok. A Magyar Királyság hadserege az 1526. évi mohácsi csatában*. Budapest, 2015, 103–108, 113–114.

57 According to a contemporary letter, Bali was dead already on 16 April 1527: Anton von Gévay, *Urkunden und Actenstücke zur Geschichte der Verhältnisse zwischen Österreich, Ungern and der Pforte im XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderte. Erster Band. Gesandtschaften König Ferdinands I. an Sultan Suleiman I. 1527–1532*. Vienna, 1840, 65: No. 43.

58 İbn Kemâl, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân. VIII. Defter*, 282.

the island of Syrmium even heard his name, in their fright they were unable to grasp with their hands or to stand on their feet.”⁵⁹

Indeed, Bali and his brothers bled for the House of Osman and the empire. One of the younger brothers, Mahmud, fell at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514,⁶⁰ while two brothers (Bali and Mehmed) fought in the Battle of Mohács as *sancakbeyis* and three brothers (Mustafa, Ahmed and Sinan) took part in the battle without official rank as *beys*.⁶¹ One of their close relatives, Küçük Bali Bey, played a particularly important role along with Mehmed during the 1529 siege of Vienna.⁶² The latter, as Mehmed Bey, gained everlasting esteem through his preservation of the rule of John Szapolyai in Hungary during the 1530s.⁶³ In the course of these years, they made great efforts to establish their own dynasty – in political, financial, and social terms alike.

This was the intended goal of Bali’s marriage to a granddaughter of Sultan Bayezid. My investigations have shown that this marriage likely took place in

59 This quote is based on a translation by József Thúry, *Török történetirók*, I. 210–211. For the original Ottoman Turkish text, see Kemal Paşa-zâde, *Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman. X. Defter*. (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, XVIII/13.) Ed. by Şefaettin Severcan. Ankara, 1996, 239–240.

60 Selahattin Tansel, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*. Ankara, 1969, 61; and based on the former source, Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 55, 57. The fate of Mahmud is, however, obscure. Contrary to that stated in Tansel’s narrative sources, the Mohács campaign journal refers to him as the very much living *bey* of the sub-province of Vidin: *Török történetirók*, I. 319; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 564; Schaendlinger, *Die Feldzugstagebücher*, 88. At the same time, a certain Mehmed is identified as the *bey* of Vidin on the list of those who participated in the Battle of Mohács: Feridun M. Emecen, ‘Mohaç (1526). Osmanlılara Orta Avrupa’nın Kapılarını Açan Savaş’, in Idem, *Osmanlı Klasik Çağında Savaş*. İstanbul, 2010, 211.

61 Emecen, ‘Mohaç (1526)’, 210–211.

62 See the campaign-journal entries in *Török történetirók*, I. 324–346 and Feridun, *Münşeat*, 566–577. Küçük Bali received the mission of taking the captured Péter Perényi to the sultan’s camp: *Török történetirók*, I. 332; Feridun, *Münşeat*, 570. According to Sándor Takáts’s unreferenced account, Küçük Bali treated Perényi so well that “he received [Küçük] Bali Bey as his father”. Sándor Takáts, ‘Barátságjánló török–magyar levelek’, in Idem, *A török hódoltság korából*. (Rajzok a török világból, IV.) [Budapest, 1927], 44.

63 *Török történetirók*, II. 102, 189; György Szerémi, *Magyarország romlásáról*. Translation revised by László Juhász, introduction and explanatory notes written by György Székely. Budapest, 1979, 222–223. Mehmed’s name is also connected to the 1527 occupation of Jajce (along with Hüsrev Bey) and to the 1537 victory over Hans Katzianer at Gara (Gorjani); cf. Fotić, ‘Yahyapaşa-oğlu Mehmed Pasha’s Evkaf’, 440–441.

1508, rather than in 1510 as previously thought, and that Bali's bride was none other than the daughter of (Göde) Ahmed Mirza and Aynışah; that is, Bali married his stepmother's daughter, or, seen from a different angle, his father's stepdaughter. This is interesting not only due to its piquancy, but because it provides a clear reflection of the ability of the Yahya family to assert its interests.⁶⁴ However, the seemingly useful plan ended in failure as Bali and his wife lived in separation and the woman shamelessly cheated on her husband, a fact that was eventually reported to the sultan. Dušanka Bojanić speculates that the couple was forced to divorce, though this is indeed nothing more than conjecture.⁶⁵ Apparently, Bali died without an heir, albeit one contemporary document mentions a young man who makes a request for a prebend, stating that he is the son of Bali Bey. In view of the information provided (for instance, that he is the paternal uncle of Ali Bey), however, this Bali Bey is not clearly identifiable as our Bali Bey.⁶⁶

Bali endeavored to maintain and increase the wealth he had inherited from his father. In and around Požarevac, in the vicinity of Belgrade and in the *sancak* of Nicopolis, the sultan granted him abandoned land, which Bali then tried to reinvigorate by bringing in settlers and by establishing various religious and welfare institutions.⁶⁷ Then using revenue derived from these estates, including the village of Černova in the *sancak* of Nicopolis and the village of Jakubci near Filibe (Plovdiv),⁶⁸ he established a pious endowment that served to finance the maintenance of local buildings and institutions as

64 Bali's wife is first mentioned on 31 October 1508: Gök, *İn'âmât Defteri*, 851; for the other information in this regard, see *ibid.*, 1106, 1156, 1218, 1240, 1377.

65 Bojanić, 'Požarevac', 61–62. For a letter describing the profligacy of Bali's wife, see M. Çağatay Uluçay, *Harem'den mektuplar. Vol. I.* Istanbul, 1956, 64–65. See the English translation of this extraordinary document in the Appendix (No. 2).

