

Uroš Dakić

**THE SOKOLLU FAMILY CLAN AND THE POLITICS OF
VIZIERIAL HOUSEHOLDS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY**

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with the specialization
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

May 2012

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Uroš Dakić

(Serbia)

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Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Uroš Dakić**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with the specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, __ May 2012

Signature

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter I	7
The Evolution of the Grand Vizierate from the Mid-Fifteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century	7
A. Mehmed II's centralization policy.....	9
B. Grand Vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha (1430s-1453).....	14
C. The Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1468, 1472-1468).....	17
D. The Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha (1523-1536).....	22
Chapter II	28
Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's Rise in Service and the Formation of His Household in the Context of Political Changes in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman and His Successors	28
A. The change in the nature of the sultan's rule under the reign of Sultan Süleyman II (1520-1566).....	29
B. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's rise in Ottoman service	36
C. Mechanisms of networking and household building	43
D. Members of the Sokollu family clan.....	52
Chapter III	62
The Uniqueness of Sokollu Family's Vision and Its Implementation through Artistic and Other Patronage	62
Conclusion	78
Bibliography	85

Introduction

Reading secondary literature on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, the Ottoman grand vizier (1565-1579) who served under three successive sultans, Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566), Selim II (1566-1574), and Murad III (1574-1595), I realized that this person was, if not the most impressive, than one among the most impressive figures in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire and surely the most powerful figure on the Ottoman political scene in his time. The very same literature, besides to his ingenious mind, ascribes Sokollu's power to the nepotistic enterprise he created, a vast social network based on patron-client relationships (Ott. *intisâb*) in which his relatives played a crucial role intermixed with political allies, foreign diplomats, and artists. References to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's extensive family clan, which held various important positions in the empire, particularly drew my attention since I did not come across any study which exemplifies the way this network operated and whether it had any greater political goal besides contributing to the image of this grand vizier as an omnipotent statesman. Exactly this was what encouraged me to write this thesis on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, his family, and their politics.

The literature directly concerning Sokollu Mehmed Pasha is scarce and limited to two monographs written in Serbo-Croatian and Turkish: Mehmed Sokolović (*Мехмед Соколовић*, 1971) by Radovan Samardžić and *Sokollu* (1924) by Ahmet Refik Altınay. These two monographs are factually rich and based on primary sources (although almost without footnotes), but methodologically outdated, romanticizing accounts of Sokollu's career. Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski's *Glasoviti Hrvati prošlih vijekova* (Famous Croats of the Past Centuries, 1886), Milenko M. Vukićević's *Znameniti Srbi muslomani* (*Знаменити Срби мусломани*, Famous Serb Muslims, 1906) and Savfet-beg Bašagić's *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u*

Turskoj carevini (Famous Croats, Bosnjaks, and Herzegovinians in the Turkish Empire, 1931) are prosopographic collections all of which mention Sokollu Mehmed Pasha but are limited to only biographical data without making any attempt to present him in the wider context of Ottoman history, which Altınay and Samaradžić partially do. Furthermore, all these works, published in Serbo-Croatian are written in a national (or nationalistic) framework, and, although giving valuable data on Sokollu's life, seek to "appropriate" his personality and successes for the respective nations of their authors. In this thesis I will use Samaradžić's monograph on Sokollu more than other works from this group since it is the most extensive study based on primary source material.

Fortunately, recently a flurry of new studies has begun to shed new light on the figure of Sokollu and his centrality for understanding the contestation of power in the sixteenth century. Giancarlo Casale in his book *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (2010) delivers detailed information on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's decisive role in placing the Ottoman Empire in the center of world trade and the unification of Muslim communities in distant areas under the umbrella of Ottoman sovereignty extended through "soft power" where its armies could not reach. Emine Fetvacı's doctoral dissertation entitled "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transitions in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage, 1566-1617" (2005) depicts Sokollu as a prolific artistic patron whose final aim was to profile himself as a key political figure of the era.¹ Through analysis of the illuminated manuscripts of the period, the author deconstructs both the rise and fall of this grand vizier. In her book *The Age of Sinan*, Gülru Necipoğlu deals with architectural opus of the famous architect Mimar Sinan, whose distinguished commissioner was Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.

¹ For the expression of social status through commissioned art, I also utilized Jeremy Tanner's article "Portraits, Power, and Patronage in the Late Roman Republic," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 18-50.

The visual message(s) transmitted through Sokollu's architectural commissions is indicative of his status and place among the Ottoman elites.

I find it appropriate, before embarking on a discussion of Sokollu family clan, to give insight into the tenures of some of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's predecessors in the position of grand vizier to illustrate the political dynamics that beset this office before he came to occupy it and how his tenure was different. These illustrative examples are the careers of grand viziers Çandarlı Halil Pasha (1430s-1453), Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1468, 1472-1468), and İbrahim Pasha (1523-1536). Through these examples I will try to explain the evolution of the grand vizierate, that is, the change in the relationship between the sultan and his grand vizier in different periods and political circumstances, the mechanisms grand viziers used to build up their power, and the means the sultans used to undermine this power. In this task I have been helped by several recent studies on the viziers in question, notably Theoharis Stavrides' *The Sultan of Viziers: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)* (2001) in which the author refers to Çandarlı Halil Pasha as well. The mystery around İbrahim Pasha, who was edited out of contemporary sources, seems to have been successfully solved by Ebru Turan in her doctoral dissertation "The Sultan's Favorite: İbrahim Pasha and the Making of Ottoman Universal Sovereignty" (2007).

I observed the rise of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family members in a wider context of political transformations in the sixteenth century, with a special focus on the rise of elite households. For this context I have benefited most from Baki Tezcan's book, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (2010), which helped me shape my central idea for this thesis. In this book, especially the third chapter, the author analyzes the struggle between the imperial court and the elites in the last quarter of the

sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, and pinpoints the beginning of the “second Ottoman Empire” at 1580, only a year after Sokollu Mehmed Pasha’s assassination. The book, *The Transformation of the Ottoman Political Government, 1550-1560* (1983), authored by Metin Kunt, gives important background for the households of Sokollu family members through a prosopographic approach to the transformations in the provincial administration in a period that also covered the tenure of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The implications of the marriages between imperial princesses and members of the Ottoman elite which shaped the destinies of Mehmed Pasha and some of his relatives and supporters are delineated in Leslie Peirce’s *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (1993). Finally, Cornell Fleischer in his groundbreaking study entitled: *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (1986), interprets the process of bureaucratization in the Ottoman Empire that began during the reign of Sultan Süleyman and significantly affected the climate in which the Sokollu clan operated. The central source and object of analysis of Fleischer’s study is the bureaucrat and historian, Mustafa Ali, who was one of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha’s critics, labeling him a “virtual sultan” (*pâdişâh-i manevî*) and accusing him of nepotism.

Primary sources on the period in question and on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family are numerous and written with different agendas by both Ottoman and foreign chroniclers and historians. Some of these historians were even members of Sokollu family, like, for instance, İbrahim Peçevi, who was the son of one of Mehmed Pasha’s female relatives. Peçevi praised the Sokollus throughout his *History*,² which covers the period between 1520 and 1640. Because of this “insider” knowledge, Peçevi’s account is a valuable source on Sokollu’s relatives’ names, their number and career paths. In his work, especially in the first volume of his *History*, Peçevi draws closely on Mustafa Ali’s (1541-1600) *Künhü’l-Ahbâr* (The Essence of Histories), another

² İbrahim Peçevi. *Ta’rîh-i Peçevî*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1992), 2 vols.

valuable source on this period that I consulted.³ Mustafa Selaniki was another chronicler related to Sokollus. He not only participated in the battle of Szigetvár (1566), but was also Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's and Feridun Bey's assistant in concealing the death of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. Selaniki's two-volume *History* gives a detailed account of the events between 1563 and 1600. Among non-Ottoman primary sources I found most helpful and relevant the diary of Stephan Gerlach, the Lutheran chaplain to the envoy of the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I.⁴ In his diary, which covers the years from 1573 to 1578, Gerlach, probably more than any other chronicler or historian of the same period, discussed the significance of Sokollu's networks created out of his relatives, foreign diplomats, and converts employed by Sokollu as spies. Other sources on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha abound, but these are the ones that I relied on most in writing this thesis.

These sources enabled me to reconstruct Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's family network, with the help of which he created his own, as Fleischer would call it, "intisâb empire" (power based on a patron-client network). In the methodology I have drawn on the prosopographical approach introduced in the growing literature on the households of the Ottoman elites, particularly works by Metin Kunt, Leslie Peirce, Jane Hathaway, and Baki Tezcan.⁵ Furthermore, I have also

³ Gelibolu Mustafa Ali, *Künhü'l-Ahbâr -- Dördüncü Rûkn* (tıpkıbasım) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2009).

⁴ Stephan Gerlach, *Tagebuch der von zween Glorwürdigsten Römischen Kaysern Maximiliano un Rudolpho...an die Ottomannische Pforte zu Constantinopel Abgefertigten*. Franckfurth am Mayn: Verlegung Johann David Zunners, 1674. I used the Turkish translation entitled *Türkiye Günliği*, trans. Türkis Noyan, ed. Kemal Beydilli (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), 2 vols.

⁵ Metin I. Kunt, "Royal and Other Households," in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 103-115, *ibidem.*, "Ethnic-Regional (*Cins*) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 3 (1974): 233-239, and *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1560* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Mevali as 'lords of the law'," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 3 (2009): 383-407; Jane Hathaway, *The politics of households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

benefited from studies on network theory applied to historical research.⁶ Sokollu's power rested upon different social networks, but the network to be examined in this thesis is the one consisting of his family members. While Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was not the only member of the Ottoman elite in the second half of the sixteenth century to use his clan members strategically for political purposes, as I will argue, his position, longevity in office, and specific understanding of the Ottoman religious-political mission made this grand vizier and his network a unique phenomenon in Ottoman history.

The aim of this thesis is to bring together various historiographic traditions on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family, ranging from the works of historians from the former Yugoslav republics, Hungary (where Sokollu Mustafa Pasha, Mehmed Pasha's nephew who served as the governor of Buda, attracted a great deal of attention), Turkey, and recent literature coming from US-based scholars, to produce a synthetic narrative about the Sokollu clan that transcends any kind of national framework and tries to understand it in the contexts of Ottoman imperial history.

⁶ For the phenomenon of social networks and patron-client relationships, I used Charles Wetherell's "Historical Social Network Analysis," *International Review of Social History* 43 (1998): 125-144; Margaret Mullett's "Power, Relations and Networks in Medieval Europe. Introduction," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 83, no. 2 (2005): 255-259; and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger's, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 1 (1980): 42-77.

Chapter I

The Evolution of the Grand Vizierate from the Mid-Fifteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century

The focus of this chapter will be the office of the Ottoman grand vizier in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seen through examples of the most representative viziers in this period – Çandarlı Halil Pasha (1439-1453), Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474), and İbrahim Pasha (1523-1536). The year 1453 can be taken as a departure point because, for the first time after almost a hundred years, a grand vizier, Çandarlı Halil Pasha, was killed by the order of a sultan, in this case Mehmed II (1451-1481). The year 1536, the year of İbrahim Pasha's assassination by the order of Sultan Süleyman (1520-1566), is taken as a concluding point. Between these years a number of grand viziers were killed by the order of the Ottoman sultans. These assassinations were reflections of a policy of centralization introduced and pursued by Mehmed II, and this chapter will deal with the repercussions of this policy on the office of grand vizier. Before focusing in detail on the Ottoman office of the grand vizier it is necessary first to take a look at the pre-Ottoman institution of grand vizierate, imperial ideology, and the policy of centralization initiated by Mehmed the Conqueror after 1453 in order to understand the context in which the three grand viziers to be discussed in this chapter operated.

The title *grand vizier* was not an Ottoman invention.⁷ In its most basic meaning, a *vizier* denoted a minister of the sultan and *grand vizier* the highest of the ministers — a prime minister. This office appeared in the Umayyad (661-750) and fully developed in the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258).⁸ The first famous grand vizier in Islamic history was Yahya bin Halid bin Barmak

⁷ On the institution of vizier, see: "Wazir" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 11, 185-197.

⁸ Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 37.

(786-803) whose tenure was during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid (786-809).⁹ According to tradition, Harun ar-Rashid bestowed on his grand vizier absolute authority over the government and Yahya bin Halid controlled the appointments in the central government.¹⁰ He was killed on the order of the caliph for still unknown reasons. Some historians ascribe this assassination to the fact that he overshadowed the caliph himself.¹¹

Grand vizier was a high office in the Seljuk Sultanate as well. Nizam al-Mulk (1063-1092) was the famous vizier of Sultan Alp Arslan (1063-1072) and Malik Shah I (1072-1092).¹² His tenure is an example of a sultan delegating power completely to a vizier. He had the right to make appointments in the government and through this he filled the high state offices with his relatives and supporters. Arguably, he was assassinated as a result of a plot organized by Malik Shah and other enemies of the vizier since he challenged the authority of the sultan.¹³ In medieval Anatolia, looking beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman *beylik*, one can even find a case of a grand vizier becoming sultan; this was Kadı Burhaneddin, the grand vizier and the sultan in the *beylik* of Eretna in fourteenth-century Anatolia.¹⁴

Before 1453 some Ottoman dignitaries were in a position to impose their will on the sultans. A telling example is the case when Grand Vizier Çandarlı appealed to Sultan Murad II to return to the throne on two occasions after he had abdicated in favor of his son, Mehmed (the future Conqueror), which shows the instability of the new sultan's position.¹⁵ Furthermore, Çandarlı strongly opposed the conquest of Constantinople, the dream of every *ghazi* (a warrior

⁹ Philip Hitti, *History of Arabs* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1946), 295.

¹⁰ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 38-39.

¹¹ Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, trans. with comments F. Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 64-65; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 40.

¹² Hitti, *History of Arabs*, 447; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 42.

¹³ Hitti, *History of Arabs*, 447; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 44-45.

¹⁴ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 50.

¹⁵ Frantz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 46-47.

for the faith) -- especially Mehmed II -- allegedly fearing a united Western counterattack.¹⁶ Willing to prevent any similar activities that might occur in the future, and encouraged by the conquest of the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Mehmed II took decisive steps to install himself as the supreme authority of the Ottoman Empire after 1453, thus making the status of the Ottoman ruler considerably different before and after the conquest of Constantinople.

As all these examples suggest, the most controversial issue revolving around the role of grand viziers in the pre-Ottoman Islamic and Ottoman society before 1453 was the extent to which the sultan's absolute power was delegated to his highest minister and how the boundaries of power were drawn between the ruler and his "right-hand man."

A. Mehmed II's centralization policy

Before the conquest, the sultan was one of the *beys* (local lords), *primus inter pares*, and thus not always and completely independent in making important decisions. Mehmed II was even referred to as *bey*. Although this was not his official title, in this respect he was not distinguished from numerous other Turkic *beys*.¹⁷ In order to prove oneself worthy of being a sultan, one had to perform great deeds that would supersede the deeds of other *beys*, like launching campaigns and conquests. Since the conquest of Constantinople was the dream of all the *ghazis*, realization of this dream would make the successful conqueror the *bey* of all *beys*, the *ghazi* of all *ghazis*, the supreme leader.¹⁸ The following words are ascribed to Prophet Muhammad: "Constantinople shall be conquered indeed; what a wonderful leader will that leader

¹⁶ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 54.

¹⁷ Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81.

¹⁸ While all *ghazis* may have wanted to conquer Constantinople, not all of them envisioned it as the future capital of the empire. Edirne was much more favored by many. See Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 148-149.

be, and what a wonderful army will that army be.”¹⁹ In these words one can note that the desire for Constantinople allegedly existed even from the emergence of Islam in the seventh century and thus one can imagine the glory and prestige that accrued to Mehmed II after the conquest, eventually giving him the right to pursue his policy of centralization. Several elements of Mehmed the Conqueror’s centralizing policy were related directly and indirectly to the office of grand vizier: the composition of the law code (*Kânûnnâme*) of Mehmed the Conqueror, the seclusion of the sultan, and introducing converts and *devşirme* recruits (children collected through child levy) as *kuls* (slaves) into the state administration.

The *Kânûnnâme* of Mehmed II is a set of laws and rules written down towards the end of the sultan’s reign.²⁰ The purpose of the *Kânûnnâme* was to establish principles that would be a basis for the new Ottoman imperial ideology and to define the position of the Ottoman sultan in contrast to his subjects, that is, to elevate the sultan above everyone else except God himself and make him untouchable. The prevailing theme of the *Kânûnnâme* is the court hierarchy. The first section is especially relevant for the grand vizierate since in the very first paragraph the grand vizier is introduced as *vekîl-i mutlaki* or the sultan’s ‘absolute deputy,’ meaning that the grand vizier became the most powerful Ottoman court official immediately after the sultan:

First of all let it be known that the grand vizier is above [other] viziers and commanders. He is an absolute deputy in all [state] affairs. The defterdar is deputy for my treasury and he [the grand vizier] is its overseer. When sitting and standing, as well as in rank, he is before all the others.²¹

¹⁹ Kaya Şahin, “Constantinople and the End Time: The Ottoman Conquest as a Portent of the Last Hour,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 14 (2010): 319.

²⁰ The earliest extant version of Mehmed II’s *Kânûnnâme* dates to the seventeenth century. Some anachronisms occur in this version, but these are additions that go along the lines of Mehmed II’s permission and even a suggestion that his successors should improve his law if necessary. On the issue of authenticity see Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 199-200; Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 32; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 58.