66 TSMA E 8757. The young man requests that instead of the assigned stipend at the court he would like to receive a *timar* and thus serve the sovereign. He emphasizes in a perceptibly conscious manner that nobody among his ancestors had served and received soldier's pay in the court (thus serving to support the premise that was not a descendent of the Yahyas).

67 Šabanović, *Turski izvori*, 60; Bojanić, 'Požarevac', 50–53. MAD 506 Numaralı Semendire Livâsı İcmâl Defteri (937/1530). *Dizin ve Tıpkıbasım.* (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 104; Defter-i Hâkânî Dizisi, 14) Ankara, 2009, 33.

68 Barkan, 'İstila Devirlerinin', 342: No. 183; Gökbilgin, *Edirne ve Paşa Livası*, 457: note 728.

well as those established near the end of his life in Skopje, Požarevac and Semendire (two masjids, soup kitchen, dervish convent, mosque, two baths, bridge, public fountain).⁶⁹ According to Bali's last will, after his death his younger brother, Mehmed Bey, was to manage the endowments; thereafter the tasks of management were to pass to Mehmed's heirs. A series of documents have survived concerning the family's livestock farms and stables near Filibe, Edirne and Çirmen. These sources imply that in the 1530s the farms and stables may have been administered by Küçük Bali Bey, who had, furthermore, acquired tax-collection rights for the family in the region. The clan apparently kept its camels and, perhaps, its horses at these farms and stables and possessed granaries and, on the Maritsa River, mills as well.⁷⁰

"Old" Bali Bey often undertook recultivation work in places that he and his fellow governors had destroyed in earlier years during their brutal incursions and plundering. This form of warfare – complemented by the traditional Ottoman relocation policy – thoroughly altered the ethnic map and settlement structure of Southern Hungary and Croatia.⁷¹ In place of the indigenous populations, which had been destroyed or had fled, Balkan Vlachs and other semi-nomadic peoples flooded into the area, as did refugees from Hungary as well.⁷² With the consent of the sultan, Bali Bey systematically settled such people in Syrmium, which had become depopulated, and in the *sancak* of Semendire. Bali then integrated them – offering advantageous conditions – into the Ottoman military organization.⁷³ Ragusan historian Ludovicus Tubero

69 Fotić, 'Yahyapaşa-oğlu Mehmed Pasha's Evkaf', 439.

70 TSMA E 7687, 8176, 9196, 10542, 10543, 12282.

71 Several thousand inhabitants of Kölpény (Kupinovo), Barics (Barič), Zimony (Zemun), and Belgrade who had surrendered both before and after the fall of the latter city were transported to Istanbul and a nearby village as well as to nine villages on the Gallipoli peninsula. Feridun M. Emecen, 'The History of an Early Sixteenth Century Migration – Sirem Exiles in Gallipoli', in Dávid and Fodor (eds.), *Hungarian–Ottoman Military*, 77–91.

72 Ferenc Szakály, 'Honkeresők (Megjegyzések Cserni Jován hadáról)', *Történelmi Szemle* 22:2 (1979) 227–261.

73 The significance of cooperation with the Vlachs with regard to Ottoman Turk conquests and consolidation policies cannot be exaggerated. The seventeenth-century chronicler İbrahim Peçevi draws attention to this as well, illustrating with several examples the good relations that existed between the sultan and Vlach leaders: *Tarih-i Peçevi. Vol. 1.* İstanbul, 1281/1864, 16. The many surveys and regulations that pertained to the Vlachs, primarily the so-called Vlach law

wrote with regard to the condition of Bali's army in 1515 that "much of it was unarmed, since it was composed of Turks mixed with Illyrian herdsmen and to the extent that it surpassed the Hungarian forces in number, it remained below it in terms of the quality and strength of the soldiers..."⁷⁴ Drawing strength from this new social and power structure, Bali established his own power base, conducting himself as an autocrat. (Incidentally, Italian sources already describe his father as a crude and unrefined figure.)⁷⁵ He then proceeded to abuse his power, which, in turn, led to the launching of an investigation against him in the years 1515–1516. Bali managed to avoid punishment through a bribe of 50,000 *akçes* to the *kadı* who had arrived on the scene from Istanbul and who proceeded to produce false witnesses and to arrange for the execution of those who had lodged the complaint against Bali.⁷⁶ The *kadı* also promulgated a "law book" (*kanunname*) in the form of an imperial order that regulated the obligations of Vlachs who lived in the *sancak* of Semendire with regard to taxation, military duty and toward the *sancakbeyi* and his men.⁷⁷ In a report that has survived from the early 1520s, three serious accusations were brought against Bali (addressed to one of the *ağas* of the court): first, that he was using money to entice warriors in the border area to leave the other *beys*

codes (*Eflak kanunu*), provide a reflection of this. For the legal status of the Vlachs, see Nicoară Beldiceanu, 'Les valaques de Bosnie à la fin du XV^e siècle et leurs institutions', *Turcica* 7 (1975) 122–134. The Ottomans and the Vlachs moved up the Balkans together, pouring into Semendire and Vidin (the Timok-Morava valley), Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, then into Syrmium and Slavonia and, finally, into the narrowly defined region of Southern Hungary as well. See Nenad Močanin, *Town and Country on the Middle Danube 1526–1690*. (The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage. Politics, Society and Economy, 35.) Leiden, Boston, 2006, 15–35; Vjeran Kursar, 'Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th–18th Centuries)', *OTAM* 34 (Güz 2013) 115–161. For an instructive series of maps showing the Vlach settlements of Hercegovina during the first three and a half decades of the sixteenth century, see 174 *Numaralı Hersek Livâsı İcmâl Eflakân ve Voynugân Tahrir Defteri (939/1533). Dizin ve Tıpkıbasım*. (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 103; Defter-i Hâkâni Dizisi, 15.) Ankara, 2009, 70–72.

74 Tubero, *Kortörténeti feljegyzések*, 281.

75 Reindl, *Männer um Bâyezîd*, 342.

76 TSMA 6304. See also Tansel, *Yavuz Sultan Selim*, 21–22 and photograph No. 12.

77 Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukuki Tablilleri. Yavuz Sultan Selim Devri Kanunnâmeleri*. İstanbul, 1991, 457–464.

and join him; second, that he was both a cowardly soldier and a conceited man capable of all sorts of wrongdoing; and third, that he was colluding with the infidels, constantly informing them about upcoming raids.⁷⁸ The author of the report – a certain Ahmed who presumably served as the *bey* of a sub-province bordering or close to the *sancak* of Semendire – characterized Bali as follows: “He is the type of person who does not comply with the commands of his majesty, the felicitous padishah. He does not fear Allah in the least. He does anything that he is able to do. In short, his conceit and jealousy are so great that they are unbearable. ... If the felicitous padishah were aware of only one of the deeds he has committed, he probably would not entrust the *sancak* to his charge for even a single day.” The previously cited document regarding the bribery of the *kadı* presents a similar portrait of Bali: “This country greatly fears Bali. Here, people do not think of the felicitous padishah, but of Bali Bey. They do not fear so much the sultan as Bali Bey. ... None of his transgressions are ever investigated. He has no fear of Allah and feels no shame in front of the prophet. He does not fulfill the noble commands of our padishah. ... As you also know, the Yahyas have always been famous for their thieving habits and their evildoing. ... In this country, people do not obey the noble commands coming from the felicitous padishah. Rather, they heed the commands and words of Bali Bey.”⁷⁹

How can it be that Bali Bey transgressed all boundaries and yet always managed to survive investigations and other machinations to discredit him and that his gravesite near Semendire became a popular pilgrimage site?⁸⁰

78 TSMA E 6544. Interestingly, the previously mentioned contemporary chronicler György Szerémi also stated that in 1523 Bali notified Pál Tomori of the impending Turkish attack on Syrmium; see Csorba, ‘Orális török néphagyomány’, 333. As a master of dissimulation (*müdarâ*), Bali often provided Hungarian commanders with dubious information. The previously cited letter in which Bali informed Tomori that they may be related was obviously intended to mislead and gain the benevolence of the latter. At the same time, mutual provision of gifts was an established custom along the border. In 1525, for example, Bali sent a Turkish horse to Tomori: Zsolt Simon, ‘A baricsi és kölpényi harmincadok a 16. század elején’, *Századok* 140 (2006) 861: note 193.

79 For a somewhat different translation that omits the reference to the Yahyas, see Bojanić, ‘Požarevac’, 64.

80 Evliyâ Çelebi wrote the following about this: “In praise of the pilgrimage site of the for-

Obviously, the sultan balanced the pros and cons (the give-and-take equation) and concluded that the overall balance was favourable to the central authority. The undeniable abuses of Bali Bey were more than offset by the services that his clan provided in the struggle against the archenemy, the Kingdom of Hungary. While their father and Bali Bey had opened the way towards Hungary, the surviving brothers and their children were able to raise the flag of the House of Osman in Southern Hungary and Slavonia and then in the very heart of the kingdom. Küçük Bali, Mehmed and his son, Arslan Pasha, were appointed the Ottoman Turkish governors of Buda, the royal Hungarian capital, while the sons of Küçük Bali, Derviş, Ahmed and Mahmud, were chosen to govern important *sancaks* in Hungary. Even some of the clan's adopted sons (such as Kasım *Voyvoda*, later *Bey* and *Pasha*, who organized the first *sancak* to the north of the Drava–Danube line and who later became *beylerbeyi* of Buda and of Temeşvar, and Mehmed, the *bey* of Arad) received crucial roles in the establishment of Ottoman rule in Hungary.⁸¹ While the sultan did on one occasion issue a stern reprimand to Bali,⁸² he was generally lenient with him

truss of Semendire. First of all, there is a broad hill extending high over the western side of the city. There [is] the pilgrimage site of the martyrs. In addition to that, lying to the west of the city at a half hour's distance in the direction of Belgrade along the banks of the Danube, Gazi Bali Bey's pilgrimage site [can be found] on high hill... He became a martyr in the year 933 (1526/1527) and is buried in this convent. It is presently the convent of the venerable dervishes to which those with feeling hearts make pilgrimages." Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*. 5. Kitap. *Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 307 Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu–Dizini*. Ed. by Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman and İbrahim Sezgin. İstanbul, 2001, 318.

81 Géza Dávid, 'A Life on the Marches: the Career of Derviş Bey', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 54:4 (2001) 411–426; Idem, 'An Ottoman Military Career on the Hungarian Borders: Kasım *Voyvoda*, *Bey*, and *Pasha*', in Dávid and Fodor (eds.), *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs*, 265–297; Idem, 'Macaristan'da Yönetici Osmanlı Aileleri/Leading Families in Ottoman Hungary', *OTAM* 38 (Güz 2015) 17–21. Cf. Markus Köhbach's abundant collection of data in his *Die Eroberung von Füleki durch die Osmanen 1554. Eine historisch-quellenkritische Studie zur osmanischen Expansion im östlichen Mitteleuropa*. (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/18.) Wien, Köln, Weimar, 1994, passim.