²¹ Abdülkadir Özcan, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed: Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman (Tahlil ve Karşılaştırmalı Metin)* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2007), 277b: *Evvelâ ma’lûm ola ki vüzerâ ve ümerânın vezîr-i a’zam başıdur. Cümlelerin ulusudur. Cümle*

The next point of the imperial ideology elaborated by Mehmed II was the sultan's physical seclusion from his subjects, following the example of Persian and Byzantine rulers. In 1459 Mehmed II built a new palace – Topkapı palace -- with high surrounding walls and three successive courtyards, the first two of which were reserved for the public services of the sultan's household. These two courts were called *bîrûn* (outer court). The third court, called *enderûn* (inner court), contained the private quarters of the sultan that were reachable only by the members of the imperial household.²² By building a new palace, Mehmed II wanted to portray himself in the manner of Persian and Byzantine emperors and to emphasize his sanctity. In this way he came to be seemingly untouchable, probably wishing his subjects to think of their ruler as of some invisible power governing their lives from somewhere beyond their reach. Mehmed II's predecessors had appeared in public regularly. This was practised in order to keep the people calm; they could rise up at the slightest suggestion that their ruler had died — something that could happen if he were not seen regularly. With Mehmed II this practise ceased due to its being against the newly established sanctity of the sultan.²³

The *Kânûnnâme* and the seclusion may seem to be out of alignment with the sultan's centralizing program. The former delegates important state affairs to a grand vizier and thus, together with the latter, distances the sultan from these same affairs. Why would Mehmed II delegate state affairs to another man if he wanted to seize all the power and authority? Why would he seclude himself? The reason might have been quite simple. Namely, it was perhaps easier to control the state through only one person who would be in charge of everything than to

umûrun vekîl-i mutlakıdır. Ve mâlûmın vekîli defterdârıdır ol nâzırıdır. Oturmada ve durmada ve mertebede vezîr-i a'zam cümleden mukaddemdir.

²² Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1991), 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 17.

control a number of hitherto semi-independent *beys*, noble families and their households. The seclusion of Mehmed II was only physical and through the person of the grand vizier the sultan not only had an insight into state affairs, but at the same time was deeply involved in daily issues. However, the question remains: Since both before and after 1453 the main representative of the Ottoman state after the sultan was the grand vizier, what prevented the individuals occupying this office after 1453 from rising to power as, for example, Çandarlı Pasha did, and thus challenging the authority of the sultan?

In order to make sure that newly appointed grand viziers would not again rise to immense power in the new circumstances, Mehmed II decided to use persons of different profiles for this office. Instead of descendants of influential noble Turkic families, with whom Mehmed II struggled for unlimited authority, converts and *devşirme* recruits came to occupy the office of grand vizier and this practice continued well into the seventeenth century. In the era of Mehmed II, the converts occupying high positions in the Ottoman administration were mainly — although not exclusively -- descendants of noble Byzantine and Balkan families who were captured or willingly surrendered and converted to Islam. They furnished the Ottoman Empire with grand viziers until they died out at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when they were replaced by *devşirmes* in this office.²⁴ *Devşirmes* were the children collected as child levy from among the Christians of the Balkans and Anatolia. They were usually taken between the ages of eight and sixteen and converted to Islam. Some of them were destined for military careers in the Janissaries corps; the rest were educated at one of the imperial palaces, in the *enderûn*, and thus

²⁴ Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 127.

prepared to reach some of the offices in the state administration through gradual career advancement.²⁵

It may sound counterintuitive to have recruited members of former Balkan and Byzantine nobility for the office of the grand vizier if the goal was to undermine rival pretensions to the sultanate. The ingeniousness of Mehmed II's policy consisted in the fact that he encouraged these viziers to explore the ties with their former compatriots in order to bring these peoples and territories into the fold of the Ottoman state. At the same time, however, these noble converts to Islam, just as *devşirme* recruits, were born as non-Muslims, had no ties to well-established, influential noble Turkic families, and could not claim the right to a status higher than that of sultan's slaves – *kuls*. As such, they were treated as the sultans' property, owed their status exclusively to the sultan, and could be dismissed or even killed by the order of a sultan, especially if they challenged his power.

Of course, with hindsight, it can be seen that these novelties introduced by Mehmed II were not fool-proof from the perspective of the central power and in fact paved the way for centrifugal tendencies in the sixteenth century, especially during the grand vezirates of İbrahim Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who exercised great political influence.²⁶ However, before I examine the consequences of Mehmed's reforms in the sixteenth century, it is necessary to examine the careers of several grand viziers who served in this new era of the grand vezirate when centrifugal tendencies were successfully checked by Mehmed II and his immediate successors.

²⁵ *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. II, 210-213.

²⁶ This issue is discussed in detail in the section "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's Rise in Service and the Formation of His Household in the Context of Political Changes in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman and His Successors."

B. Grand Vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha (1430s-1453)

Immediately after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, along the lines of Mehmed II's centralizing policy, Grand Vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha was assassinated. This assassination was orchestrated from the imperial court itself -- it was a direct order of Sultan Mehmed II. Who was Çandarlı Halil Pasha? Why is his origin relevant? Why was he an obstacle to the sultan becoming the foremost authority of the Ottoman Empire?

Çandarlı Halil Pasha was a member of a noble Muslim family whose line in the Ottoman service one can follow back to Murad I (1361-1389). This family came from a scholarly (*ülemâ*) background and provided the Ottoman dynasty with various kinds of dignitaries, especially grand viziers. His grandfather, Çandarlı Hayreddin Pasha, was a grand vizier (1380-1387) of Murad I (1360-1389). Çandarlı Halil Pasha's uncle, Çandarlı Ali, was grand vizier to three sultans – Murad I, Bayezid I, and Bayezid's son, Süleyman (Rumelia, 1402-1411), between 1387 and 1406. Finally, İbrahim, Çandarlı Halil Pasha's father, was grand vizier under Murad II.²⁷

All three ancestors of Çandarlı Halil Pasha, prior to their appointment to the grand vizierate, were *kadis* (judges) and *kadiaskers* (military judges).²⁸ As members of a distinguished Turkic family they were well rooted in the Ottoman administrative system. These “noble” Turkic families represented a significant threat to Osman's dynasty prior to 1453.²⁹ For the sake of his

²⁷ See: İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı's *Çandarlı Vezir Ailesi* (Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basemevi, 1974) and “Çandarlı,” in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3, 351-357.

²⁸ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 52; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 161.

²⁹ Similar examples were the families of the Rumeli raider (*akıncı*) commanders such as the Turahanoğulları, Mihaloğulları, Evrenosoğulları and others, who in the early days of the Ottoman enterprise served more as partners to the Ottoman dynasty than servants. In order to co-opt the members of these families for the Ottoman cause, the sultans recognized their hereditary rights to the land they conquered in the Rumeli borderlands. Their special status was evident in the fact that their property as the *gāzī* frontier lords was transmitted to their children from the very beginning, in contrast to the property of the *timariots* — i.e., land-grant (*timār*) the sultan bestowed on holders in return for their military service. However, they were barred from high office in the central government and could serve only in provincial posts in Rumeli. See Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious*

supremacy and the new imperial ideology established in 1453, Mehmed II decided to put aside these pedigreed Ottoman families, using drastic measures when necessary, starting with the current grand vizier.

Çandarlı Halil Pasha had followed the career path of his predecessors. After completing a *medrese* education he was appointed *kadı* (district or provincial judge) and later *kadıasker* (military judge of European part of the empire or Anatolia). He became the grand vizier sometime in the 1430s. Çandarlı was on good terms with Sultan Murad II, whose absolute deputy he became. After the peace of Szegedin in 1444, of which Çandarlı was a negotiator, Sultan Murad II abdicated in favor of his son, Mehmed II. After Murad II's abdication, Çandarlı Pasha retained the vizierate, but relations between the grand vizier and the young sultan were not harmonious for several reasons.³⁰

Mehmed II openly maintained close relations with officials of *devşirme* origin. Seeing this as a portent of the *kuls'* rise in importance and using the Crusader invasion as an opportunity, Çandarlı Pasha, in 1444, the same year when Mehmed II first ascended the throne, invited Murad II back to Edirne so that he could lead an army against the invasion. Consequently, Murad II was reinstated and thus Çandarlı Pasha imposed his own will on the will of Mehmed II. After the Battle of Varna in the same year, Murad II abdicated for the second time. In 1446, after the revolt of the Janissaries in the Ottoman capital, Çandarlı Halil Pasha again invited Murad II back to the throne, which he occupied until 1451. Some sources even

Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 47, n. 105; and Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 55-66, 143.

³⁰ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 53.

argue that the Janissary revolt was orchestrated by Çandarlı Halil Pasha himself, thus giving him another opportunity to invite Murad II.³¹

Despite strained relations with the prince, Çandarlı Halil Pasha retained his office after Mehmed II's enthronement in 1451. Nevertheless, grand vizier's opposition to the sultan did not cease. During the debate over whether Mehmed II should launch the conquest of Constantinople or not, Çandarlı Pasha was openly against it, expressing his fear that such an attack might trigger Western forces to unite against the Ottomans.³² Behind this fear there was probably another one. Namely, Çandarlı Halil Pasha might have guessed that Mehmed II's conquest of the Byzantine capital would mean the end of his involvement in trade with Byzantium and, what is more important -- of his vizierate.³³ On this question, Mehmed II was supported by his *devşirme* following.

The first day of the conquest of Constantinople, Çandarlı was imprisoned, together with his sons. His property was confiscated and he was later executed. For this execution, the sultan made use of the rumors accusing Çandarlı Pasha of supporting the Byzantines during the siege and even receiving bribes from them.³⁴ However, the real reasons seem apparent. Mehmed II was frustrated by the grand vizier having deposed him twice, in 1444 and 1446. After the conquest, Mehmed II wanted no obstacles in his way towards becoming an absolute ruler, not to be endangered by any hindrance in the Ottoman administration. The year 1453 was the beginning of a new era, the era of patrimonial slavery,³⁵ dominated by the sultan's slaves.

³¹ Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 46-47.

³² See: Daniel Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 369-393;

³³ Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184-232.

³⁴ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 54.

³⁵ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 90.

C. The Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1468, 1472-1468)

Mahmud Pasha Angelović an illustration of the evolution of the grand vizierate in many respects. Mahmud Pasha was the grand vizier for two terms: from 1453 to 1468 and from 1472 to 1473.³⁶ He was a scion of Byzanto-Balkan nobility which was absorbed into the highest echelons of the Ottoman ruling elite after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453.³⁷ Some of the highest state offices, including that of the grand vizier, were filled with statesmen with such backgrounds for the next fifty years.

The intention of Mehmed II was to create a loyal ruling elite using converted Byzanto-Balkan aristocrats, either *devshirmes* or voluntary converts, thus opposing the old and influential Turkish families. These “new Muslims” were usually cut off from their backgrounds, which came to be irrelevant both for themselves and their contemporaries. Here the question arises: Could the background of a prince from the Balkans or the last Byzantine emperor’s nephews so easily become irrelevant and forgotten?³⁸ These people were well known among their contemporaries in their Christian lands and their noble origin and background could by no means escape the attention of their new Muslim compatriots. However, these noble converts or captives converted to Islam were the best spoils of war of Ottoman campaigns, especially when elevated to high positions, since they could easily earn sympathies of their old-new subjects in the territories they came from.

Mahmud Pasha was a member of the noble Byzanto-Serbian Angelović family from the important mining and commercial center of Novo Brdo. The exact year of his birth is not known.

³⁶ The most detailed study on Mahmud Pasha Angelović is by Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453-1474)*.

³⁷ Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 116-117.

³⁸ At least two nephews of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI Palaiologos (1449-1453), converted and served as grand viziers under the names of Mesih Pasha and Has Murad Pasha s. See: Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 115-116.

What is relevant is that he was captured during the reign of Sultan Murat II and brought to Edirne, where he became a page.³⁹ During his youth, Mehmed II got acquainted with the converts and captives in the imperial palace, among whom was also Mahmud. These acquaintances were not well received among the prominent Turkic families, especially the Çandarlis, who probably saw them as a portent of their sad end that might come after the young prince's accession to the throne.⁴⁰ Indeed, upon coming to the throne, Mehmed II established the practice of new sultans bringing to the imperial court their own people from the provinces they had governed prior to their enthronement. The new sultan would replace almost all the people of the previous sultan. I would label this phenomenon the *clash of sultanic households*. Namely, the members of the new sultan's household would push out the following of the previous sultan who, during the years spent in the most influential state positions, accumulated power in their hands. Putting forward their households and thus surrounding themselves with the loyal persons, new sultans prevented any kind of threat to their authority at the very outset of their reigns. These new people of the sultan were not only the members of the prince's household. This group also included the statesmen of the previous sultan who had not held a 'dangerous' amount of power, who sympathized with the in-coming sultan or were known opponents of the old structures.

In the group of Prince Mehmed's acquaintances were, among others, Zaganos Pasha, a Greek renegade who was the prince's tutor (*lala*) and later his father-in-law and grand vizier, as well as Mahmud Pasha.⁴¹ Zaganos Pasha was the third vizier of the Porte when Sultan Mehmed

³⁹ See: "Mahmud Pasha," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, 69-72.

⁴⁰ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 144.

⁴¹ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 63; Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 47. In the case of Zaganos Pasha, one notes that his kinship with Mehmed II did not help him at all in 1456 when he was exiled to Balıkesir together with his daughter.

II was enthroned.⁴² Still, not only did he retain this position, but he was also promoted to the office of second vizier and, finally, the first or the grand vizier after the assassination of Çandarlı Halil Pasha in 1453.⁴³ This was due to the rivalry between Çandarlı Halil Pasha and Zaganos Pasha which immediately implied desirability of the latter. Thus the old structures at the Ottoman court were threatened with this initial faction created around the young prince. I say *initial* because other factions were created later and they struggled among themselves to earn the favor of the sultan.

After Mehmed II's accession to the throne, Mahmud's career took an upturn. The question of the year of Mahmud Pasha's appointment is still under discussion. The most competent authorities on this issue agree that he was granted the grand vizierate in 1456.⁴⁴ The three years between the conquest and Mahmud Pasha's appointment were marked by service of Zaganos Pasha in this position. However, leaving aside the question of dating Mahmud Pasha's appointment, I will focus now on his career, which was dependent on the fluid relations between this remarkable personality and the sultan. No matter how close this relationship and how high and stable the place of the grand vizier may have seemed, this was the most vulnerable position, a peak of the mountain that was always the point most exposed to the thunder of the sultans' moods. For instance, after the unsuccessful siege of Belgrade in 1456, Zaganos Pasha was deemed responsible for the failure and was exiled, together with his daughter, who was Mehmed II's wife, to Balıkesir where he had large estates.⁴⁵

After the dismissal of Zaganos Pasha the position of the grand vizier was given to Mahmud Pasha Angelović who distinguished himself during the siege of Belgrade and was one

⁴² Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 15.

⁴³ Halil İnalçık, "Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time," *Speculum* 35, no. 3 (1960): 413.

⁴⁴ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 59-60; İnalçık, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1451-1481) and His Time," 413.

⁴⁵ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 63-64; Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 115-116.

of the most remarkable personalities on both the military and diplomatic scene in the fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire. He accompanied Sultan Mehmed II or personally launched almost every battle that was fought during his tenure. He served simultaneously as the grand vizier and governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) of Rumelia.⁴⁶ It seems that Mahmud Pasha was the only member of the Angelović family who was captured in Serbia.⁴⁷ His brother, Michael Angelović, was briefly the governor of Serbia in 1458. Being in contact with his brother at the Sublime Porte, Michael made an effort to keep Serbia closer to the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁸ When he was removed by the Serbian notables due to his pro-Ottoman attitudes, Mahmud Pasha was sent to settle things down in Serbia and lead a campaign the aim of which was not to allow Serbia to make an alliance with the Hungarians.⁴⁹ Although some of the strategically important fortresses were captured (Golubac, for instance), the capital of the Serbian Despotate, Smederevo, did not fall. The following year Mahmud and his army joined the troops of the sultan and after a successful siege, Smederevo finally surrendered.⁵⁰

The conquest of Serbia is a telling example of the relation between the sultan and his grand vizier in the post-1453 period. Although Mahmud Pasha was not going against his brother, who had been deposed earlier, his obedience went so far that he went against the country of his origin, the country where he was captured. I have not found any signs of his opposition to the sultan's decision as in the case of Çandarlı Halil Pasha and the conquest of Constantinople. A similar situation arose in 1460, when Mahmud Pasha followed the sultan to the campaigns of Sinop, Amasra, and Trebizond, where he negotiated the surrender of the city with his cousin, the

⁴⁶ See: "Mahmud Pasha," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, 70.

⁴⁷ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 92.

⁴⁸ Сима Ћирковић, *Историја српског народа* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1982), vol. 2, 306.

⁴⁹ Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 93-100.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

philosopher George Amirutzes. During these battles Mahmud Pasha turned out to be irreplaceable and it was at this point that he reached the apex of his power.⁵¹

In 1468, during the fighting in Karaman in Anatolia, the rivalry between Mahmud Pasha and another faction of the imperial court headed by Rum Mehmed Pasha reached a critical point. Having not been able to capture the *bey* of Karaman to deport all the master craftsmen from Konya and Larende to Istanbul, Mahmud Pasha was accused of negligence and taking bribes. Shortly after this, Mahmud Pasha was replaced by Rum Mehmed Pasha.⁵²

Before the battle against the Akkoyunlus and their leader, Uzun Hasan, in 1472, Mahmud Pasha was again given the office of the grand vizier due to his great martial abilities. However, this time he did not personally lead the army nor was he in the immediate surroundings of the sultan. He was assigned to serve by the side of Has Murad Pasha, the sultan's young favorite and governor-general of Rumelia. With this humiliation the breach between the sultan and Mahmud Pasha grew. After the battle, where the role of Mahmud Pasha was controversial and which resulted in defeat of the Ottoman army, he was dismissed for the second and final time.⁵³ However, the dismissal of Mahmud Pasha is still disputed. The stories about what exactly happened to cause the rift are more complicated and include some sort of personal violation of Mahmud Pasha's wife by either the sultan or one of the princes. Rumors swirled about this and janissary songs were composed on the topic. In any case, Mahmud Pasha was considered a wronged victim of the sultan's whim and was later immortalized in a *menakib* (panegyric) that

⁵¹ "Mahmud Pasha was now at the height of his glory. It was as though the sultan had renounced the sultanate and bestowed it on Mahmud." See: "Mahmud Pasha," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 6, 70.

⁵² Stavrides, *The Sultan of Viziers*, 329-332.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 137-141.

treats him almost like a saint. This would suggest that this figure definitely became the focus of some people's opposition to or dislike of the sultan's actions.⁵⁴

D. The Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha (1523-1536)

İbrahim Pasha is the next representative in the sequence which best depicts the evolution of the office of grand vizier from *kul* to 'virtual sultan.' Using the most recent literature on İbrahim Pasha, I will show why he was special and thus relevant for the topic under discussion.⁵⁵

İbrahim Pasha (1523-1536) was the first grand vizier appointed by Sultan Süleyman (1520-1566). His rise, like his fall, was sudden. When Sultan Süleyman ascended the throne, his main preoccupation was to create a profile of himself as an authoritative ruler worthy of the place he occupied. Like Mehmed II, he had to prove himself as a *ghazi* and to get rid of his father's powerful functionaries. The opportunity arose after the conquests of Belgrade and Rhodes in 1521 and 1522, respectively. From the clash of households, a new, completely unknown personality emerged as governor-general of Rumelia and grand vizier. İbrahim Ağa⁵⁶ was the head of Sultan Süleyman's privy chamber and thus had no experience in government, especially in the duties that the office of the grand vizier entailed.⁵⁷ In the early decades of the sixteenth century, bureaucratic hierarchy for the appointments in the government still did not

⁵⁴ Ibid., 329-396.

⁵⁵ The most recent studies which contributed to solving many controversies about İbrahim Pasha have been authored by Ebru Turan and include her PhD dissertation, "The Sultan's Favorite: İbrahim Pasha and the Making of Ottoman Universal Sovereignty," (University of Chicago, 2007) and her essays "Voices of Opposition in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman: The Case of İbrahim Paşa (1523-1536)," *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond: The Freely Papers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Museum of Anthropology and Archeology, 2007), vol. 2, 23-35, and "The Marriage of İbrahim Pasha (CA. 1495-1536): The Rise of Sultan Süleyman's Favorite to the Grand Vizierate and the Politics of the Elites in the Early Sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire," *Turcica* 41 (2009): 3-36. Older studies are Feridun Emecen, "İbrahim Paşa, Makbul," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (ISAM: Istanbul, 2000), vol. 21, 333-335, Jenkins' *İbrahim Pasha, Grand Vizir of Suleiman the Magnificent* (New York: Columbia University, 1911), and Tayyib Gökbilgin's "İbrahim Paşa," *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 5/2, 908-915.

⁵⁶ İbrahim's title prior to his appointment to the grand vizierate.

⁵⁷ İbrahim Peçevi, *Ta'rîh-i Peçevî*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1992), vol. 1, 16; Turan, "The Sultan's Favorite," 100.

exist in Ottoman political culture but one must ask himself why Sultan Süleyman appointed an inexperienced man to the two highest positions of the empire. Contemporaries themselves noticed that İbrahim did not even have the most basic knowledge of how to run the imperial council meetings.⁵⁸ If he wanted to establish his power on firmer ground, was not he supposed to surround himself with new but competent people?

Even before İbrahim rose to the grand vizierate, in 1521/22 Süleyman had built a palace for his favorite at Atmeydani.⁵⁹ Since the influence of the political structures inherited from Selim I was still strong (Piri Mehmed Pasha, serving as grand vizier at the time, still exercised strong control over the government and the sultan himself⁶⁰), Süleyman decided that the first step in the struggle for authority should be his seclusion in Topkapı Palace. The next step was to establish a connection with the elites, but only from distance, through a trusted individual. The most trusted person of the sultan was İbrahim, his slave, childhood friend, and the head of his privy chamber. However, since İbrahim resided in the imperial palace, he could not freely communicate with the political forces outside the palace. The decision was therefore made to promote him to the grand vizier and move him from the palace to a place in the vicinity. The Atmeydani (the ancient Hippodrome) was thought to be an appropriate location for this purpose. After it had been built, İbrahim Pasha's palace became the outpost of the imperial palace for communication with the Ottoman elites, with İbrahim Pasha in the centre of this communication. In this way, the sultan's favorite was given an opportunity to style himself as the sultan's alter ego.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Turan, "The Sultan's Favorite," 191.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 142-143.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 145.

⁶¹ Ibid., 142-178.

As it turned out, Ibrahim Pasha was a perfect instrument for the realization of Süleyman's centralizing aspirations. The precondition for his rise was the elimination of the viziers from Sultan Selim I's divan either by retirement or execution; the old Grand Vizier Piri Mehmed Pasha who had the monopoly in the government was retired in 1523; Ahmed Pasha, the second vizier and the governor-general of Rumelia was executed after he raised a rebellion in Egypt in 1524; Ferhad Pasha, Süleyman's brother-in-law who put an end to the rebellion of Camberdi Gazali in 1520, was also killed in 1525.⁶²

After this turmoil it was necessary to legitimate Ibrahim Pasha, who was unknown to the public, as a capable and respectable vizier. This could be done by creating circumstances in which Ibrahim could distinguish himself and by marrying him to a woman from a noble family. The first occasion for Ibrahim's legitimization appeared in 1523/24 with the rebellion in Egypt started by Ahmed Pasha, known as the Betrayer (*Hain*) in Ottoman chronicles.⁶³ The grand vizier was sent to suppress the rebellion, which he did successfully, eliminating his own rival who was a powerful remnant of Sultan Selim I's household.

The next task was Ibrahim Pasha's marriage. Recent studies shed light on the identity of his bride, who was previously believed to be a sister of Sultan Süleyman.⁶⁴ Ibrahim married a granddaughter of İskender Pasha, a supporter of the dynasty and prominent political figure from Bayezid II's time (1481-1512) in 1524.⁶⁵ This marriage enabled Ibrahim Pasha to establish himself as a member of Ottoman society elite and to, to a certain extent, marginalize the fact that he was raised to the grand vizierate from the sultan's Privy Chamber. However, the marriage by itself was not enough for Ibrahim's legitimization. Since he became the only intermediary

⁶² Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 16, 22; Turan, "The Sultan's Favorite," 101-103.

⁶³ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 22.

⁶⁴ See: Turan, "The Marriage of Ibrahim Pasha;" Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 63-64.

⁶⁵ Turan, "The Marriage of Ibrahim Pasha," 13.

between Süleyman and the world, secluding himself within the walls of his palace more than his predecessors,⁶⁶ İbrahim had to be presented to the public as a person the sultan limitlessly bestowed his love and confidence upon. With this aim, Süleyman decided to use the contested site of the Byzantine Hippodrome.⁶⁷ This was the second time since the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople that this site was used for a festivity organized by a sultan.⁶⁸ Although this was not the wedding of an imperial prince or princess, it lasted several weeks and “never had such a wealth and happiness been disposed before the eyes of the public in any wedding of the imperial princesses before.”⁶⁹ The sultan himself was present among the highest officials of the Ottoman elite.⁷⁰

İbrahim Pasha’s role as the sultan’s alter ego and intermediary between the sultan and the elites enabled him to acquaint himself with the influential dignitaries such as the state’s chief financial controller (*baş defterdarı*), İskender Çelebi, and a merchant of Venetian origin and representative of Venetians in Istanbul, Alvise Gritti, who came to play a major role in Ottoman foreign policy as the sultan’s adviser during İbrahim’s vizierate.⁷¹ Not accidentally, all the three persons ended their lives at approximately the same time (1534-1536).

İskender Çelebi, supported Sultan Süleyman upon the latter’s accession in 1520 and helped both the rise and mission of İbrahim Pasha in Egypt.⁷² İskender Çelebi and İbrahim Pasha were close companions until the campaign to Bagdad in 1534, when the former was ‘*asker-kethüdası*’ (the quartermaster — the main person in charge for equipping the army with provision

⁶⁶ Turan, “The Sultan’s Favorite,” 146-147.

⁶⁷ Peçevi, *Ta’rih*, vol. 1, 63.

⁶⁸ The first time was in 1490 when Bayezid II organized the festivity for circumcision of his son and wedding ceremonies for his daughters. See: Nutku Özdemir, “Festivities at Atmeydanı,” in *Hippodrom/Atmeydanı – A Stage for Istanbul’s History* (bilingual publication), ed. by B.Pitarakis (Istanbul: Pera Muzesi Yayınari, 2010), 74-75.

⁶⁹ Peçevi, *Ta’rih*, vol. 1, 63.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

⁷¹ Eric R. Durstler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 128.

⁷² Turan, “The Sultan’s Favorite,” 116-117, 228.

and arms) and the latter *ser'asker* (chief commander). Due to a dispute between them during the campaign, Sultan Süleyman, persuaded by İbrahim, ordered the execution of İskender Çelebi.⁷³ According to Peçevi, soon after the campaign, Süleyman heard in a dream the following words of İskender Çelebi: “Why did you hang me innocent?” Upon hearing these words, the sultan woke up saying: “I wish you İbrahim the same death before a year passes!” Writing with hindsight, Peçevi tried to link the deaths of İskender and İbrahim pashas, even though mystery surrounds the details of the latter.

At the same time when İbrahim became the grand vizier, Alvise Gritti's father, Andrea Gritti, was elected doge of the Venetian Republic (1523-1538). This event placed Alvise Gritti in the center of Ottoman foreign policy not only with Venice, but with the rest of Europe as well. Due to his friendship with Alvise, İbrahim's foreign policy became markedly pro-Venetian and anti-Habsburg oriented.⁷⁴ This is clear from the 1526, 1529, and 1532 campaigns against Hungary, which was on the way to Vienna. The great honor Alvise Gritti enjoyed at the Ottoman Court went so far that he was entrusted with the diplomatic task of dealing with John Zapolya, the Ottoman vassal king of Hungary.⁷⁵ The voivode of Moldavia killed Gritti in Transylvania in 1534 as rumors spread about the latter's aspirations to the Hungarian throne.⁷⁶

The anecdote about Sultan Süleyman's dream may be fiction, but it also points to the public understanding of why İbrahim Pasha, the sultan's favorite, was suddenly killed in 1536.⁷⁷ Two sets of explanations appear in sixteenth-century literature, one blaming Süleyman's wife, Hürrem's, life-long jealousy of İbrahim's influence on her husband for his final demise, and the other maintaining that İbrahim aspired too high and encroached on the sultan's authority with his

⁷³ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 32-33.

⁷⁴ Turan, “The Sultan's Favorite,” 288.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁷⁷ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 139-138.

insatiable ambitions. Supposedly feeling overshadowed by the grand vizier, Süleyman ordered İbrahim's execution when he returned from the war with Safavids in 1536. İbrahim was assassinated while he slept in the sultan's private rooms⁷⁸ and his blood was supposedly left on the walls for years as a reminder of the destiny of arrogant servants.⁷⁹

As one can see from the above examples, the periods of Mehmed II and Süleyman the Magnificent differed to a certain extent with regard to their relationships with the grand viziers and with the elites generally. Mehmed II tried to undermine the old elite by creating an elite of his own; however, by Süleyman's time, new Muslim elites had formed in Constantinople in the seventy years since the conquest of the capital and the sultan needed to deal with them more carefully and with more respect toward some old and venerated officials of his father's government. The removal of old political structures from the Ottoman political scene went gradually, manifested even more in the second half of the sixteenth century with the accession of Murad III and his relationship with the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, indicating the rise in power of the latter's office.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 139.

⁷⁹ Durstler, *Venetians in Constantinople*, 229.

Chapter II

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's Rise in Service and the Formation of His Household in the Context of Political Changes in the Reign of Sultan Süleyman and His Successors

Recent historiography describes Sokollu Mehmed Pasha as the last grand vizier of the so-called 'classical period' of the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁰ According to some historians, after the death of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha a new era of Ottoman history started, in which the structure of power differed significantly from the preceding period.⁸¹ After him, the office of the grand vizier was reduced to a mere formality for almost one hundred years thanks to Sultan Murad III's (and his successors') efforts to push against the model of a powerful grand vizier and instead to promote a variety of court favorites who were the agents of the sultan's power. Only with the emergence of the Köprülü family and the Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (1656-1661) did the holders of this post resume their prior authority. However, in order to understand what made Sokollu Mehmed Pasha so powerful that the entire office for which he stood had to be undermined, one needs to examine the political circumstances in which he rose to power in Ottoman service and built his household.

The general aim of this chapter is to provide a historical context, with a special focus on the era of Sultan Süleyman in order to shed light on the rise, importance, and transformation of the Ottoman and other elite households in the sixteenth century. More particularly, this chapter aims to examine the mechanisms that supported the rise of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha in Ottoman service, the formation of his household and its gradual establishment of a monopoly on power in

⁸⁰ Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 29.

⁸¹ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 100.

the Ottoman Empire through careful management of the Sokollu family clan, which consisted of a network of households set up by Sokollu family members.

A. The change in the nature of the sultan's rule under the reign of Sultan Süleyman II (1520-1566)

Contrary to the traditional scholarly representations of it as the culmination of the “classical age” of Ottoman history, recent research suggests that the reign of Sultan Süleyman represents a turning point with regard to the nature of the sultan's power. It was an era of significant changes (that paved the way for many further changes), which in many respects made a break with trends from the past.⁸² Several of these changes that are relevant for the topic under discussion will be put forward in what follows: promotion of the law as the sultan's surrogate persona, delegation of the power to run the state to the bureaucratic apparatus, de-personalization of the office of sultan, and striking a bargain between the dynasty and the elites. All these changes overlapped with each other and one of their repercussions was the creation of centrifugal forces embodied in the households of the elite and detraction of power from the imperial household.

Sultan Süleyman, eager to break with the elite inherited from his father, Selim I, and to legitimize his own monopoly on power, drew on his initial successful conquests to profile himself as a messianic figure (*mahdi*) who embodied both supreme martial capabilities and the ability to renew the religion of Islam. The ultimate goal of this messianic campaign was legitimization of the Ottoman sultan among other contemporary rival neighboring rulers who also claimed messianic authority, most notably the Habsburg emperor, Charles V, and the

⁸² See: Fleischer: “The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymân,” in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, Actes du Colloque de Paris. 7-10 mars 1990, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 1992), 159-177.

Safavid, shah Ismail. The claim that the sultan and his advisers, most notably İbrahim Pasha, crafted and maintained throughout the 1520s and early 1530s, was that the Ottoman sultan, the scion of the House of Osman that had hitherto legitimized itself as the supreme power of Islam through military conquests and just rule, was not only the utmost authority of the empire but also the messiah envisioned in various medieval Muslim prophecies.⁸³ Süleyman was the tenth Ottoman ruler in the tenth millennium according to the Muslim calendar. As the end of the millennium was approaching, expected in AH 1000 (1591/92), apocalyptic expectations in the Islamic world came increasingly to center on the Ottoman sultan, who was expected to conquer the known world, bring it into the realm of Islam on the eve of the Day of Judgment, and usher in perfect justice that was prophesied as the prelude to the apocalypse.⁸⁴

Towards the end of İbrahim Pasha's vizierate (1523-1536), Ottoman conquests, which had previously brought entire kingdoms into the Ottoman domains, slowed down. At this point, realizing that the Ottoman borders could not be so easily expanded any longer and that the messianic image clashed with his failure to decisively defeat either the Habsburgs or the Safavids, Süleyman turned to another legitimizing strategy; dynastic law (*kânûn*) became his primary instrument of power and his surrogate persona. In the late 1530s and throughout the 1540s one can note the intensified efforts of the chief chancellor, Celalzade, to codify the will of the sultan (*örf*) mirrored in dynastic law, and later, together with Grand Mufti Ebu's-Su'ûd Effendi, to synchronize it with religious law – *sharî'a*.⁸⁵ It is due to his legislative activities in this period that Sultan Süleyman acquired the name *Kânûnî* (the legislator).⁸⁶

⁸³ Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah," 163-167.

⁸⁴ Ibid.; Turan, "The Sultan's Favorite," 304; Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 91-95.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 167, 171-172.

⁸⁶ See: Imber, *Ebu's-su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

The synchronization of the dynastic law with *sharî'a* paved the way for an increased development of the bureaucratic and administrative apparatus that transpired in the last two decades of Süeyman's reign.⁸⁷ The cadre of the palace servitors was educated under the promise of regular rewards for carrying out depersonalized and bureaucratized functions. Stability of one's tenure in office in return for supporting the Ottoman sultan and his household was at the center of Sultan Süleyman's bargain with the elites. Besides the imperial palace, the military class was another important source from which the ruling stratum was furnished.⁸⁸ The sultan delegated the running of the state to this bureaucratic apparatus, which was the reason for the empowerment of the elite households, which became the major locus of power that in the course of time challenged the imperial household.

From what has been said so far one would draw a conclusion that the rise of the elite households was a negative development for Ottoman society. However, such a judgmental view that privileges the imperial center distracts from the study of power structures and their multiple agents in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire, especially in the last years of Süleyman's reign and onwards, can be viewed as constellation of power centers grouped around various households. Putting aside, for the moment, the effects of these households on imperial politics, it should be noted that they were the main constituent of Ottoman society in the second half of the sixteenth and in the seventeenth centuries.⁸⁹ Excluding the biggest one, the imperial household, the major households were those of the grand and other viziers. After them in rank came the households of provincial and district governors (*beylerbeyis* and *sancakbeyis*). Since Ottoman

⁸⁷ Ibid., 171. See also: Mehmet Şakir Yılmaz, "The *Koca Nişancı* of Kanuni: Celalzade Mustafa Çelebi Bureaucracy and "Kanun" in the Reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566)," PhD Dissertation, (Ankara: Bilkent University, 2006).

⁸⁸ See Fleischer's articles "Preliminaries to the Study of the Ottoman Bureaucracy," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 135-141, and "Between the Lines: Realities of Scribal Life in the Sixteenth Century," in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honor of Professor V. L. Ménage*, ed. Colin Imber and Colin Heywood (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1994), 45-61.