82 For an examination of the problems surrounding the command/letter of doubtful authenticity that refers to this reprimand, see the Appendix (No. 3). The relevant part of this command/letter: "If, however, on the day of judgement they hold us accountable for these abuses that have taken place through your activity as commander-in-chief and *bey* on the territory under our control, we are going to take you by the neck and you will not be able to easily dis-

and with most of his fellows, for the clans and political families headed by these men (the Yahyas, the Aranids, the Memis, etc.)⁸³ were merely doing on a smaller scale roughly the same things that the members of the Ottoman dynasty were doing, or had done, on a larger scale. The clans also constituted a *predatory/plundering confederacy* (a term coined by Heath Lowry), just as Osman had done upon the foundation of the empire.⁸⁴ They too accepted into their midst anyone who was willing to serve the interests of the empire and of the clan, just as Osman had allied himself with Catalans and Greeks when establishing his state. They too relied primarily upon their entourages of slave origin, just as the House of Osman had done. They too destroyed their enemies with fire and sword before establishing a new culture on the seized territories, just as Osman and his successors had so often done. And they too employed population exchanges and the settlement of slaves in order to revitalize and consolidate the conquered territories, just as the dynasty had done for more than 200 years.⁸⁵ Still, while they made every effort to enrich themselves, these clans were supremely loyal to the House of Osman. Thus, Süleyman saw in Bali (and in the other *beys* of the border zone) a reflection of himself and of his predecessors and a successful amalgam of imperial and private interests.

engage your neck from my grasp." Yusuf Kılıç, 'Kanûnî Sultan Süleyman'ın Semendire Beyi Bâli Paşaya Gönderdiği Emr-i Şerif. Takdim', in Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, İlber Ortaylı and Emeri van Donzel (eds.), *CIÉPO Osmanlı Öncesi ve Osmanlı Araştırmaları Uluslararası Komitesi VII. Sempozyumu Bildirileri. Peç: 7–11 Eylül 1986*. (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, XXVI/2.) Ankara, 1994, 171.

83 For further detail regarding these clans as political families, see Dávid, 'Macaristan'da', 21–23; Balázs Sudár, 'Ki volt Jakováli Haszan pasa?', *Pécsi Szemle* 9 (2006) 27–34. For the Istanbul connections of the Yahya political family during the middle of the sixteenth century, see Pál Fodor 'Who Should Obtain the Castle of Pankota? Interest Groups and Self-Promotion in the Mid-Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Political Establishment', *Turcica* 31 (1999) 67–86.

84 See Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*. Albany, 2003, 46, 54.

85 Géza Dávid's research shows that the previously mentioned Derviş, the first *bey* of Szeged, settled Hungarian captives at his family base established in the town of Jagodina in the *sancak* of Semendire and that he even "abducted" a priest for them. See Dávid, 'A Life on the Marches', 418–419. For the practice of forced settlement/deportation (*sürgün*) in general, see Ömer Lütfi Barkan, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskân ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Sürgünler', *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 11:1–4 (1949–1950) 524–561; 13:1–4 (1951–1952) 56–78; 15:1–4 (1953–1954) 209–237.

For this reason, he took action against them only when the prestige of the dynasty lay at stake. (This explains why in the spring of 1528 he ordered – to the delight of the local population – the public execution of another Bali [plus nine of his men], who, as the district governor of İskenderiye [in Albania], had cruelly oppressed his subjects.)⁸⁶ This also explains why he let the various clans vie for influence and power, because he knew that in this way they would test each other's strengths and hold each other in check. And when he saw that one of the political families was on the wane and that another more promising family was striving to take its place, he would even help to foster this process. On 3 August 1566, during his thirteenth and final campaign in Hungary, on the way to Szigetvár, where just over a month later he too would lose his life, Süleyman had Arslan, the governor-general of Buda, executed. With this act, the success story of the Yahyas in Hungary met its end.⁸⁷ Their place was taken by the Sokollus, who in turn were removed from their privileged position just several decades later. It was in this way that dynastic will and the struggle of the élites turned the wheel of fortune in the European border areas of the Ottoman Empire.

86 The most serious accusation lodged against this Bali was that he had seized peasant children and either sold them or given them away as gifts. The objective of the public execution was “to serve as a deterrent for the other *beys* and ensure a tranquil life for the population”; see Kappert, *Geschichte Sultan Süleyman Kânûnis*, 176b–177a.

87 [Feridun Ahmed Bey], *Nüzhət-i Esrârü'l-Ahyâr der Ahbâr-i Sefer-i Sigetvar. Sultan Süleyman'ın Son Seferi*. Edited by H. Ahmet Arslantürk and Günhan Börekçi, proofread by Abdülkadir Özcan. İstanbul, 2012, 19v–20r. Political downfall did not, however, necessarily entail financial failure as well: until the beginning of the twentieth century, the Yahya family earned substantial revenue from its endowments located throughout Rumelia (which the family lost in 1913). See Moutaftchieva, ‘Du role du vakıf’, 206; cf. Balázs Sudár, *Dzsámik és mecsetek a hódolt Magyarországon*. (Magyar Történelmi Emlékek. Adattárak) Budapest, 2014, 50.

APPENDIX

I.

REPORT OF PRINCE SÜLEYMAN TO THE PASHAS OF THE DIVAN REGARDING THE BATTLE OF ZSARNÓ
EDİRNE, BETWEEN 15–24 MAY 1515⁸⁸

Your highnesses of the great pashas! – may Allah, whose name be exalted, enhance your renown until the day of resurrection! After having presented – together with the zephyr-caravan of conquest and power and the clever camel of victory and triumph as gift and donation – the zephyr-like offerings of pure and continuous salutation and the abundant and amiable pages of greeting that blow from the rose garden of fortune and the fragrant orchard of respect and which bring with them the scent of a light eastern breeze, we submit the undermentioned before the noble presence of the notables of felicity and the pillars of the sultanate.