⁸⁹ See: Kunt, "Royal and Other Households," in Woodhead, *The Ottoman World*.

households were originally military establishments, especially those of provincial and district governors, each of them had the obligation to participate in campaigns with a number of soldiers in accordance with the grant revenues received. Thus, a district governor had to have a military household of one hundred to two hundred men. A provincial governor was required to have a military retinue of around one thousand men.⁹⁰ The provincial and district governors could bestow a revenue grant on someone from their households,⁹¹ but the appointees who reached the higher positions in the Ottoman government, especially those who advanced to the office of the grand vizier in the sixteenth century, were almost exclusively raised from the imperial household.

Households used different means to acquire and preserve the power they had. The patrons of certain households were extremely rich, but sometimes that was not enough to secure one's safety. Peçevi wrote that the chief *defterdâr* of Sultan Süleyman, İskender Çelebi, was capable, enormously rich, and thus an influential person,⁹² but this was clearly not enough to save him from execution in 1534. Due to a clash of interests between him and the Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha, he disappeared overnight. This shows that one household, although powerful by itself, had to be connected with the key households of the time in order to secure its own existence. The connections established among the households were not the only support of political power. For instance, as will be discussed in more detail below, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's sources of power were not only his connections with his family members seated in the high military administrative positions, but also his direct relation with the imperial court through his marriage to Princess İsmihan, a daughter of Sultan Selim II.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁹¹ Ibid., 110.

⁹² Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 32-33.

This led to another significant change that was introduced almost at the outset of Sultan Süleyman's reign and lasted until the mid-seventeenth century -- the political influence exercised by women of the imperial harem.⁹³ Not only did the sultan's favorite (*haseki*) rise to power, but so did also the royal princesses and, later in the second half of the sixteenth century, the mother of the current sultan (*valide-i sultan*). How did women become involved in the network of power and directly attached to the source of power?

Süleyman was the first Ottoman ruler after a long line of predecessors to have a legal wife.⁹⁴ A sultan having a wife was not illegal, but it was simply not a practice that had been followed since the early fifteenth century due to the potential conflicts concerning the issue of succession. Not only did Süleyman marry, a woman named Roxelane, but he also moved the imperial harem from the Old Palace to the Topkapı Palace, where the royal women appeared in the centre of the state affairs.⁹⁵ This was a step towards allocating the sultan's power among the members of the imperial household, especially because Roxelane, known as Hürrem Sultan, did not follow her sons to the provinces they were allotted, which had been the practice hitherto.

Aiming to tie the imperial household to the households of his high officials, Süleyman started the practice of marrying the women of his dynastic family to his viziers. Thus, imperial women came to be a major nexus between the imperial and vizierial households. These were the means the sultan used in order to rein in the centrifugal tendencies of the elite households. First of all, the dynasty controlled all the appointments; secondly, by marrying princesses to state officials, especially those from the highest strata of the state administration, the sultan became the supreme patron. This structure resembled a hub-and-spoke network pattern where the imperial household was in the centre surrounded by other satellite households with their own

⁹³ See: Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*.

⁹⁴ Ogier de Busbecq, *Turkish Letters*, trans. E. S. Forster (London: Eland, 2001), 18.

⁹⁵ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 119.

networks.⁹⁶ Starting with Sultan Süleyman, Ottoman sultans exercised their sovereignty over the elites through the participation of royal women. One of Sultan Süleyman's most famous grand viziers, Rüstem Pasha, was married to Mihirimah, the sultan's daughter.⁹⁷ Over the course of time, especially in the second half of the sixteenth century, imperial brides became a channel through which the power of the sovereign flowed out from the court to the households of viziers. The marriage of a high military-administrative statesmen to a royal princess was not only an honor, but also an obligation the avoidance of which could be paid with one's head. For instance, according to some sources, Mustafa Pasha, governor-general of Buda (1566-1578), was assassinated because he refused to marry the sister of Sultan Murat III.⁹⁸

The changes introduced in the reign of the Sultan Süleyman influenced not only his era but also the structure of power for several generations to follow. During the last years of Süleyman's reign and the entire reign of his successor, Selim II, the power was no longer confined to the imperial household. The process of bureaucratization led to a division of power among the now-numerous members of the dynastic family that consisted of the imperial household and the households of the viziers tied to the ruling dynasty through marriages to royal princesses. Murad III (1574-1595) tried to put an end to this development. One of the measures he undertook was to keep his sons at the imperial court and not send them to administer the provinces.⁹⁹ The households of young princes in the provinces where they governed could become a threat to the sovereign seated in the center. In the new circumstances, the entire royal family was under one roof, which led to a new disposition of power in the imperial household.

⁹⁶ Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

⁹⁷ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 19.

⁹⁸ The issue of Mustafa Pasha's refusal to marry the royal princess will be discussed in more detail in the section dedicated to members of the Sokollu family clan.

⁹⁹ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 21.

During the reign of Murad III's immediate successors the Ottomans switched to the system of seniority for ascendance to the throne. This enabled the mothers of princes who were to ascend the throne to become institutionally powerful as mothers of future sultans (*vâlide-i sultân*). The seniority system was in a way an outcome of the process of bureaucratization started by the Sultan Süleyman. These reforms produced one more collateral effect on the nature of the sultanate – his office became more abstract and less personal.¹⁰⁰

The households of the military-administrative class were not the only kind of household. Some members of the learned class of Ottoman society (*'ulemâ*) also had their own households. The pinnacle of an *'ulemâ* career was the position of the *şeyh'ül-İslâm*, since the practice of elevating its members to the grand vizierate had ceased with Mehmed II. The head of one *'ulemâ* household, following the rules of bureaucratized career paths, could appoint his favorites as medrese lecturers or magistrates.¹⁰¹ Thus, among the powers that high echelons of the *'ulemâ* class acquired by their appointment, their influence grew since they were well-rooted in the system through their protégés.

However, *'ulemâ* households did not rise in power simultaneously with the vizierial ones. Murad III was vigorously opposed to ruling under the burden of a powerful grand vizierate inherited from his predecessors. He responded to this challenge by depriving the office of the grand vizier of political influence by frequent dismissal of its occupant, thus enabling other individuals in other positions to gain power.¹⁰² The main beneficiary of this change was the chief black eunuch, the chief officer of the harem, whose office was tied to the very center of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 23-24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 112.

¹⁰² Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Courts of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) and His Immediate Predecessors," PhD Dissertation (The Ohio State University, 2010), 159-171; Şefik Peksevgen, "Secrecy, Information Control and Power Building in the Ottoman Empire," 1566-1603, PhD Dissertation (Montreal: McGill University, 2004), 183-115.

imperial court, meaning that political power came to be confined within the walls of the imperial palace.¹⁰³ The white eunuchs, the supervisors and tutors of the inner court, were sometimes appointed district governors and, although rarely, some of them reached the grand vizierate.¹⁰⁴ Besides the chief black eunuch's rise in importance in the time of Murad III, at the turn of the century 'ulemâ households came to dominate the Ottoman political scene.¹⁰⁵ The office of the grand vizier, suppressed by Murad III, resumed its political power only in the mid-seventeenth century with the rise of the Köprülü family.¹⁰⁶ The continuity of the powerful grand vizierate was thus interrupted for nearly one hundred years.

B. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's rise in Ottoman service

The early years of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's life and career are quite obscure. Primary sources, after short remarks on Mehmed Pasha's origin, note him only when he started to distinguish himself in the imperial court. It seems that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was born in or around 1505¹⁰⁷ to an Orthodox Christian family in the village of Sokolovci near the town of Rudo in present day eastern Bosnia.¹⁰⁸ According to Serbian sources he had three brothers, two, according to Turkish sources.¹⁰⁹ As a child he was sent to the Mileševa monastery to study to become a monk. Although he was in the monastery, when the *yaya başı* (head of the enfeoffed foot soldiers of a province) Yeşilce Mehmed Bey, came to Bosnia some time around 1521¹¹⁰ to

¹⁰³ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 100.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 114. See also his "The Ottoman Mevali."

¹⁰⁶ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 255.

¹⁰⁷ Радован Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 1971), 15; Gyula Káldy-Nagy, "Budin Beylerbeyi Mustafa Paşa," *Bulletin* 54 (1990), 8.

¹⁰⁸ Şefik Efendi, *Cevâhirü'l-Menâkıb* (MS Esad Efendi 2583, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul), folio 15a.

¹⁰⁹ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 15; Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Sokollu* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2001), 4.

¹¹⁰ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 17-18. The episode of collecting children who had started to study to become monks is not confined to the case of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha only. In his panegyric, Mahmud Pasha was also described as studying to become a priest at the time when he was recruited. See: Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 68-69.

collect children for the child levy (*devşirme*), he required Mehmed's delivery.¹¹¹ According to the legend, Mehmed's parents objected to this demand and even called on help from the brother of Mehmed's father, Dimitrije, who was a monk in Mileševa monastery and allegedly rich. Despite the Sokollu family's attempt to bribe him, Yeşilce Mehmed Bey was persistent and said to them:

'Hey, you ignorant people, wanderers in the wilderness of hell! Don't you know that this poor boy will be honored in the sultan's service? When he, with the sultan's endeavor, reaches the limitless felicity, you will all enjoy happiness and riches. Because this state is a Huma bird¹¹² which has descended on your tribe and now you want to chase it away with your stupidity and thus burn your house with your own hands! On the forehead of your son there is a mark of great fortune indicating that he will reach high position in the service and proximity of the sultan, our benefactor.'¹¹³

These data are relevant for several reasons. If this source is to be trusted, it is interesting to explore why Yeşilce Mehmed wanted to recruit especially Mehmed, who was apparently not at home but at the Mileševa monastery when the child levy was collected. What does this reveal about the process of *devşirme*?

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was not the first member of the Sokollu family taken to the imperial court through *devşirme*. Deli Hüsrev Pasha, who became the second vizier of the Sultan Süleyman in 1543, was taken from the same family.¹¹⁴ The influence of Ottoman officials depended how many supporters and protégés they had, through whom they were rooted in the Ottoman administration. Each official tried to recruit as many protégés as possible. Naturally, the most appropriate persons for creating one's personal network were the members of one's own

¹¹¹ According to Jakov Lukarević, a historian from Dubrovnik, Mehmed Pasha's name prior to conversion to Islam was Bajica. See: Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 15.

¹¹² A mythological Persian bird which brings happiness.

¹¹³ *Cevâhirü'l-Menâkıb*, folio 17.

¹¹⁴ See "Sokollu Family," *Encyclopedia of Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on Files, 2009), 534-536.

family. It was thus possible that Yeşilce Mehmed Pasha followed the order of Deli Hüsrev Pasha to collect, among other children in Bosnia, young Mehmed as well. This means that besides the “official” *devşirme*, some kind of “private” *devşirme* was also practiced.¹¹⁵ If one assumes that Deli Hüsrev Pasha indeed tried to recruit Mehmed intentionally in order to strengthen his own clan, it seems like the plan backfired, since his younger brother, Lala Mustafa Pasha, and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha came to be the fiercest enemies.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was brought to the imperial court in Edirne. Since he participated in the conquest of Iraq in 1534 under the *defterdar* İskender Çelebi, it is plausible that Mehmed was first allotted to this dignitary. After the death of İskender Çelebi in 1534, Mehmed was sent to Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, where he found himself in the immediate proximity of the sultan.¹¹⁶ There he advanced in the court hierarchy as a groom (*rikâbdâr*), valet-de-chambre (*çohadâr*), sword-bearer (*silâhdâr*), and chief taster (*çeşnegir başı*), consecutively. The exact years of every single appointment of Mehmed Pasha during his service in the inner (*enderûn*) and outer court (*birûn*) are unknown. However, these years are relevant with respect to his court service and the posts granted to court pages after their graduation (*çıkma*). The unwritten rule was that the longer a page served in the *enderûn*, the higher position he acquired in the *birûn* or in the provinces.¹¹⁷ This law was applied in the case of Mehmed Pasha. He graduated from the

¹¹⁵ Besides the possibility of the existence of a private *devşirme*, one can draw important conclusions about the process of *devşirme* per se. Although the mentioned section of *Cevâhirü'l-Menâkıb* (see folios 16 and 17) depicts one single example of *devşirme*, it may contribute to the disclosure of this controversial phenomenon introduced by the Ottomans. In modern historiography, the dispute is still present over whether parents gave their children voluntarily or by force. Clearly, this depended on the denomination of the population of a given region. See Eşref Kovačević, “Jedan document o devşirmi,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 22-23 (1976): 203-209; Menage, “Devşirme,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 210-213; Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans: Kısve Bahasi Petitions and Ottoman Social Life, 1670-1730* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2004).

¹¹⁶ Gilles Veinstein, “Sokollu Mehmed Paşa,” in *International Encyclopedia of Islamic Dynasties* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2005), 765.

¹¹⁷ Kunt, *The Sultans Servants*, 27.

inner court only in 1541, after 20 years spent there. In this year he became the head door-keeper (*kapıcı başı*), which was the position fourth in rank in the outer court hierarchy.¹¹⁸

The first high post allotted to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was the admiralty of the Ottoman fleet. In this position he succeeded Hayrüddin Barbarossa after his death in 1546.¹¹⁹ Unlike Barbarossa, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha did not go to sea but stayed in Istanbul during his entire tenure in this position,¹²⁰ which was important for his future career and contacts he made with his family in Bosnia. In 1549 the governor-general of Rumelia, Semiz Ali Pasha, was given the grand vizierate and his place in Sofia was passed on to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. This appointment of Sokollu can be seen through the prism of both his abilities, shown hitherto during his career, and his origins. The borderlands between the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires in this period came to be turbulent due to the ambition of Ferdinand of Habsburg to annex Transylvania, which was governed by Süleyman's vassal, John Sigismund, son of the deceased king of Hungary, John Zapolya.¹²¹ On both sides of the Ottoman-Hapsburg border the Serbian population was numerous and the choice of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha for this post as the commander of the forthcoming war was not accidental. The aim was to attract as many Serbian soldiers as possible to the Ottoman army, which actually happened during the course of campaign in 1551 when the Serbian garrisons facilitated the Ottoman conquest of several fortresses.¹²² However, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha failed to conquer Timisoara and had to withdraw to Belgrade to spend the winter there. Despite this defeat, Sokollu retained his position as the governor-general of Rumelia. In the following year, 1552, the campaign continued with Kara

¹¹⁸ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 19; Veinstein, "Mehmed Paşa," 766.

¹¹⁹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 31; Veinstein, "Mehmed Paşa," 766.

¹²⁰ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 36.

¹²¹ See: Ђурђевић, "Прва година ратовања Мехмеда Соколовића у Банту и прва опсада Темишвара," *Glasnik istoriskog društva u Novom Sadu* 7 (1934): 64-69; Geza David, "Administration in Ottoman Europe," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Metin Kunt and Christine Woodhead (London: Longman, 1995).

¹²² Ђурђевић, "Прва година ратовања Мехмеда Соколовића у Банту и прва опсада Темишвара," 71, 73.

Ahmed Pasha, the second vizier, as the head commander (*serdâr*) and Timisoara was finally conquered.

The reasons for Sokollu's appointment, retention of his position, and further advancement can be seen from the fact that he was gradually becoming the favorite of the court. The period when he was the governor-general of Rumelia fell during the grand vizierate of Rüstem Pasha (1544-1553, 1555-1561), who originated from Skaradin (nowadays in Croatia) and who spoke the same language as Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. They were thus compatriots. Since rivalry between ethnic factions was an important element of Ottoman political life, it is quite justifiable to think of the possible support Sokollu Mehmed Pasha received from Rüstem Pasha.¹²³ Ottoman historian, Mustafa Ali, commented on the ethnic kinship among Ottoman dignitaries, noting that:

whenever a grand vizier is Bosnian, it is for certain that the prestige of imperial council members belonging to that group will daily increase through advancement and promotion to higher posts. If he is Albanian, his own group becomes fortunate, for he is likely to promote his relatives and siblings, appointing to reputable positions those from his own city and hometown.¹²⁴

This comment is certainly relevant for understanding Sokollu's strategy in building his household.

Not only was Sokollu Mehmed Pasha possibly backed by Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha, but also, one can claim this with more certainty, he was well received by the women of the imperial harem, especially the wife of Sultan Süleyman, Hürrem, and her daughter, Mihrimah, Rüstem Pasha's wife. A Venetian diplomat in Istanbul reports that Sokollu:

owed his swift promotion to having rescued Haseki Hürrem Sultan from drowning one day when her boat capsized, thanks to his strong physique. The grateful queen thence caused his rapid rise through the ranks of chief gatekeeper

¹²³ See Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity;" Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650*, 2.

¹²⁴ Cited in Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 43.

(1541), grand admiral (1546), and governor-general of Rumelia (1549), to third vizier in 1554.¹²⁵

Immediately upon the conclusion of the fights at the northern borders of the Ottoman Empire, in 1553, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was called to the east, to Tokat, to fight against the Safavids with his Rumelian troops.¹²⁶ The fighting was postponed because of an alleged revolt by Süleyman's eldest son, Mustafa, who was eventually executed on the order of his father.¹²⁷ Sokollu had to winter in Tokat and wait for the next war season. In June, 1544, Sokollu distinguished himself with his Rumelian troops on the march from Erzurum to Nakhcivan and in the conquest of several Georgian fortresses. On their return from the front, in Amasya, Sultan Süleyman appointed Sokollu Mehmed Pasha the third vizier.¹²⁸ Sokollu thus entered the imperial council (*divan*).