The pride of the generous emirs, the servant of your eminences, Bali Bey of Semendire, has previously sent letters on several occasions and reported that on the 7th of the month of Rebiülevvel⁸⁹ the abject infidels built a landing dock on the bank of the Danube and crossed over to this side. This is why we sent the letter of the aforementioned Bali to the gate of prosperity with a servant of your eminences, Mehmed *çavuş*. At the same time, we sent the *çavuşes* serving at our felicitous threshold, Beni and Hasan, your servants, to the vicinity of Semendire, to Bali Bey, in order to take a look at the position and movements of the infidels, to become precisely acquainted with them, and to give an account of this. We forwarded the commands from the exalted court to the *sancakbeyis* of Rumelia via courier and appended to them our own confirmative orders. The *sancakbeyis* were just about to have the *sipahi* and *akıncı* troops march to Semendire when the depraved infidels marched against

88 TSMA E 5438. For a summary of the content of this letter, see Sándor Papp, “A török béke kérdése a Dózsa-féle parasztháború idején,” in Emese Egyed and László Pakó (eds.), *Előadások a Magyar Tudomány Napján az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület I. Szakosztályában*. (Cer-tamen, III.) Kolozsvár, 2016, 239–240.

89 21 April 1515.

the fortress called Havale⁹⁰ and surrounded it. They shot it with their cannons from several places and opened gaps [in the wall]. Before the other *sancakbeyis* could join Bali Bey, the servants of your eminences, *sancakbeyis* Mesih of Vidin, Ahmed of Alacahisar, Kasım of Prizren and Hacı of İzvornik arrived there and held a council. They planned to await the other *beys* and together they would take up the fight against the infidels. However, the defenders of Havale then sent a messenger down from the aforementioned fortress and informed the *beys* that if they did not arrive there by the next day, then – since they had no more men and they had no strength to fight – an assault would be launched against the fortress. The *sancakbeyis*, the servants of your eminences, disregarding the dearth of people of Islam and the multitude of infidels and asking incessantly for divine mercy and for the help of the holy spirit of his holiness the prophet – may his name be glorified! – and knowing that the exalted support and superior power of the padishah, the refuge of the world, were with them, placed alongside the close relatives of the aforementioned Bali Bey, the servants of your eminences, the *ziamet*-holder Bali⁹¹ and Rüstem, the *azab ağası* and *beşlü ağası* and in addition the most valiant and brave soldiers of Semendire, who as infantrymen attacked the foot soldiers standing alongside the cannons of the infidels positioned below the fortress and dispersed them. The *sancakbeyis* arrived in their tracks and assailed the camp of the infidels. As they began to fight, around 20,000 armored cavalry rushed out from the camp of the infidels and an enormous battle took place from morning until afternoon. The infidel cavalry could not hold out, again withdrew to the camp and for a while fought from there. Finally, the multitude of flags bearing the sign of divine assistance and the deterrent spectacle of the heroes who enjoyed the abundant and miraculous support of the saints threw fear into the cavalry and the infantry of the infidels and unable to resist the effort of the fighters for the faith, they surrendered their camp. Then through the mercy and support

90 As mentioned above, Zsarnó in Hungarian and Avala in Serbian. The other Ottoman Turkish name for this fortress was Güzelcehisar. The Ottomans built it on the ruins of the medieval fort of Zsarnó in 1442. This is the place from which Ottoman military actions against Belgrade and nearby locations were launched.

91 The later Küçük Bali Bey, Pasha and the second *beylerbeyi* of Buda (1542–1543). To my knowledge, this document is the first that refers to him as a close relative of the Yahyas.

of God in the prosperous days of his majesty the sovereign, the army of the infidels scattered and much of it became the food of the steely, shining sword, while those infidels who escaped the saber were placed in shackles and locked in the fortress. The infidels left behind 600–700 camp wagons, all of their shields, cannons, flags, and tents as well as their other military equipment and instruments and, defeated and hopeless, took to their heels. Our fighters for the faith raised the flag of victorious Islam and assailed the infidels all the way until Belgrade, taking the heads of the *ban* of Belgrade Mihály Paksi and the *ban* of Szabács.⁹² The accursed known as the *ban* of Transylvania⁹³ managed to escape with a few thousand infidels and gathering all his strength fled to the fortress of Belgrade. During the prosperous time of his majesty the padishah – the shadow of Allah on earth – the infidels suffered a defeat of such magnitude that it cannot even be described. In order to impart the good news of the victory reaped in the fight for the faith, Bali Bey, the sincere follower of your eminences, made a report via letter that he sent here with his relative, Rüstem Bey, and with our *çavuşes* dispatched to Semendire, the servants of your eminences, Beni and Hasan, along with two armoured infidels whom were captured alive. For these reason we sent the servants of your eminences, the *çavuşes* Beni and Hasan whom were dispatched to Semendire and took part in the battle, with the friendly letter to your noble persons in order to recount the aforementioned adventure before your jubilant presence as it happened and as they saw it. What else might be said? Let new conquests and endless victories multiply and proliferate with the lord of humanity.

Written in the first ten days of the month of Rebiülahir in year 921 at the headquarters of Edirne. Süleyman⁹⁴

92 Gáspár Paksi.

93 John Szapolyai (later king of Hungary, 1526–1540).

94 The so-called *pence*-form signature is located at a right angle in the right-hand margin.

REPORT OF A HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL TO SULTAN SELİM ON THE PROFLIGACY OF BALI BEY'S WIFE AROUND THE YEAR 1516⁹⁵

Let it be known to his majesty my sultan that a shameful thing has occurred with the wife of his servant, Bali Bey of Semendire: they caught her with a man in Skopje. I had the arrested boy brought in to me, we interrogated him in the presence of several *kadı*s and he made a confession. However, unable to tolerate this, I killed him. In addition, we had six of the gatekeepers and procuresses executed. And after this affair had taken place, the woman went to Istanbul without my permission. There several of her sins became public. She made love with a Kuran reciter, a boy known by the name of Dellakoğlu. She became with child from him and brought a girl into the world. She placed the girl in the home of Hasan, the Kuran reciter at the Sultan Mehmed Mosque, and committed her to the care of a nanny. Five or six months later the girl died. She gave the nanny to Hasan as a gift and she gave many other things to him as well. The *kadı* of Istanbul learned of this matter, brought the boy in and beat him. After they beat him, the boy in his shame could not bear to stay and came to Edirne. When he arrived here, he came down with a serious case of malaria. Upon hearing that he had become ill, [the woman] sent one of her people for him. They were already on their way from Istanbul when [the lover] died in Babaeski,⁹⁶ where he was buried. When the woman learned of his death, she went out to Yenihisar⁹⁷ under the pretext that there was a plague epidemic in Istanbul. Then she went to the boy's grave dressed in a disguise. She exhumed him, took a look at him and reburied him. Around eleven days later she again went to Istanbul. Now she is with the younger brother of the deceased boy, the Kuran reciter named Dellakoğlu Bak. When the daughter

95 Uluçay, *Haremden mektuplar*, I. 64–65. The “high-ranking official” was most likely Prince Süleyman, who – as the previous document showed – kept his court in Edirne during these years. There were few others besides Süleyman who could have written to the sultan in such a manner.

96 Babaeski: the second stop along the main route from Edirne to Istanbul.

97 Fortress known today as Rumelihisarı standing above Istanbul on the European shore of the Bosphorus.

of Sultan Mahmud⁹⁸ saw that she was pregnant, she spat in her face and said to her: “Do you want to bring the girls of the House of Osman to ruin? What kind of things are you doing? Do you think that this padishah is just like the others? If he finds out about just one of the things that you have done, he will break everybody to pieces; and you as well!” She has a slave woman named Kamerveş and a Circassian slave named Ferayet. These are the procuresses. If you desire to know the story of this affair, then have this slave woman brought to you, interrogate her, and you will become acquainted with it. Among the eunuchs sent in from the various households of Sultan Ahmet,⁹⁹ there is one who knows all the secrets. There is a slave by the name of Saru Djerzük (?) İshak, he was also an accomplice in this affair. The now deceased *çavuş* who lived under the Kuruçeşme aqueduct has a wife, she also knows all the secrets. She [the wife of Bali Bey] does all of these things with the help of her riches. Her fortune is boundless and unparalleled. For the salvation of the souls of Gazi Sultan Bayezid and Gazi Sultan Mehmed, examine this situation and rectify it! If the common people disapprove of these affairs, how could the padishah tolerate them! What more might be said? Otherwise, the decision is my sultan’s prerogative.

3.

THE ALLEGED COMMAND OR LETTER OF SULTAN SÜLEYMAN TO BALI BEY OF SEMENDİRE

This peculiar document has been known for decades among Ottomanists and has appeared on several occasions in scholarly literature.¹⁰⁰ K. E. Kürkçüoğlu, who first published the document, noticed after the appearance of his article that another version of it had appeared in the collection of documents that Feridun Bey presented to Murad III in 1574. The latter version of the document differed from that which Kürkçüoğlu had published in several regards, notably in that its issuer was Murad I (1362–1389) and its recipient was Evrenos Bey, the conqueror of

98 The son of Bayezid II who died in 1507.

99 The son of Bayezid II, whom his brother and main adversary, Sultan Selim, had killed in April 1513 after winning their struggle for the throne.

100 Kemâl Edib Kürkçüoğlu, ‘Kanunî’nin Bali Beğ’e Gönderdiği Hatt-ı Humâyün’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 8:1–2 (1950) 225–231; Kılıç, ‘Kanûnî Sultan Süleyman’ın, 168–172 (he was unfamiliar with the previous publication); *Kânûnî Sultan Süleyman Han’ın Semendire Sancakbeyi Gâzî Bâli Bey’e Mektubu*. İstanbul, 2007.

Rumelia.¹⁰¹ Those who subsequently published and cited the document generally overlooked this disconcerting fact and expressed no doubt regarding its authenticity, deeming it to be an order addressed to Bali Bey and an important manifestation of Sultan Süleyman concerning royal authority. Serving to further complicate the situation, an anonymous publisher¹⁰² identified this Bali not as Yahyapaşaoğlu Bali, but as Malkoçoğlu Bali, which is strange because the latter died around the year 1510 and thus could not have been *sancakbeyi* of Semendire at the time of Süleyman. Kürkçüoğlu, citing the falsifications of Feridun Bey to which several researchers had drawn attention, adhered to his viewpoint that the document originated with Süleyman and was intended for Bali Bey. According to Kürkçüoğlu, it could not have been written during the time of Murad I, because at that time the language of documents was much simpler. Moreover, in Kürkçüoğlu's opinion, the fact that the Yahya family possessed a copy of the document in the middle of the twentieth century also represented significant evidence regarding its origin. The obvious problems with regard to chronology and genre did not bother those who subsequently published and used it. Whereas Feridun Bey characterized the document as a *berat* (appointment diploma, in this case granting a *sancak* to Evrenos), one modern publisher qualified it as a *hatt-i hümayun* (order that the sultan wrote with his own hand), another as an *emr-i şerif* (noble order) and yet another as a *mektub* (letter) even though the word *tevki* – the term used to designate decrees that the *divan* issued in the sultan's name – appears in the text. However, the document can immediately be recognized not as an ordinary command, but as a “work of art” that resembled the *nashihatname* (“advice literature”) known as “mirror for princes” in Europe. The text evokes the paternalistic tone of *nashihatname* in which the sovereign explains the principles of good governance to the gallant though unscrupulous Evrenos Bey or Bali Bey. The numbers specified in the various versions of the document are unrealistic and fanciful and become increasingly extravagant with time. Feridun Bey's compilation of texts are dated between 26 October and 4 November 1386, while the alleged date of the earliest version connected to Bali Bey is 9 March–7 April 1532 (Kürkçüoğlu). The second is dated 26 March–23 April 1629 (though this may be an error; *Kânûnî Sultan Süleyman*) and the third is undated and was copied into a compendium of documents prepared at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Kılıç). None of these dates coincides with the lifetime of Bali Bey, who, as previously mentioned, died in the spring of 1527. The text was obviously popular and was read and copied for generations. Although the text changed little in terms of content over time, it did undergo a somewhat greater transformation in terms of form. The language used in Feridun Bey's compilation closely resembled the style used in the Ottoman chancellery during the sixteenth

101 Kemâl Edib Kürkçüoğlu, ‘Münşe’âtü’s-Salâtine Dâir Kısa Bir Not’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 8:3 (1950) 328; cf. Feridun, *Münşeât*, I. 87–89.