From this moment on, Sokollu was entrusted with the most difficult tasks, one of which was to guard the imperial throne. The first occasion was the revolt of Düzme (False) Mustafa. Namely, in 1555, a man appeared in the Dobrudja who claimed to be a real son of the Sultan Süleyman. The alleged prince was handed over to Mehmed Pasha and hanged.¹²⁹

In 1558, the animosity between the Süleyman's sons, Bayezid and Selim, grew red-hot. Allegedly, Hürrem Sultan, Süleyman's wife, in cooperation with her daughter, Mihrimah, incited an open conflict between the princes but did not see its outcome since she died in the same year. The younger prince, Bayezid, was encouraged to demand to be recognized as a legitimate successor to the Ottoman throne.¹³⁰ Sultan Süleyman sent the army under the command of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha against Bayezid, who was waiting, fortified in Konya. After he was

¹²⁵ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 331.

¹²⁶ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 213.

¹²⁷ Busbecq, *Turkish Letters*, 19-21; Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 215.

¹²⁸ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 232; Vainstein, "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha," 767.

¹²⁹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 242-243.

¹³⁰ Busbecq, *Turkish Letters*, 52-56; Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 79.

defeated, Prince Bayezid escaped to Persia and was ransomed and executed only in 1561.¹³¹ Sokollu Mehmed Pasha intervened in the struggle on behalf of the sultan and Prince Selim and preserved the unity of the empire, thus securing for himself further advancement and the gratitude of the future sultan, Selim II.

After the death of Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha in 1561, the second vizier, Semiz Ali Pasha, was moved to the office of the first, and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha to the office of the second vizier. After four years of Semiz Ali Pasha's tenure, Sokollu was naturally promoted to the post of grand vizier, the last in the sequence of grand viziers appointed by Sultan Süleyman, who died in 1566.¹³²

At the outset of his vizierate, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha enabled the smooth transition of the throne from Süleyman to his son, Prince Selim II, which launched the grand vizier into the center of Ottoman power, where he stayed for the next eight years, during the entire tenure of Selim II. Sultan Süleyman died on his last campaign, during the siege of Szigetvar in 1566. In order to prevent disarray both in the army and in Istanbul, Sokollu, with the valuable help of his secretary, Feridun Bey, kept the sultan's death secret until Prince Selim arrived. Prince Selim met Sokollu and the army in Belgrade, where he took the imperial insignia and the withdrawal toward the capital continued with a new sultan¹³³ who, from that moment on, greatly appreciated the merits of Sokollu as a protector of the imperial throne. However, the years 1565 and 1566 were not the starting point of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's rise. He started to build up his power while still serving in the imperial court and the mechanisms he used for this need to be understood in the wider context of changes in the sultanic rule under Süleyman the Magnificent.

¹³¹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 271-275.

¹³² Veinstein, "Sokollu Mehmed Paşa," 767.

¹³³ Selaniki Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî (971-1003/1563-1595)*, transcribed by Mehmet İpşirli, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 30-53. Selaniki described the campaign of 1566 in tiny detail since he was a participant and an eyewitness to these events.

C. Mechanisms of networking and household building

Through the process of bureaucratization Sultan Süleyman turned the position of sultan into an “office” and the empire into a system with regularized, but not always zealously followed, career paths.¹³⁴ The entire system came under the control of the elites, who started to use their households to spread their influence. Some of the heads of these households, while still in service in the imperial court, started to establish connections with other courtiers, graduates who had already been sent to a revenue grant (*timar*) or become higher officials.¹³⁵ The scene of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha’s participation in the battle of Mohacs in 1526 and his meeting with Gazi Hüsrev Bey, the famous Bosnian district governor, although not reliable, testifies how important personal acquaintances of this kind were.¹³⁶

In this first stage of service, in the imperial court, the connections among the pages were usually, but necessarily, based on so-called *cins* (ethnic or regional origin) solidarity. The pages with the same regional origin and same language, not yet fully familiar with the language, religion, and customs of their new surroundings, became acquainted with each other most easily.¹³⁷ These acquaintances left strong marks on these pages’ future careers since some of them later became influential statesmen who supported each other, whether as equals or as subordinates to one another.¹³⁸ After around thirteen years of serving İskender Çelebi, Sokollu was moved to the imperial court together with six other young men, each of whom later became either a viziers or an admiral: Pertev Mehmed Pasha, Piyale Mehmed Pasha, Ahmed Pasha, Zal

¹³⁴ Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*.

¹³⁵ See: Kunt, “Ethnic-Regional (*Cins*) Solidarity.”

¹³⁶ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 26.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹³⁸ This was not always the rule. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had the fiercest enemy in his relative, Lala Mustafa Pasha, the tutor of Prince Selim and vizier of Mehmed III. See: Giancarlo Casale, “Global Politics in the 1580s: One Canal, Twenty Thousand Cannibals, and an Ottoman Plot to Rule the World,” *Journal of the World History* 18, no. 3 (2007), 285.

Mahmud Pasha, Lala Mustafa Pasha, and Hüseyin Pasha.¹³⁹ At least five of them were probably Slavic-speaking: Pertev Mehmed Pasha, Piyale Mehmed Pasha, Zal Mahmud Pasha, Lala Mustafa Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.¹⁴⁰ In 1571 all five were in the vizieral council, on good or bad terms with each other.

Not only did the pages at the imperial court establish connections with each other, but also with their families (if they were originally non-Muslims) in the province where they were recruited through *devşirme*. When a page reached a high position later in his career, he would help the advance of his family members and make the network thus created the basis of his power. The household of, for example, the grand vizier, with its wealth and influence, in this way became more powerful since it represented the centre of a network consisting of strong nodes embodied in the households of his family members or other officials with the common interests. Although they were not raised in the household of their patron-to-be, they later became his clients. Converting one statesman's family members and appointing them to a state post was not unknown in the sixteenth century. Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha's brother was a district governor in Herzegovina, then district governor of Gallipoli and admiral of the Ottoman fleet.¹⁴¹

Even before Sokollu Mehmed Pasha reached the position of grand vizier, pursuing his own, say, private *devşirme*, he started bringing his relatives from Bosnia to the imperial court, supervised their education, and prepared them to occupy high state offices. Later, as a grand vizier with immense power, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was in a position to influence the appointments of these relatives and persons whom he found appropriate to very high offices like district governors (*sancakbeyis*) and provincial governors (*beylerbeyis*), the most important

¹³⁹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol.1, 33, 342; Joseph Von Hammer, *Historija Turskog /Osmanskog/ carstva*, trans. Nerkez Smailagić (Zagreb: Štamparski zavod Ognjen Prica, 1979), vol.1, 395-396; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 27-28.

¹⁴⁰ Savfet-beg Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bosnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini* (Zagreb: Štamaprija Grafika, 1931), 56-57, 61-62; Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 331, 368.

¹⁴¹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol.1, 246.

offices of a military-administrative career. When Sokollu was head sword-bearer in the court of Sultan Süleyman (sometime between 1534 and 1541),¹⁴² he asked Ahmed Bey, a tax collector in Bosnia and probably a friend, to bring his brothers [and nephews?] to Istanbul.¹⁴³ The first to come to Istanbul was Sokollu's nephew, Mustafa,¹⁴⁴ the future famous governor-general of Buda (1566-1568).¹⁴⁵ Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's father, Dimitrije, also embraced Islam, and with the Muslim name of Cemaluddin Bey, was granted a pious endowment (*vakf*) to administer in Bosnia.¹⁴⁶ Soon after Mustafa moved, other scions of Sokollu family arrived in Istanbul: Ferhad, Ali, Derviş, Mehmed, and Šemsa, according to some historians, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's sister.¹⁴⁷ All of them, besides Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's two sons from his first marriage, were for years the dominant constituents of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's family network. But before these personalities came onto the historical scene, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had to travel a long way to gain the political influence which only later gathered support from members of his family.

In the bureaucratized Ottoman administrative system the succession of viziers was quite predictable. Upon the death or dismissal of the grand vizier, his place would be occupied by the second vizier and this pattern was followed all the way to the last vizier in the imperial council.¹⁴⁸ Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's entering the imperial council immediately as the third vizier in 1555, despite the prescribed career paths, was not a surprise if one takes a look at his experience acquired during almost ten years while serving as the admiral of the Ottoman fleet and governor-general of Rumeli. As a governor-general of Rumeli, Sokollu distinguished

¹⁴² See section on Mustafa Pasha.

¹⁴³ Veinstein, "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha," 765; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 32.

¹⁴⁴ Agoston, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, 535.

¹⁴⁵ See the section on Mustafa Pasha.

¹⁴⁶ Veinstein, "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha," 765.

¹⁴⁷ Džemal Čelić and Mehmed Mujezinović, *Stari mostovi u BiH* (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 1998) 165.

¹⁴⁸ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 92.

himself in the civil war between the princes, Selim and Bayezid, when he backed the former in the struggle for the throne. Prince Selim did not forget this and during his entire reign Sokollu remained one of his most reliable confidants.

In 1557, during Sokollu's tenure as third vizier, an imperial order (*ferman*) was issued allowing the revival of the Serbian patriarchate of Peć. Almost the entire Serbian historiography on the issue finds Sokollu Mehmed Pasha the key factor that influenced the issuance of this *ferman*. Although a Muslim, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was allegedly still emotionally connected to his roots.¹⁴⁹ However, there is no proof that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha played a role in the renewal of the Serbian independent church. It is more plausible to assume that the large Orthodox Christian population in the turbulent Ottoman-Hungarian borderlands was perceived as a potentially useful military element that could be drawn into the Ottoman army. During the campaign in 1551, almost the entire Serbian Orthodox population joined the Ottoman army upon the invitation in their own language issued by Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.¹⁵⁰ Leaving aside the question of Sokollu's involvement in the issue of the Serbian church, one can note another fact that is relevant for the relationship between Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family: He tolerated Christians among his relatives. Stefan Gerlach, the Lutheran chaplain to the envoy of the Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I, wrote that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha did not force his family members to convert to Islam and that those who stayed in Orthodoxy were also well treated by the vizier.¹⁵¹ There was thus a Christian branch of the Sokollu family, the most prominent members of which were educated and prepared for the church. The first patriarch of the renewed

¹⁴⁹ Миленко М. Вукићевић, *Знаменити Срби мусломани* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1906), 21.

¹⁵⁰ Мирко Мирковић, *Правни положај и карактер српске цркве под турском влашћу (1459-1766)* (Belgrade: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Socijalisticke Republike Srbije, 1965), 87.

¹⁵¹ Cited in Veinstein, "Sokollu Mehmed Pasha," 769.

Serbian church was Makarije Sokolović, a brother or nephew of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.¹⁵² Members of the Christian branch of the Sokollu family held the patriarchate for thirty years, from 1557 to 1587,¹⁵³ and it is highly probable that they enjoyed the protection and patronage of Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. It is noteworthy that the last Serbian patriarch from the Sokolović family held this position for only eight years after Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had been assassinated. Apparently, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha served as a channel through which the Serbian church, and through it Serbian Orthodox population as well, was controlled by the Porte. Connected by family relations with the vizier, the political attitudes of Sokolović patriarchs were aligned with the interest of the Sublime Porte. Successors of the last patriarch from the Sokolović family did not have support in the Ottoman government and they tried to seek help from the curia in Rome and from Russia. This resulted in the Ottomans burning the relics of the first Serbian enlightener, St. Sava, about twenty years after Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's death.¹⁵⁴

As already mentioned, another event of immense importance in the career of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was his marriage to Princess İsmihan, the granddaughter of Süleyman the Magnificent and daughter of Prince Selim. After more than ten years of fighting on the battlefields of Europe and Asia, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was finally seen worthy of entering the imperial family. In 1562 three marriages took place: three daughters of Prince Selim (İsmihan, Gevherhan, and Şah), married Sokollu, Admiral Piyale, and Chief Falconer Hasan Aga, respectively. All three weddings took place only after it had become clear that Prince Selim would ascend the throne after the death of Sultan Süleyman.¹⁵⁵ Sokollu Mehmed Pasha thus became an imperial son-in-law (*damad*) and entered the imperial family. The household of

¹⁵² Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, vol. 2, 555.

¹⁵³ Мирковић, *Правни положај и карактер српске цркве*, 87.

¹⁵⁴ Бранислав Ђурђевић and Милан Васић, *Југословенске земље под турском влашћу (до краја XVIII вијека)* (Sarajevo: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2005), 152.

¹⁵⁵ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol.1, 19, 309; Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 67.

Sokollu, although separate from the imperial household, became part of the sultan's extended household connected to it through İsmihan. It is known that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had at least two sons from his first marriage: Hasan Pasha and Kurd Bey.¹⁵⁶ When he was “offered” the marriage with Princess İsmihan, he had to divorce his previous wife.¹⁵⁷ The case of Kalaylikoz Ali Pasha, governor-general of Buda, was similar. After Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's death, the next choice of his widow, Princess İsmihan, was this general and when the imperial order came demanding that he divorce, his current wife was said to have “moved the stones and mountains of the city with her wailing.”¹⁵⁸

Marriage with an imperial princess was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's way to the grand vizierate and political influence were guaranteed. On the other, imperial princesses exercised significant power and imperial sons-in-law were often afraid of them. As Gerlach noticed, an imperial princess would often remind her husband, who was often of *kul* origin, that once he had been her father's slave.¹⁵⁹ The power of the royal princesses rested not only on their fathers, but also on their enormous wealth. They were, like high state officials, allotted grants by the sultan. Princess Mihrimah, the wife of the Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha (1544-1553, 1555-1561), daughter of Süleyman the Magnificent, was famous for her wealth and pious building activities.¹⁶⁰ When Sultan Selim II wanted to give his daughter, İsmihan, one hundred thousand gold coins to build a new palace for her and Sokollu Mehmed

¹⁵⁶ Toma Popović, “Spisak hercegovačkih namesnika u XVI veku,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 16-17 (1970), 98; Gerlach, *Turkiye Günlüğü*, vol. 1, 383.

¹⁵⁷ Gerlach, *Turkiye Günlüğü*, vol. 2, 584.

¹⁵⁸ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 331; Salih Sidki Hadžihuseinović Muvekkit, *Povijest Bosne*, trans. with comments Abdulah Polimac, Lamija Hadžiosmanović, Fehim Nametak, and Salih Trako (Sarajevo: El-Kalem, 1998), vol. 1, 171.

¹⁵⁹ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 332.

¹⁶⁰ Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 23.

Pasha, the grand vizier gallantly deposited the same amount for the same purpose, leaving the sultan's money to his wife.¹⁶¹ What were the sources of Sokollu's huge wealth?

Grand viziers were the richest men of the Ottoman Empire, sometimes even richer than the sultans themselves. Sultan Murad II, for example, had to borrow three thousand gold coins that he regularly sent to the poor in Mecca and Medina from Grand Vizier Çandarlı Halil Pasha.¹⁶² In the sixteenth century, with the culmination of the patrimonial political system, the Ottoman sultan owed expensive obligations to his slaves. The compensation given to his grand viziers sometimes exceeded the combined treasury revenue of several small contemporary European kingdoms.¹⁶³ Besides enormous amounts of wealth that grand viziers had to spend in order to please their wives, after their death or dismissal the personal treasuries of imperial princesses would still be hard to calculate. Their wealth consisted not only of fiefs, palaces, personal guard, and servants, but also huge wealth accumulated in their residence as carpets, precious materials, jewelry, and so on. In his *History*, Peçevi listed the belongings of Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha, notorious for his greed, after he died. This list is a good example of the wealth of the grand viziers: 8000 copies of Kur'âns written in calligraphy, 180 copies of Mushafs (hand-written Kur'âns) in hardback covered with jewels, 5000 various books, 170 male slaves, 2900 horses, 1160 camels, 80 000 *tülbents* (cotton head-covers), 780 000 gold coins, 5000 silk cloaks, 1100 *üskiifs* (golden hats), 290 blankets, 2000 pieces of armor and shields, 600 silver saddles, 500 saddles decorated with gold, 130 golden stirrups, 860 scabbards with golden inlays, 1500 helmets with gold inlays, 100 gold maces, 30 precious stones, 476 pairs of gloves, around

¹⁶¹ Peçevi, *Ta'rîh*, vol.1, 9.

¹⁶² Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs*, 55.

¹⁶³ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 90.

1000 cargos of forged and raw gold, 1000 *çiftliks* (fiefs) in Anatolia and Rumelia – all in all worth approximately 11 300 000 ducats.¹⁶⁴

Unfortunately, there is no list of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's property, but Peçevi here and there mentions the wealth of this grand vizier. According to this historian, Sokollu's annual revenues were 160 cargos (*yük*)¹⁶⁵ from only his *ze'âmet*s (a type of Ottoman land grant).¹⁶⁶ Besides the fiefs that were granted to Sokollu only during his lifetime since they were state property, he privately owned villages in Bosnia.¹⁶⁷

Dynastic histories written by Sokollu protégés (more on this topic in the next chapter) depict him as an incorruptible person; however, they also note that the gifts the grand vizier received from foreign delegations and officials of lower rank three times exceeded the amount the contemporary dignitaries used to gain by bribes.¹⁶⁸ Taking a bribe was not a rare phenomenon at the time. A Venetian ambassador who was in Istanbul around 1575 stated that Sokollu controlled all the appointments and sold everything publically. Not only Sokollu did appoint officials for money, but he was also increasingly involved in the lucrative trade transactions of the time.¹⁶⁹ He was even actively engaged in developing a new port in Yakacık, slightly to the north of İskenderun.¹⁷⁰ Some historians have estimated Sokollu's wealth at 18 000 000 ducats.¹⁷¹

All the above-mentioned was the basis upon which Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's power rested: his marriage to an imperial princess, his wealth, and a wide range of clients, the most

¹⁶⁴ Peçevi, *Ta'rîh*, vol.1, 18.

¹⁶⁵ One *yük* at that time was equal to 500 000 *akçes*/aspers.

¹⁶⁶ Peçevi, *Ta'rîh*, vol.1, 9.

¹⁶⁷ *Opširni popis Bosanskog sandžaka iz 1604.*, ed. Adem Handžić (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, 2000), vol. 2, 458-461.

¹⁶⁸ Peçevi, *Ta'rîh*, vol.1, 9.

¹⁶⁹ Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 140.

¹⁷⁰ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 94.

¹⁷¹ Андреј Андрејевић, "Удео Мехмед-паше Соколовића у подизању Београда," *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta* 11, no. 1 (1970), 439.

significant of whom were his family members. Although a scribe in the service of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's opponent, Mustafa Ali, notable chronicler of the sixteenth century, writes that Sokollu dominated the government by giving different posts to his relatives, but since these appointees were capable of running these posts, the grand vizier did no harm to the state by behaving like this.¹⁷² How did Sokollu succeed in elevating the members of his family from the inner court of the sultan (*enderûn*) through the outer court (*birûn*) to high offices, i.e., district and provincial generals?

Grand viziers did not have the right to appoint their protégés to the posts of district and province governors, but they certainly had huge influence on the sultan's decisions. Although in the mid-sixteenth century the practice of gradual advancement from the *enderûn* toward the office of *sancakbeyi* or *beylerbeyi* was still in force, one can assume that in many cases personal relations with court officials based on *cins* solidarity and relations with the sultan himself played major role in appointments.¹⁷³ Furthermore, district and provincial generals had the right to place the 'graduates' of their own households in positions to receive revenue grants.¹⁷⁴ This is how the network of the Sokollu family clan started to be created from the top to the lowest *timar* holders.

The sultans' attempts to suppress alternative *loci* of power by appointing palace-school graduates to the provinces actually resulted in creating other alternative *loci* of power since these graduates were related not only to the sultans but also to other officials with whom they might be connected by blood kinship. These palace-school graduates formed their own groups of protégés to whom, using their own powerful offices, they distributed lesser positions.

These offices provided the relatives of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha with relatively high revenues which enabled them to have large households and, consequently, greater influence and

¹⁷² Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 202.

¹⁷³ See: Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (*Cins*) Solidarity;" Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 253-272.

¹⁷⁴ Kunt, *Royal and Other Households*, 110.

political power.¹⁷⁵ With the grants sometimes exceeding a hundred thousand *akçes* per year, provincial governors were among the wealthiest men in the empire and thus among the most powerful.¹⁷⁶

D. Members of the Sokollu family clan

The most important node in the Sokollu family network gathered around Mehmed Pasha was his nephew, the governor-general of Buda (*Budin beylerbeyi*), Sokollu Mustafa Pasha (1566-1578). As was already mentioned, the norm was that the longer a page served in the *enderûn*, the higher position he acquired in the *birûn* or in the provinces.¹⁷⁷ Mustafa's service in the *enderûn* and the appointments he received after graduation (*çıkma*) took a slightly different pattern. This example will show that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha backed the smooth and quick career advancement of his nephew. Mustafa was brought from Bosnia when Sokollu Mehmed was a sword-bearer (*silâhdâr*) in Süleymân II's *enderûn*,¹⁷⁸ some time between the years 1534 and 1541.¹⁷⁹ Mustafa served as falconer (*çakırcıbaşı*), which was already a position in the *birûn*, in 1545.¹⁸⁰ This means that he spent between four and eleven years in the *enderûn*, which was not a long period of time when compared with Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's approximately twenty years in this part of the imperial court.¹⁸¹ Historians give different data on Mustafa's career after his graduation from the *enderûn*. He was appointed either financial controller (*defter kethüdası*) or

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁷⁶ Kunt, *The Sultans Servants*, 27.

¹⁷⁷ Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 32.

¹⁷⁹ See the section on Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's rise.

¹⁸⁰ Yasemin Altaylı, "Macarca Mektuplarıyla Budin Beylerbeyi Sokollu Mustafa Paşa (1566-1578)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 49, no. 2 (2009), 158.

¹⁸¹ Samardžić (*Мехмед Соколовић*, 17-18) pinpoints Sokollu's recruitment from Bosnia immediately after 1521.

district governor of Timisoara in 1553,¹⁸² both of which offices were highly ranked in the Ottoman administrative system. The post of district governor was still a highly ranked office in the sixteenth century since a district (*sancak*) was still the primary administrative unit in the empire. The districts only lost importance in the seventeenth century.¹⁸³ The *defter kethüdası* was also an important office, not controlled by the governors themselves, but belonging to a separate system responsible to the sultan directly. Keeping in mind that the longer a page served in the *enderûn*, the higher position he would be granted in the *birûn* or in one of the provinces, and given that Mustafa does not seem to have spent more than ten years in the inner service, it is plausible that his quick advancement was supported by his uncle, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.

After serving as either financial controller or district governor in Timisoara, then as district governor in Füleke, Klis, and Szeged, Mustafa Pasha became the Bosnian *sancakbeyi* in 1564.¹⁸⁴ The following year, as war with the Hapsburgs was approaching, Mustafa Pasha started fights in Croatia and Slavonia against this northern Ottoman neighbor. With an army of twenty thousand soldiers he conquered the town of Krupa¹⁸⁵ on the right bank of the Una River, but in the same year he lost two thousand men in a defeat in a battle near Obreška.¹⁸⁶ At this time Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was the second vizier.

After the battle of Szigetvar in 1566, Mustafa Pasha remained in Hungary, where he had come with his troops to help in the siege.¹⁸⁷ There he was appointed to the most distinguished position he had ever occupied – the governor-general of Buda. The office of the governor-

¹⁸² Kaldy-Nagy, “Budin Beylerbeyi Mustafa Paşa,” 665; Altaylı, “Macarca Mektuplarıyla Budin Beylerbeyi Sokollu Mustafa Paşa (1566-1578),” 158.

¹⁸³ Kunt, *The Sultan’s Servants*, 90.

¹⁸⁴ Altaylı, “Macarca Mektuplarıyla Budin Beylerbeyi Sokollu Mustafa Paşa (1566-1578),” 159; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 34; Vedad Bišćević, *Bosanski namjesnici osmanskog doba (1463.-1878.)* (Sarajevo: Connectum, 2006), 115; Muvekkit, *Povijest Bosne*, 147.

¹⁸⁵ Peçevi, *Ta’rîh*, vol. II, 23.

¹⁸⁶ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 140-142.

¹⁸⁷ Peçevi, *Ta’rîh*, vol. II, 23; Muvekkit, *Povijest Bosne*, 115.

general was the most prestigious and most lucrative one in the system of provincial government. The sultan usually chose his grand viziers from men holding this position.¹⁸⁸ In the mid-sixteenth century there were about twenty provinces (*beylerbeylik*) within the borders of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁹ When Mustafa Bey became Mustafa Pasha, that is, when he became the governor-general of Buda in 1566, this number was probably similar. This means that he was one of around twenty governor-generals in the Ottoman Empire at the time, one among the twenty important persons of this rank. During a century and a half of Ottoman rule in Hungary, ninety-nine governor-generals passed through Buda.¹⁹⁰ Mustafa Pasha was the twelfth Ottoman *beylerbeyi* seated in Buda, and the twelve years of his tenure were, according to some historians, the most prosperous years of Hungary under Ottoman rule.¹⁹¹

Mustafa Pasha's predecessor seated in Buda was Arslan Pasha (1565-1566). He made efforts to preserve good relations between Istanbul and Vienna, which ceased with delays of taxes sent from Vienna and the start of sporadic fights along the border. Arslan Pasha lost several fortresses and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha used this reason to replace him with his nephew, Mustafa Pasha.¹⁹²

Peace negotiations between the Ottomans and the Hapsburgs were run with the help of Mustafa Pasha, who was the first to start correspondence with Emperor Maximilian.¹⁹³ In these letters two things are noteworthy. The first is the similarity between the policies of Mustafa Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. Both of them were inclined to peace. This similarity was probably a result of obeying the orders of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who, after the war with the

¹⁸⁸ Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 170.

¹⁸⁹ Kunt, *Royal and Other Households*, 104.

¹⁹⁰ Miklos Molnar, *A Concise History of Hungary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 104.

¹⁹¹ Altaylı, "Macarca Mektuplarıyla Budin Beylerbeyi Sokollu Mustafa Paşa (1566-1578)," 158; Molnar, *A Concise History of Hungary*, 104.

¹⁹² Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 25-27; See also: Yasemin Altaylı, "Budun Beylerbeyi Arslan Paşa (1565-1566)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Coğrafya Fakültesi*, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/19/26/172.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Altaylı, "Macarca Mektuplarıyla Budin Beylerbeyi Sokollu Mustafa Paşa (1566-1578)," 160.

Hapsburgs had ended, turned to the East and needed peace on the northern borders of the empire. The other striking fact is the level of autonomy Buda *beylerbeyis* had. In the correspondence with the Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian and other Hapsburg and Hungarian notables, Mustafa Pasha, using the first person singular, usually wrote that *he* had made a certain decision, that *he* wanted something to be done according to *his* orders. His predecessor, Arslan Pasha, was dismissed because his policy was not seen as appropriate at the moment. This means that Arslan Pasha had *his own* policy. The policies of governor-generals were, without doubt, aligned with the state interests and orders of the sultans, but it is clear that Buda *beylerbeyis* had considerable independence in governing their province.

From the moment he became governor-general of Buda, Mustafa Pasha constantly made efforts to maintain friendly relations with Vienna. Because of this, Emperor Maximilian praised him and, through his envoys in Istanbul, even pleaded with the sultan and grand vizier to keep Mustafa Pasha in this position. According to one stipulation of the contract signed between the Hapsburgs and the Ottomans, Governor-general Mustafa Pasha was designated as the main person in charge of preserving the peace on the borders and resolving any dispute that might occur.¹⁹⁴

The appointment of Mustafa Pasha could be ascribed to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's actions and influence. Sokollu, even in the first years of his tenure as grand vizier, started to knit the network around himself more closely than before. Since he followed Mustafa's education, Sokollu was aware of his qualities and he probably expected to use them in order to create strong borders with Austria. Mustafa was a real border guardian, recruited from the Sokollu family and sent to the turbulent Ottoman-Hapsburg border. This is even more visible when taking into consideration Mustafa Pasha's numerous and successful incursions into Hapsburg territories as

¹⁹⁴ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 298.

for instance that in 1568 during the so-called Little War.¹⁹⁵ These incursions were carried out with an army estimated at between 30 000 and 50 000 soldiers in peacetime.¹⁹⁶ Out of this number, according to the treasury accounts, the number of garrison soldiers in the province of Buda between 1569 and 1578, varied between 10 616 and 11 023.¹⁹⁷

When a governor-general was elevated to the imperial council, he might be moved from the province to the centre.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Sokollu Mustafa Pasha retained his position as governor-general of Buda when he was accepted as one of the seven viziers of the imperial council in 1574. This was probably due to Mustafa Pasha's great abilities as governor-general and the need for such a general in a province of such immense strategic importance as Hungary. Mustafa Pasha was practiced in financial issues. (This makes it more probable that he had previously been financial controller rather than governor general of Timisoara.) He succeeded in improving the financial situation of Buda province. From 1575 to 1581 gold pieces were no longer delivered to Buda from the central imperial treasury. In the treasury account it is recorded that:

previously 350 000-400 000 gold has been provided by the imperial treasury annually to cover the cost of payments in the *vilayet* of Budun. It is nine years since Mustafa pasha became governor of the *vilayet* and during this time he has brought order to the province so that revenue now covers expenses. The treasury of the sultan no longer gives any gold pieces; only 4 million *akçe* are received from the treasury of the Temisvár.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Geza David, "The Origins and Development of the Border Defense against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary (up to the Early Eighteenth Century)," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, ed. Geza David and Pal Fodor (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 40; Geza Palffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 90.

¹⁹⁶ Molnar, *A Concise History of Hungary*, 103.

¹⁹⁷ Gábor Ágoston, "The Costs of the Ottoman Fortress-System in Hungary," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, ed. Geza David and Pal Fodor (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 206.

¹⁹⁸ Kunt, *Royal and Other Households*, 104.

¹⁹⁹ Agoston, "The Costs of the Ottoman Fortress-System," 216.

What is even more important, in the 1570s the revenue of the province of Buda covered 89% of the payments made to the salaried troops in the Ottoman fortresses.²⁰⁰

When Murad III's centralization policy and the clash between his and his father's households marginalized Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's policies and network, Mustafa Pasha was inevitably involved as well. Since he was an extended hand of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, Mustafa was also perceived as a threat to the new constellation of power centered in Istanbul. Accused of being responsible for the explosion of the ammunition storage in Buda that was struck by lightning[!], he was executed by imperial order in 1578. Peçevi explains this obscure event by the fact that Mustafa Pasha was Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's nephew, without going into further detail.²⁰¹ However, these "details" are crucial to understanding the changing dynamics between the imperial and vizierial households and the centralization politics pursued by Murad III. Mustafa Pasha was executed due to his refusal to marry the sister of Sultan Murad III.²⁰² This decision of the sultan was even approved by the *şeyhü'l-İslâm* Kadizade Ahmed Şemseddin Effendi (1577-1580), Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's opponent and rival.²⁰³ Wanting to deprive Sokollu Mehmed Pasha of political influence, Sultan Murad III and his dignitaries found that his protégés should be either eliminated or subordinated to the new structure of power. They tried to tie Mustafa Pasha to the imperial household using the system hitherto tested many times – marriage with an imperial princess – to secure his allegiance. Since this did not work, the only choice that remained was eliminating him.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 6.

²⁰² Takats A., "Vezir Sokolli Musztafa Pascha," *Ungarische Rundschau* 4, 811. Quoted in Kaldy-Nagy, "Budin Beylerbeyi Mustafa Paşa," 660.

²⁰³ Kaldy-Nagy, "Budin Beylerbeyi Mustafa Paşa," 660; Peksevgen, *Secrecy, Information Control and Power Building in the Ottoman Empire, 1566-1603*, 198.

When Mustafa Pasha was appointed governor-general of Buda Province in 1566, his place as Bosnian district governor was given to his younger brother, Mehmed, who held the position until 1574.²⁰⁴ Before coming to Bosnia, Mehmed was a tutor (*lala*) to one of the princes. The lack of information on Mehmed's service during Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's vizierate is an obstacle to detecting any kind of firm relation between the two. However, their simultaneous residence in Istanbul before 1566 and Lala Mehmed Pasha's appointment to Bosnian district-governor immediately after Mustafa Pasha is indicative with regard to the connections between the grand vizier and his younger nephew. Mehmed Bey was later recalled from Bosnia to Istanbul, where he again became tutor to one of the princes.²⁰⁵ Many years later, Lala Mehmed Pasha distinguished himself in the war with Austria and in 1604 he became the second grand vizier from the Sokollu family.²⁰⁶

One more guardian of the empire's borders from the Sokollu clan in the 1560s and 1570s was Ferhad Pasha. Sokollu Ferhad Pasha held the position of Klis *sancakbeyi* from 1566 to 1574.²⁰⁷ Ferhad Pasha was probably a son of Rüstem Pasha, brother of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's father, Cemaluddin Sinan Bey. He distinguished himself as a great warrior against the Venetians, conquering Zemunik, Brodin, Bijela Stijena, and Ozren from them. In 1574, during an incursion into Croatia, Ferhad Pasha occupied Bihać.²⁰⁸ In the same year, Lala Mehmed Bey was called back to Istanbul and Ferhad Pasha was granted the position of Bosnian *sancakbeyi* (1574-1588). In 1575 he conquered the basin of the Glina River and the area between the Una and Kupa rivers (today in Croatia). During these fights, the assistant captain-general of the Habsburg border-

²⁰⁴ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 267; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 187.

²⁰⁵ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 267.

²⁰⁶ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 267; Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 2, 437.

²⁰⁷ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 359; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini*, 20.

²⁰⁸ Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini*, 20.

fortresses, Herwart Freiherr von Auersperg, died in a battle near Budački.²⁰⁹ When the Bosnian *sancak* was raised to the level of *beylebeylik* in 1580, Ferhad Pasha became the first Bosnian *beylerbeyi* and held this position until 1588.²¹⁰ In 1590 he died, as Buda governor general, stabbed by one of his own slaves.²¹¹

Ferhad Pasha had two brothers: Kara Ali Bey and Derviş Pasha. The former was appointed to be the Klis *sancakbeyi* in 1574 when Ferhad Pasha moved to Banja Luka.²¹² According to his own words, written down by Peçevi, he was the governor of Isztolni Beograd and Esztergom for fifteen years. He took part in numerous battles in Hungary and died in 1595 at the siege of Esztergom.²¹³ Derviş Pasha served as the *beylerbeyi* of Diyarbakir. He lost his life in 1578 during an expedition to Georgia.²¹⁴

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had two sons from his first marriage – Kurd Bey and Hasan Pasha.²¹⁵ Both of them participated in the battle of Szigetvar in 1566.²¹⁶ Information on Kurd Bey is scarce and limited to several notes in the Dubrovnik archive since he had intensive cooperation with merchants from this republic while he was district governor of Herzegovina between 1571 and 1572.²¹⁷ There is no information on the circumstances in which he died.

Hasan Pasha was the elder son of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. According to Peçevi and Selaniki, he occupied numerous posts all around the empire: *beylerbeyi* of Erzurum, Damascus,

²⁰⁹ Geza Palffy, "The Hungarian-Habsburg Border Defense System," in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe*, ed. Geza David and Pal Fodor (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 50; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini*, 20.

²¹⁰ Hazim Šabanović, *Bosanski pašaluk* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1959), 81; Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 202.

²¹¹ Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 225, 233; Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 37; Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini*, 20; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 360.

²¹² Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u Turskoj carevini*, 9.

²¹³ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. I, 317-318; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 360.

²¹⁴ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 35; Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 360, 543.

²¹⁵ Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, vol. 2, 584; Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. II, 25.

²¹⁶ Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 27.

²¹⁷ Popović, "Spisak hercegovačkih namesnika u XVI veku," 98.