102 *Kânûnî Sultan Süleyman Han'ın*.

century. The first two versions connected to Bali are linguistically simpler and sometimes almost clumsy, though subsequent authors visibly made the text more coherent and elegant. The author of the present study, based on the data with which he is familiar, would have difficulty taking a position with regard to question of when the “original/first” version of the document was actually written and to whom it was addressed. However, one should consider the fact that one of the most important titles of the designated recipient of the document (in the versions addressed to Bali as well!) corresponds to the 1417 inscription that appears on the sarcophagus of Evrenos Bey, son of İsa, in Yenice-i Vardar (today Giannitsa, Greece): “King of the *gazis* and fighters of the jihad, slayer of the infidels and the pagans” (*melikü'l-guzzat ve'l-mücabidin, katilü'l-kefere ve'l-müşrikin*).¹⁰³ Yet before drawing far-reaching conclusions from this circumstance, one should also recall that similar attributives can be found in Bali Bey’s charter confirmed by Ebussuud Efendi on 15 March 1545 (“paragon of the *gazis* and fighters of the jihad, annihilator of the infidels and the pagans” [*kıdvetü'l-guzzat ve'l-mücabidin, kamuü'l-keferet ve'l-müşrikin*]; see Elezović, *Turski spomenici*, I/1, 479). The title “commander/prince of the faithful” (*emirü'l-müminin*) that is used emphatically in the document is nevertheless much more compatible with the words “martyr” (*şehid*) and “pilgrim” (*hacı*) used on inscriptions pertaining to Evrenos, who along with his father of Catalonian origin was the cofounder of the Ottoman state and who – just as the leader of the contemporary Mihaloğlu clan – indeed bore titles similar to those of the sultan. Based on these considerations, it is not inconceivable that an exchange of letters between Murad I and Evrenos served as the foundation for later revisions that transformed very simple texts into a moralizing document on statesmanship that was subsequently (after Bali’s death) regarded as a suitable general representation of relations between Süleyman and Bali and in a broader sense between the sultan and the frontier *beys*. (In any case, the text should be compared to the early, fifteenth-century, mirrors for princes, most of which are the translations of “classical” works, in order to find its origins). One thing is certain: whoever put together the first version of the document connected to Bali was not merely articulating the interests of sultanic power, but – using the example of Bali – rendering tribute to the achievements of the frontier *beys* as well and consciously emphasizing the interdependence of the two poles. At the same time, the text refers in succession to problems that were a source of continual aggravation for central authorities: the accumulation of wealth among leading officials in the frontier regions, the placement of this wealth into foundations, corrupt practices related to plunder, disregard for law and order, abuse of power, etc. As mentioned above, the possibility cannot be excluded that an exchange of correspondence (perhaps containing a

103 Heath W. Lowry and İsmail E. Erünsal, *The Evrenos Dynasty of Yenice-i Vardar: Notes and Documents*. İstanbul, 2010, 89. The fact that a member of the court used the term *melik* (king) to describe the *beylerbeyi* of Anatolia and the *sancakbeyis* of Rumelia in a 1511 letter to Selim may provide a foundation for an assessment of the usage and content of this word. See Uluçay, ‘Yavuz Sultan Selim’, 122: note 11.

threat from the sultan) between Süleyman and Bali served as the impetus for the revision of the basic text (the fact that the previously cited portion of the letter implying this motive [footnote no. 82] does not appear in the variation of the text addressed to Evrenos alludes to this possibility). The translation below is based on the latest version of the text, which is phrased more clearly than the previous versions, though does not differ significantly from them in terms of content.¹⁰⁴

The copy of the noble command of his majesty the deceased Sultan Süleyman Khan who is the recipient of forgiveness – the mercy and pardon of God be upon him! – to Bali Bey of Semendire kept at the Buda treasury.

Pride of the generous emirs, pillar among illustrious great, possessor of might and respect, king of the *gazis* and fighters of the jihad, slayer of the infidels and the pagans, my familiar friend, my distinguished veteran, Gazi Bali Bey! Upon the arrival of this noble imperial command, let it be known that they read the letter sent by you and we became familiar with its content. With the help of Allah – may he be exalted! – you seized 18 castles and sent 30,000 beams to my imperial naval arsenal. You also sent the heads of 60,000 infidels. May God bless you, let your face be white in this world and in the world beyond and let my bread be to your health!

However, you also asked for a horse-tail standard (*tuğ*).¹⁰⁵ Gazi Bali Bey, this is not the time [to ask] for a *tuğ*. Although you have placed us under a debt of gratitude with this service and good deed, we have previously done three good things for you. The first was this: we addressed you as “commander of the faithful”; the second: we sent you a very precious robe of honour; the third: we gave you the victorious *tuğ* of his holiness, the most generous apostle – may Allah commend and salute him!¹⁰⁶ We honoured you and expressed

104 Kılıç, ‘Kanûnî Sultan Süleyman’ın’, 170–172 (transcription), photographs 1–3. The note that the original version of this variant of the text was once kept at the Buda treasury is interesting and, if true, very significant.

105 The horse-tail standard was an old Turkish symbol of power. In the Ottoman Empire, the sovereign had six such standards, while the viziers had three, the *beylerbeyis* had two and the *sancakbeyis* had one.