Rumelia, Anatolia, and Bagdad.²¹⁸ Sources testify about the words of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha directed to his son during the war with Safavids, just before the battle of Tiflis (Tbilisi) in 1579: “Regard this task as a precondition of your future advancement in service!”²¹⁹ These words indicate that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha did not promote his family members, not even his sons, without first testing their abilities. Hasan Pasha distinguished himself in the war with the Safavids when he freed Tiflis from the enemy’s siege and at the battle of Szekesfehervar in 1593.²²⁰ He died in eastern Anatolia during the Celali revolts in 1598/99, besieged at Tokat.²²¹

Kara Sinan Bey Boljanić was Sokollu Mehmed Pasha’s brother-in-law, married to Sokollu’s sister, Šemsa. In 1562 he was the Bosnian district-governor, and after this, three times district governor of Herzegovina (1563-1567, 1569, 1574-1580). His brother, Hüseyin Pasha Boljanić, was also a district governor in Herzegovina (1567-1569).²²² His title, *pasha*, suggests that he was not only a district governor. He may be Potur Hüseyin Pasha mentioned only briefly by Peçevi as governor-general of Van, Bagdad, Cairo, and Damascus.²²³

What do the years when different relatives of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha were appointed to the offices of *beylerbeyis* and *sancakbeyis* reveal? The list goes as follows (summarized in Fig. 1): Mustafa Pasha – Bosnian *sancakbeyi* from 1564 to 1566, Buda *beylerbeyi* from 1566 to 1578, and vizier in 1574; Lala Mehmed Pasha – Bosnian *sancakbeyi* from 1566 to 1574; Ferhad Pasha – Klis *sancakbeyi* from 1566 to 1574, Bosnian *sancakbeyi* and *beylerbeyi* from 1574 to 1588 when he became Buda *beylerbeyi*; Kara Ali Bey – Klis *sancakbeyi* in 1574. Apart from the fact that different members of Sokollu family clan succeeded each other in these positions, the fact

²¹⁸ Peçevi, *Ta’rih*, vol. II, 25-27, 154; Selaniki, *Ta’rih*, vol. 1, 117, 124, 134, 236.

²¹⁹ Peçevi, *Ta’rih*, vol. II, 50-52.

²²⁰ Ibid., 50-52, 128.

²²¹ Peçevi, *Ta’rih*, vol. II, 239.

²²² Popović, “Spisak hercegovačkih namesnika u XVI veku,” 96-97.

²²³ Peçevi, *Ta’rih*, vol. 1, 311.

that the years of their appointment coincide with some of the crucial years of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's tenure as grand vizier is clearly visible. In 1566 Sokollu became the grand vizier; the year 1574 was the apogee of Sokollu's vizierate since in 1574 Sokollu was still seen as the pivot of the state because he had enabled Murad III's smooth accession to the throne.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's Relatives	Some of the crucial years of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's tenure	
	1566	1574
	The Battle of Szigetvár and Sokollu's central role in the smooth transition of power from Suleyman II to Selim II	Murad III's accession and the apogee of Sokollu's power
Mustafa Pasha	Buda <i>beylerbeyi</i>	Vizier of the imperial council
Lala Mehmed Pasha	Bosnian <i>sancakbeyi</i>	
Ferhad Pasha	Klis <i>sancakbeyi</i>	Bosnian <i>sancakbeyi</i>
Kara Ali Bey		Klis <i>sancakbeyi</i>
Sinan Bey Boljanić		Herzegovinian <i>sancakbeyi</i>

Figure 1: Table showing the key years of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's tenure and his relatives' appointments to high state offices

I will deal with the downfall of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and the consequences of this for his clan in the conclusion to this thesis. Before that, however, it is important to examine the politics of the Sokollu clan and explore to what extent it had a mission and what that mission was.

Chapter III

The Uniqueness of Sokollu Family's Vision and Its Implementation through Artistic and Other Patronage

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's importance for Ottoman history in general and the Ottoman political scene in the 1560s and 1570s in particular cannot be explained only by the facts that he established an extensive family network, members of which were dispersed all around the empire, that he married an Ottoman princess, or that he basically ran the Ottoman government thanks to Selim II's disinterest in state affairs. All these factors must be taken into consideration along with Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's and his family's political roles, and patronage of architectural, artistic, and maritime exploration that reflect a particular political vision for the Ottoman Empire's role in the world and Sokollu family's place in this mission. This political vision was pan-Islamic and global, reaching well beyond the empire's borders. As I will try to show in this chapter, it was not a coincidence that the major projects of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family members were building channels and bridges, mosques and charitable institutions, as well as financing of exploratory expeditions into the Indian Ocean. Their vision of the Ottoman mission and their own role in it was further supported through their sponsorship of history writing.

The very outset of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's tenure marked a shift in Ottoman foreign policy. Although Sokollu represented the last relic of the Süleymanic era in that he promoted

Süleyman's vision of a universal world empire, at the same time his vizierate represented a break with Süleyman's martial policy against the Habsburgs and Safavids by turning to and favoring diplomacy. Known for his preference for non-military solutions to imperial problems from the very beginning of his political career, as grand vizier Mehmed Pasha built an intricate network of spies, informants, and explorers (see more on this below) that made it possible for him to pursue alternative strategies in extending Ottoman power. In addition to diplomacy in its broadest sense, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha used trade routes to spread Islamic propaganda and Ottoman influence. All these missions of Sokollu were interconnected and aimed to enhance the Ottoman Empire's prestige through "soft power," namely political, cultural, religious, or commercial influence over some region or community not achieved through military conquests.²²⁴

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's predecessors did not show an interest in establishing connections with the Muslim communities beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Although it was the Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha who commissioned the maritime travelogue *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik* (Mirror of Countries), written by the famous Ottoman sailor Seydi Ali Reis, neither he nor his successor Semiz Ali Pasha tried to establish Ottoman suzerainty over Indian Muslims.²²⁵ Inspired exactly by *Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik*, in which the author noted that the Muslims living on the coasts of the Indian Ocean were willing to subjugate themselves to the Ottoman sultan, Sokollu was the first to intensify Ottoman contacts with these communities and send expeditions to this part of the world.²²⁶ One of his diplomacy's greatest successes was bringing Muslims of the vast area stretching from Spain to southeastern Asia to recognize the Ottoman sultan as their supreme sovereign, thus projecting Ottoman religious leadership and political power into territories not conquered by the Ottoman armies. Although the military expeditions sent to the Indian Ocean to

²²⁴ Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 117-151.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 118, 120.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

help the Muslims living there resist the Portuguese failed due to either the distance of the region or rebellions within the empire's borders, the results of Sokollu's Ottoman-Islamic propaganda became quite obvious -- the name of the Ottoman sultan was being mentioned in the Friday Prayers from Morocco in the West to eastern Africa including the Maldives and, further, to Sumatra in the East.²²⁷ How far Sokollu's efforts to protect various Muslim communities went one can see from his opposition to launching an invasion against Cyprus. Namely, Mehmed Pasha found that the Ottoman intervention in North Africa and Spain to protect Moriscos living there was more necessary at the moment.²²⁸

Sokollu's pan-Islamic policy was not directed only to the East and West. Upon the intensified complaints of Muslim pilgrims and merchants living in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khwarazm that their way to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina was being obstructed by the Safavids in Iran and Ivan IV of Russia, Sokollu decided to initiate a project of digging a channel between the Don and Volga rivers in 1569.²²⁹ Realizing that the pilgrims' way would be facilitated even more if there were a maritime way from Istanbul to the holy cities, Sokollu also developed a project of digging another channel, at Suez.²³⁰ These two channels were meant to have a double aim. Besides their role in religious traffic they were to facilitate trade between the eastern and western parts of the empire. Although both of these projects ultimately failed to be realized due to technical difficulties, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's persistent "eastern policy" placed the Ottoman Empire in the center of the spice trade (the by-product of which was his own enrichment) in the 1560s and made it an active participant in the 'age of exploration' with

²²⁷ Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 149, and "Global Politics in 1580s," 278.

²²⁸ Andrew Hess, "The Moriscos: An Ottoman Fifth Column in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *The American Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (1968), 12.

²²⁹ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 329-331; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 135-137.

²³⁰ Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 135-137.

numerous expeditions into the Red Sea.²³¹ In order to promote geographic exploration and the science that could facilitate it, Sokollu also supported the opening of the astronomer Takiyyuddin Effendi's famous observatory in Istanbul.²³²

The objects of Sokollu's religious policy were not only distant Muslim communities beyond the Ottoman borders. Mehmed Pasha was deeply involved in internal religious projects targeting all the religious entities of the empire. His most active agents employed for these purposes were renegades of European origin, as Gerlach clearly testifies in his diary. Sokollu granted stipends to these renegades for their translation and diplomatic services and gradually shaped them into a vast spy network since they possessed the knowledge of European languages. Gerlach portrays Sokollu as the center of a vast network consisting of German, Hungarian, and Transylvanian renegades who were infiltrated into the Ottoman administration through their conversion to Islam.²³³ Some of them played significant roles in religious interactions in the religiously diverse borderlands of Transylvania and Hungary, where their main task was to stimulate Ottoman non-Muslim subjects to convert to Islam and where Sokollu's nephew, Mustafa Pasha, was the provincial governor.²³⁴ Special efforts were put into encouraging the Protestants to convert to Islam due to considerable similarities between Protestantism and Islam. However, Sokollu's religious engagement in the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands did not include imposing conversion by force, since the Ottomans were careful not to encourage the populace's dissatisfaction with the government. Furthermore, the territory of Hungary at the time was basically a region "under three crowns" without strong of Ottoman, Hungarian or Habsburg authority. All these factors turned the region into fertile ground for different religious

²³¹ Ibid., 142-143.

²³² Ibid., 120.

²³³ Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, 101-103, 239.

²³⁴ Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, 239.

communities. This is one reason why the Reformation spread far more easily in Hungary under the Ottoman rule than under the Habsburg Catholic Kingdom.²³⁵

Although Sokollu did not write history as some of his predecessors in the position of the grand vizier had (for instance, Lütfi Pasha, the grand vizier (1539-1541) of Süleyman the Magnificent), he was in many respects a personality with a sophisticated sense of art and quite aware of its political implications. He sponsored both writing and translations of historiographical and geographical works into the Ottoman language, commissioned paintings by Veronese artists, and ordered paintings of Ottoman sultans from Venice. Namely, Sokollu used his diplomatic contacts, in this case friendship with the Venetian *bailo*, Niccoló Barbarigo, whom he sent to Venice several times to bring portraits of the Ottoman sultans for the purposes of producing new illuminated manuscripts which would contribute to the visual and artistic program of establishing the sultans' images in the Ottoman visual cannon.²³⁶ Sokollu's engagement in this shows the global nature of his vision and the extent to which in his tenure Ottoman imperial self-fashioning was in close dialogue with that of the Ottomans' contemporary political rivals. However, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's building and artistic patronage had the unmistakable goal of depicting the grand vizier as the central political figure of his era.²³⁷

The canons in Ottoman art became firmly established during the reign of Sultan Süleyman in the mid-sixteenth century, together with the process of bureaucratization of the state. In and after the 1550s a distinctive Ottoman visual vocabulary developed in the artistic

²³⁵ Molnár, *A Concise History of Hungary*, 103.

²³⁶ Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in *Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, ed. Ayşe Orbay (Istanbul: İşbank, 2000), 37-40.

²³⁷ See Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan* and Emine Fetvacı's studies: "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transition in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage (1566-1617)," PhD Dissertation (Harvard University, 2005) and "The Production of *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân*," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 236-315.

expression concerning the arts of both writing and architecture.²³⁸ The salaried artisans of the imperial court were accessible both to the dynastic family and the ruling elites, whose used artistic patronage to distinguish themselves from other layers of Ottoman society. However, distinction was present among the ruling elite itself, with different dignitaries being obliged to follow different patterns of visual expression. For instance, if a commissioner of a mosque was a grand vizier, his mosque should not surpass a mosque of a sultan in height. Similarly, an admiral's mosque was not allowed to rival a vizier's.²³⁹ This rule also applied to the production of illuminated manuscripts – the hierarchy of the ruling elite was mirrored in a position of dignitaries in a painting and in the dimensions of figures depicted. Both in their building and manuscript commissions, these officials were supposed to show the awareness of their *devşirme* origin, which was still predominant in the Ottoman government, and not to overshadow the sultan.

Although the office of the imperial historian (*şehnâmeçi*) was introduced in 1555 during the reign of Sultan Süleyman,²⁴⁰ royal calligraphers and illuminators employed in this office surpassed their colleagues – the architects -- only in the reign of the bibliophile sultan Murad III, when architectural patronage declined due to economic and political circumstances.²⁴¹ In this period (the last quarter of the sixteenth century) illustrated manuscripts reflected change in the social hierarchies at the Ottoman court, as is visible from their content. Namely, the main task of calligraphers and illuminators, besides writing on contemporary events, was to depict the sultan

²³⁸ Necipoğlu, “A Kânûn for the State, A Canon for the Arts: Conceptualizing the Classical Synthesis of Ottoman Art and Architecture,” 195.

²³⁹ Ibid., 207-209.

²⁴⁰ Christine Woodhead, “An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of Şehnâmeçi in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555-1605,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 75 (1983), 157.

²⁴¹ Necipoğlu, “A Kânûn for the State...” 212.

and current dignitaries as highly virtuous persons.²⁴² These manuscripts were thus an instrument of the self-promotion of their commissioners. The audience of such manuscripts was restricted to the residents of the imperial palace, the members of the royal family and court pages who would later man the highest strata of the Ottoman administration inspired by the virtues of the high state dignitaries illuminated in these manuscripts.²⁴³

Imperial court historians owed their positions primarily to the viziers of the imperial council who were their chief commissioners.²⁴⁴ These viziers, under the guise of glorifying the sultan, sponsored the production of illuminated manuscripts in order to promote their own deeds and personalities, thus putting the *şehnâmecis* in an uncomfortable situation by forcing them to balance among various power-wielders in the Ottoman government and look for patronage of the following vizier upon the death of the current one. The influence of the grand viziers on the production of these manuscripts is discernible from their content, which paid more attention to those around the sultan than sultan himself.²⁴⁵

Production of the *şehnâme* genre flourished during the 1570s and 1580s through the merit of the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who had a monopoly over the writing and illuminating of dynastic histories almost until the end of his life in 1579.²⁴⁶ Sokollu was depicted as a key political figure of the era in almost all the illuminated manuscripts produced during his tenure: *Fütûhât-ı Cemîle* (Admirable Conquests), *Nüzhetü'l-ahbâr der Sefer-i Sîgetvâr* (The

²⁴² Emine Fetvacı, “The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian,” in *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond: The Freely Papers*, ed. Robert G. Ousterhout (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Museum of Anthropology and Archeology, 2007), Vol. 2, 7.

²⁴³ Necipoğlu, “A Kânûn for the State...” 212.

²⁴⁴ Fetvacı, “The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian,” 15.

²⁴⁵ Fetvacı, “The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian,” 15-16. In *Şehname-i Selîm Hân*, Selim II appears in only six illustrations, while his commanders and vizier appear in twenty-six paintings. See: Fetvacı, “The Production of *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân*,” 266.

²⁴⁶ Fetvacı, “Viziers to Eunuchs: Transition in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage,” *1566-1617*, 83

Joyful Chronicle of the Szigetvár Campaign), *Zafernâme* (The Book of Victory), and *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân* (The Book of Kings of Sultan Selim).²⁴⁷

The most prolific among *şehnâmecis* and the occupant of this office from 1569 until 1596/97, meaning for much of its existence, was Seyyid Lokman, who composed ten of the fifteen works produced by all the *şehnâmecis*.²⁴⁸ Among the manuscripts he produced, the *Süleymânnâme* (History of Sultan Süleyman) and chronicles on the reigns of Selim II and Murad III -- *Şehname-i Selim Han* and *Sehinsehname* -- are outstanding.²⁴⁹ He was responsible for all aspects of the production, bringing his own creative responsibility into every manuscript, even those not composed by him but his assistants.²⁵⁰ Lokman was both a member of the *müteferrika* corps (the elite corps of imperial servants) and in complete control of his office. He was in a position to appoint his assistants and influence their careers.²⁵¹ This implies that Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, Lokman's main patron, had a large team consisting of Lokman and his assistant calligraphers and illuminators employed to profile him as an illustrious grand vizier and a devoted Muslim. On the other hand, the writing and illumination of court histories was often a battlefield of opposing factions of the ruling elite. Mustafa Ali, the scribe of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's rival, Lala Mustafa Pasha, was sent to the office of the Ottoman court historian to supervise the production of the illustrated version of his own narrative on the Georgian campaign of his master.²⁵²

The major parts of Lokman's first two illuminated manuscripts -- *Süleymânnâme* and *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân* -- were produced with the aim of promoting the virtues of Sokollu

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 92-93.

²⁴⁸ Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography" 161, 164; Fetvacı, "The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian," 8.

²⁴⁹ Fetvacı, "The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian," 15.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 8-9.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 9, 12.

²⁵² Ibid., 10.

Mehmed Pasha and his scribe, Feridun Bey.²⁵³ Almost two thirds of the *Süleymânnâme* is dedicated to the key year of Sokollu's tenure – 1566 -- the year of the battle of Szigetvar when the grand vizier enabled the smooth transition of the throne from Süleyman to Prince Selim II. The second manuscript, *Şehname-i Selim Han*, begins with Sokollu's merits and virtues, but the second part is dedicated to the viziers Sinan Pasha and Lala Mustafa Pasha, powerful courtiers of Selim II and Murad III. The manuscript was in production from 1571 until 1581,²⁵⁴ sweeping over the reigns of sultans Selim II and Murad III and encompassing two years after the death of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. This period, which witnessed a redistribution of power among the elites, is well reflected in this manuscript. The two extant versions of *Şehname-i Selim Han* differ significantly when it comes to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The editions undertaken by Sokollu's political opponents resulted in the removal of some episodes dominated by the grand vizier. For instance, the scenes of Sokollu playing the key role in the battle of Szigetvár and the accession of Selim II (present in both *History of Sultan Süleyman* and *Şehname-i Selim*) were edited out.²⁵⁵

Some other manuscripts produced during the reign of Sultan Murad III clearly show the changed structure of power in the last two decades of the sixteenth century. The *Surname* (The Book of Festivities) that depicts the scenes from the imperial circumcision festival of 1582, features the chief black eunuch Mehmed Aga prominently; he was one of the most powerful persons at the court of Murad III, to whom the power of the marginalized office of grand vizier was transmitted.²⁵⁶

Besides *şehnâme*s, there were individuals who wrote chronicles or other kinds of historical pieces, some of whom were connected to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha during his life or

²⁵³ Fetvacı, "The Production of *Şehname-i Selim Hân*," 265.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 264, 289.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 275.