106 Bali Bey could obviously not have been presented with such a standard. The holy banner of Muhammad (*liva-i şerif*) was not a *tuğ*, but a black flag that the Ottomans likely acquired during their conquest of Egypt and the holy cities and took on their military campaigns beginning with the Long Turkish War (1593–1606). In the version of the text published in Feridun, *Münşeat*, I. 87, the term *tabl ve alem* (“military band”) figures instead of *tuğ*.

our esteem with these three things. There is no greater gift than this. Now you should give thanks for these good deeds and show your gratitude.

Be well aware that power resembles a two-panned scale. One of the pans is heaven, the other is hell. In this corruptible world, one hour of righteousness is worth more than seventy years of prayer. Let God – may he be praised and exalted! – place all of us in the company of the righteous on the day of judgement! Never forget about this final day. On the day when fire consumes the book of our deeds like dry wood, let you be filled with worry and be on the watch!

If, however, on the day of judgement they hold us accountable for these abuses that have taken place through your activity as commander-in-chief and *bey* on the territory under our control, we are going to take you by the neck and you will not be able to easily disengage your neck from my grasp. Be very cautious not to let conceit fill your heart and do not say that you have conquered countries through your own strength and with your sword. The country belongs in the first order to the Creator, then to the caliph of the surface of the earth. Be aware that everything is from the Creator – may he be exalted!

It came to my royal attention that in fortresses that you occupied you reserved the goods and foodstuffs for the treasury. I do not give my royal consent for this act. Reserve a fifth of the booty for the treasury and distribute the rest among the army of Islam. Because these spoils belong to the Muslim soldiers.

Look upon the veteran warriors as if they were your father, the middle-aged ones as if they were your brothers, the young ones as if they were your sons. Show honour and reverence toward your father, honour and esteem toward your brothers and compassion and mercy toward your sons. Take care that the army of Islam suffers no scarcity of any kind, do not begrudge them the benefactions and wealth you have in your possession, but dispense these to them abundantly. If there is not sufficient money in the treasury of the army and you suffer need, let me know. I am not so poor that with the help of Allah – may he be exalted! – I could not send one or two thousand purses [of money].¹⁰⁷

107 The first of the previous two versions mentions 300–400 purses (*kese*) of reimbursement (*harçlık*), while the second refers to 500 purses of *akçes*.

Do not pester the tax-paying subjects (*reaya*) with unbearable tax burdens. Take extreme care in this regard, because if our *reaya* live in calm, then the infidel *reaya* will become inclined toward us and will come over to our side. Pay attention to the poor of the Muslim communities living there in small and big cities and if there be among them some who are in need of alms, provide them with foodstuffs from the treasury. Because the poor are the kind servants of God – may he be praised and exalted! The Muslim public treasury is for the servants of God.

If the apostolic offspring settle in those parts, command a daily allowance of one gold piece¹⁰⁸ for every one of them from the tax-farms and treasuries and make sure that the apostolic offspring suffer no need of any kind. I have appointed our lord Mustafa, the paragon of the *kadıs* and the magistrates, the mine of virtue and erudition – may his virtues increase! – to serve as the judge of my imperial camp.¹⁰⁹ When he arrives, submit and render homage to the sacred law in all regards and do not neglect to show respect toward him. Act according to the sacred hadith¹¹⁰ “the jurists are the heirs of the prophets”, commit no error in the paying of respect.

If you want to use somebody for some service, by no means pass judgment according to his previous situation. There are many people who appear to be followers of asceticism as long as they find no opportunity; though when this opportunity comes to them, they become Nimrod¹¹¹ and pharaoh. Do not employ such people in your service until you have from time to time and repeatedly tried them out in the administration of affairs. If their subsequent and previous situations show agreement, then employ them. There are also some who fast during the day and pray at night.¹¹² Those are the kind who are

108 This did not appear in the previous versions of the text. The stipulation of a daily allowance of one gold piece is obviously an intentional exaggeration.

109 A “judge of the camp” (*ordu kadısı*) was appointed for each military campaign to arbitrate legal disputes that emerged within the army.

110 The sayings and actions of the prophet; one of the major sources of Islamic law.

111 According to Islamic legend, Nimrod was a cruel and godless ruler who cast Abraham into the fire, but the latter was able to escape with the help of Allah.

112 Here the sentence “But in fact they are idolaters” is omitted, while it appears in the other two versions of the text (Kürkcüoğlu, ‘Kanunî’nin’, 229; *Kânûnî Sultan Süleyman Han’ın*, 13; and similarly Feridun, *Münşeat*, I. 88). The omitted sentence makes the previous one intel-

drawn toward the secular, they like such things. Be very careful to avoid people like this. Do not give yourself over to fleeting things either.

You wanted to make a few villages and places into religious foundations. I swear to Allah the most high that you can establish foundations in all of the territories that you have conquered, it has my royal blessing.

If the padishahs who follow me do not show respect to your children and their families and offend them, let the curse of Allah, the angels and all men fall upon them and on the day of judgment I myself shall be their accuser and enemy.¹¹³

Now, therefore, Gazi Bali Bey, spur your horse into a swift run, let your sword be sharp and keep watch over your valiant warriors and your useful men. No matter where you go, let your horse be fleet, your sword be sharp and luck accompany you! Let God – may he be glorified and exalted! – help you in your affairs that are the most useful to the religion of Islam, let Him stand next to you and extend toward you a helping hand. Amen for the sake of the lord of the prophets.

The end.

ligible, since there would obviously have been no problem with those who “fast during the day and pray at night” unless they were in this way attempting to conceal something.

113 In one version (*Kânûnî Sultan Süleyman Han'ın*, 11–12), there appears at the beginning of this part of the text a sentence stating that Bali asked the sovereign to issue a sultanic order guaranteeing the future inviolability of his family (this sentence is also present in the Feridun version of the text: *Münşeat*, I. 88).