²⁵⁶ Fetvacı, "The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian," 19. On rise of the office of the chief black eunuch during the reign of Murad III, see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 100-104.

later, as younger members of his family and clients of his descendants. Feridun Bey was Sokollu's secretary and one of his most reliable confidants. In 1570 Sokollu appointed Feridun *re'îsü'l-küttâb* (chief government secretary) and in 1574 *nişâncı* (chancellor of the imperial council) (the same year in which some Sokollu family members were promoted to higher positions²⁵⁷). The ultimate glorification of Mehmed Pasha's accomplishments in 1566 is seen in Feridun Bey's illuminated work entitled *Nüzhet-i Esrârü'l-Ahyâr der Ahbâr-ı Sefer-i Sigetvar* (Chronicle of the Szigetvár Campaign).²⁵⁸ In his work entitled *Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn* (The Writings of the Sultans), Feridun Bey compiled royal letters, imperial decrees, victory missives, and other documents preserved in the imperial chancery from the time of Osman I under more than 250 headings. Sokollu presented this work to Murad III in 1575 in order to please the new sultan.²⁵⁹

Other two historians/chroniclers who were part of the Sokollu family patronage network were İbrahim Peçevi and Mustafa Selaniki. Selaniki (d. 1600) participated in the battle of Szigetvár and authored an Ottoman history covering the period between 1563 and 1600. Together with Feridun Bey, he was Sokollu's agent, who played an important role in concealing the sultan's death in 1566. Selaniki wrote favorably about all the members of the Sokollu family in his history. İbrahim Peçevi (1572-1650) was himself a part of the Sokollu family. In his history of the Ottoman Empire, covering the period between 1520 and 1640, he often emphasizes his blood kinship with the Sokollus. He occupied different administrative offices all around the empire and served for many years as a confidant of Lala Mehmed Pasha. Feridun Bey, Mustafa Selaniki, and İbrahim Peçevi were "responsible" for the image of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha that is known today -- a person larger than life.

²⁵⁷ See Chapter II.

²⁵⁸ Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 1566-1617, 97-106.

²⁵⁹ Börekçi, "Factions and Favourites," 167-168.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was not only a prolific patron of expeditions, illuminated manuscripts, and science. Together with his family members he commissioned a number of building projects all over the Ottoman Empire – from Buda to Hejaz. Before enumerating the Sokollu family clan’s architectural imprint on the Ottoman Empire and discussing their significance and symbolic meaning, one question deserves attention: What was the aim of the building projects of Ottoman dignitaries?

Self-promotion through erecting edifices of different purposes pervaded Ottoman society from the sultan on the top to merchant representatives and actually followed the pattern established by the sultan himself, especially Sultan Süleyman, who saw himself as a great builder – the Second Solomon.²⁶⁰ However, as mentioned above, whoever the commissioner was, he or she was obliged to follow a pattern which expressed their social status and position in the Ottoman hierarchy. With the growing importance of religious orthodoxy and consciousness in the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the sixteenth century, building mosques and other sacred edifices became a hallmark of the ruling elite more than before. Almost every grand vizier of this period marked even the most distant provinces of the empire with mosques and *mecids* both as a sign of his piety and for self-promotion as a powerful and just official. The importance of the building activities pursued by the dynasty and elites is well reflected in the fact the imperial palace had a separate office for architects, who would often follow the ruler during the campaigns with the task of building bridges for the army, repairing conquered fortresses, and immortalizing Ottoman victories over the infidels by converting churches into mosques or designing new mosques in the name of the sultan in the conquered areas. The most prolific occupant of this office was the famous Mimar Sinan, who served under three sultans: Süleyman the Magnificent, Selim II, and Murad III, from 1539-1588.

²⁶⁰ Necipoğlu, “A Kânûn for the State,” 212.

The wealth of the grand viziers of Sultan Süleyman and their wives, the royal princesses, enabled them to commission monumental mosques. Especially famous for their commissions were the imperial couples of Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha and Süleyman's daughter, Mihrimah, and Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and Ismihan, daughter of Selim II. Their architectural projects can be seen from their *vakfiyes* (endowment charters, lists of immovable property). However, according to the most authoritative historians on the issue, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was the foremost architectural patron of the time,²⁶¹ which is apparent from his *vakfiye*. Most of Sokollu's architectural memorials were commissioned when he was at the apex of power, during the reign of Selim II.

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha was the most distinguished architectural commissioner of the Sokollu family clan. He left traces from Szigetvár in Hungary to the holy city of Hejaz. Besides the four palaces that the grand vizier owned,²⁶² according to his *vakfiyes*, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha built seven Friday mosques, seven *mescids*, two *medreses*, one school for Koran recitation, eight elementary schools, five caravanserais, three dervish monasteries, three hospices, a hospital in Mecca, numerous fountains, a paved road (Lüleburgaz), and at least five bridges.²⁶³ Out of the total number of Sokollu's edifices, two mosques, two *medreses*, a school for Koran recitation, one dervish monastery, two caravanserais, and six fountains were or still are in Istanbul.[a footnote to how you know this would be good] As in his patronage of illustrated histories, in architectural patronage Sokollu employed the most notable artist, Mimar Sinan, who built the most of the structures commissioned by the grand vizier.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 331-368.

²⁶² On Sokollu's palaces, see: Artan, "The Kadirga Palace: An Architectural Reconstruction," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 201-211, and Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 333.

²⁶³ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 331-368.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 345.

The sites of Sokollu's architectural structures can reveal much with regard to the special place of this grand vizier among the Ottoman elite. Somewhere around 1574,²⁶⁵ Sokollu Mehmed Pasha abandoned his old palace overlooking the port of Kadırgalimani²⁶⁶ and, together with his wife, İsmihan, moved to a new palace built on the site of the former Byzantine Hippodrome, revived during the reign of Suleyman.²⁶⁷ This was the second vizierial palace built at the Hippodrome -- the first was that of Süleyman's favorite, İbrahim Pasha.²⁶⁸ Simultaneously with building of the new palace, a funerary medrese was constructed in the holy acropolis of Ayyüb.²⁶⁹ It must have been a matter of prestige and honor for every Muslim to give some kind of contribution to the complex of the holy acropolis of Abu Ayyüb al-Ansari, one of the followers of the Prophet, whose tomb under the walls of Istanbul was discovered during the siege in 1453.²⁷⁰ Along with the medrese, a funerary place for enshrining Sokollu's infants who died in childhood was built.²⁷¹ Burying their children in this prestigious sacred site was quite indicative of the Sokollu couple's reputation and status. Sokollu himself was buried at this site in a *türbe* within his complex, next to the tomb of Ebu's-Su'ûd Effendi (d. 1574), the celebrated *şeyh'ül-İslam* who was his friend and contemporary.

Sokollu's mosques in Istanbul are also worth noting. His first mosque was built next to his Kadırga Palace; it is one of Sinan's most distinguished mosque complexes.²⁷² This mosque was built in a style between the imperial and vizierial forms, showing Sokollu's connection with

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 332.

²⁶⁶ On Sokollu's Kadırga Palace, see: Artan, "The Kadırga Palace."

²⁶⁷ On Atmeydanı, its importance and festivities held there, see Derin Terzioğlu, "The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995): 84-100, and Nutku, "Festivities in Atmeydanı."

²⁶⁸ See the section on İbrahim Pasha in Chapter I.

²⁶⁹ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 335.

²⁷⁰ Şahin, "Constantinople and the End Time," 327.

²⁷¹ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 332.

²⁷² Ibid., 331.

the royal family through his wife.²⁷³ Sokollu commissioned a second mosque in Istanbul at Azapkapı. It is located next to the sea coast outside of the walls of Galata facing Rustem Pasha's mosque on the other side of the Golden Horn. The mosque was clearly visible from the city side as a continuation of the Kasim Pasha arsenal. Sokollu built this mosque towards the end of his life, possibly with the intention of reminding the people of Istanbul of his merits during his tenure as the grand admiral (*kapudan-ı derya*), when he refitted the Ottoman fleet in 1572 and 1574 after the battle of Lepanto.²⁷⁴

Sokollu Mehmed Pasha maintained a relationship with Bosnia not only through his family members but also through building mosques, *mescids*, bridges, and caravanserais in or in the immediate proximity of his birthplace. The famous bridge on the River Drina was designed by Mimar Sinan²⁷⁵ and eternalized in the novel of the Yugoslav Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić. This bridge not only symbolizes Sokollu's seeming attachment to Bosnia, but it may (also) have been built to connect this border province of strategic importance to the center. It could be said that bridges were a hallmark of the Sokollu family's patronage; almost all the members of this family, even those who did not occupy a high post, built at least one bridge. Besides this one on the river Drina, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha himself commissioned at least four more bridges in Rumeli: in Podgorica – the Bridge of the Vizier (*Vezirov most*), the bridge on the Trebišnjica River, mistakenly called the Bridge of Arslanagić (*Arslanagića most*), the bridge on the River Žepa, and the one in Sarajevo called *Kozja ćuprija*.²⁷⁶

Other members of the Sokollu family clan not only backed the position of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha with their good government in various provinces of the empire. Like their patron,

²⁷³ Ibid., 339.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 362.

²⁷⁵ Čelić and Mujezinović, *Stari mostovi u BiH*, 178.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 178.

they undertook extensive building activities, especially those who were provincial and district governors in Bosnia and Hungary. They all thus contributed to the image of the Sokollus as a powerful family of prolific patrons and devoted Muslims.

Mustafa Pasha left architectural traces all over Bosnia and Hungary. In 1558, the sultan gave Mustafa Pasha a *mülkname* which entitled him to a piece of land called Rudo in Bosnia. There he started building the town of Rudo, raising one by one a mosque, *mekteb*, large *han*, a bridge on the Lim River, baths, a mill, and numerous shops.²⁷⁷ Besides the bridge over the Lim River, Mustafa also build the one in Goražde.²⁷⁸ While holding the governorate in Buda, Mustafa Pasha spent a fortune on mosques, *mescids*, *medreses*, caravanserais, and bath (*hamam*) endowments in Buda, Pest, Szekesfehervar, Esztergom, Güssing (Németújvár/Novigrad), Szécsény, Hatvan, Szeged, Simontornya, Koppány, Osjek, Fülek, Srem, Vác, Földvár, Tolna, Szigetvár, Mohács, Vukovar, and Tovarnik.²⁷⁹ Another very significant aspect of Mustafa Pasha's patronage was commissioning a manuscript called *Cevâhir'ül-Menâkib*.²⁸⁰ This panegyric was composed with the aim of extolling the deeds and personality of Mustafa Pasha and the entire Sokollu family with its supreme patron, the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The manuscript is written in Persianized Ottoman and it is worth examining as an example of provincial patronage that probably was modeled on imperial *şehnâmes*. The manuscript was

²⁷⁷ Leyla Gazić, ed., *Vakufname iz Bosne i Hercegovine* (Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, 1985), 105-110.

²⁷⁸ Čelić and Mujezinović, *Stari mostovi u BiH*, 25.

²⁷⁹ Kaldy-Nagy, "Budín Beylerbeyi Mustafa Paşa (1566-1578)," 661-663; Gyöző Gyeró, "Balkan Influences on the Mosque Architecture in Hungary," in *Archeology of the Ottoman Period in Hungary*, Papers of the conference held at the Hungarian National Museum, ed. Ibolya Gerelyes and Gyöngyi Kovács (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 2003), 184; Adrienn Papp, "Archeological research at the Rudas and Rác baths," in *A középkor és a kora újkor régészete Magyarországon; Archaeology of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period in Hungary*, ed. Elek Benko and Gyöngyi Kovács (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Régészeti Intézet, 2010), 207-220.

²⁸⁰ For the scanned copy of this manuscript (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Esad Efendi, 2583) I am thankful to my mentor, Tijana Krstić.

composed during the reign of Sultan Murad III²⁸¹ and it ended with the episode of Mustafa Pasha's assassination.²⁸² This makes it possible to date the earliest years when the composition started and ended -- 1574 and 1578. The author is a certain Şefik Effendi about whom nothing is known except that he was a contemporary of Sokollu Mehmed and Mustafa Pasha and that he was probably an official of lower rank.²⁸³ Unfortunately, *Cevâhir'ül-Menâkıb* has not attracted the attention of modern scholars so far.

Ferhad Pasha was meritorious for developing Banja Luka into an important administrative center of Bosnia while he was the district and provincial governor there. He built the famous Ferhadiyye mosque, a fortress, a bridge, and many other public buildings in this city.²⁸⁴ Sinan Bey Boljanić built two bridges: one in Priboj over the Lim River and another over the Janjina River.²⁸⁵ Even one woman from Sokollu family is remembered for her bridge in Banja Luka -- Šemsa, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's sister.²⁸⁶

What emerges from all of this is that the Sokollu family had a vision that was shared and promoted by all its members, but its aim was more than self-promotion. This is clear from Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's efforts to create an empire with either direct or 'soft' power over the entire Muslim population of the world and trade routes, respecting meanwhile all the religious denominations within its borders. This soft power was supposed to be realized through a well-organized communication network with different communities beyond as well as among those within the empire itself. Keeping this in mind, one understands why channels and bridges were

²⁸¹ Hasan Dündar, "Rahîmîzâde İbrahim (Harîmî) Çavuş'un Gence Fetihnâmesi Adlı Eserinin Transkripsiyonu ve Kritisasyonu," MA Thesis (Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2006), 22-24. In this MA thesis, the author mentions this manuscript in the list of works of the same kind penned during the reign of Murad III.

²⁸² *Cevâhir'ül-Menâkıb*, folio 187.

²⁸³ Abdurrahman Şeref, "Sokollu Mehmed Paşa'nın Evail Ahvâli ve Ailesi hakkında Bazı Malumat – *Cevahirü'l-Menakıb*," *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası* 29 (1902), 257.

²⁸⁴ Alija Bejtić, "Banja Luka pod turskom vladavinom: arhitektura i teritorijalni razvitak grada u XVI i XVII vijeku," *Naše starine* 1 (1953): 91-119; Čelić and Mujezinović, *Stari mostovi u BiH*, 163-164.

²⁸⁵ Čelić and Mujezinović, *Stari mostovi u BiH*, 25.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

among the major projects of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family members. Exactly therein lies the uniqueness of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his clan.

Conclusion

Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent built a palace for his favorite, İbrahim Pasha, in 1521/22 on a symbolic site in Istanbul – the former Byzantine Hippodrome or Ottoman Atmeydanı.²⁸⁷ More than fifty years later, another grand vizier exploited this site in the heart of the city. Some time around 1574 Sokollu Mehmed Pasha abandoned his old palace overlooking the port of Kadırgalimanı and, together with his wife, İsmihan, daughter of Selim II, moved to a new palace built close to İbrahim’s at the Atmeydanı, which was revived as a space of imperial ceremonial importance during the reign of Süleyman.²⁸⁸ The years when these palaces of the viziers were built marked the rise of the former, who was accused of and reportedly executed for aspiring to be the virtual sultan and the fall of the latter who was openly called the virtual sultan (*pâdisâh-ı manevî*) by his contemporaries and admired for it.²⁸⁹ In this thesis I have attempted to explain the changes in Ottoman politics and structure of the government that account for such different experiences in the power of İbrahim Pasha and Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, the two grand

²⁸⁷ Turan, *The Sultan’s Favorite*, 143.

²⁸⁸ On Atmeydanı, its importance and festivities held on it, see: Terzioğlu, “The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation;” Nutku, “Festivities in Atmeydanı.”

²⁸⁹ Fetvacı, “The Production of the *Şehnâme-i Selîm Hân*,” 264.

viziers of Süleyman's era. What is left to explain is the end of Sokollu's career and its consequences for the Ottoman political scene.

The year of Murad III's enthronement (1574) was the apex of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's power. Peçevi narrates a second-hand account that describes the event that can be interpreted both as the capstone of Sokollu's power and the moment when his career started to descend. After the death of Selim II and upon Sokollu's invitation to come to the capital to take over the throne, Murad left Manisa in haste, where he had been governor since 1565, and headed toward Istanbul, afraid that one of his five brothers would be enthroned before him. Exhausted after the long sea voyage, Murad disembarked near the city, where the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha welcomed him. Not knowing whether one of his brothers had already taken the throne before his arrival, but certainly knowing that all depended on the grand vizier, Murad bowed down to kiss Sokollu's hand. The grand vizier prevented him and kissed the sultan's hand instead. Peçevi remarks that the new sultan's hatred toward the grand vizier stemmed from the humiliation he had suffered on this occasion.²⁹⁰

This humiliating event, however, only enhanced rather than gave rise to Murad III's animosity toward Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, which had developed already during the former's governorship in Manisa and culminated within the following five years. Namely, Sokollu was the vizier who survived two clashes of the households in the years of Selim II's and Murad III's accessions to the Ottoman throne -- 1566 and 1574. His merits in the accessions of both sultans and his monopoly on the government prevented Selim II and Murad III from putting forward their own favorites.²⁹¹ However, the clash of the households did not dominate the reign of Selim II as much as it dominated the period between 1574 and 1579. Unlike his father, Murad III was

²⁹⁰ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 21.

²⁹¹ On the struggle among court factions during Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's vizierate under Murad III, see Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 159-172.

determined to put an end to Sokollu's paramount role in the government and to transmit the power of the grand vizier to his favorites. The sultan's favorites were not Sokollu's rivals for the grand vizierate, since Murad III's centralizing policy was opposed to the idea of having a strong grand vizier. Nevertheless, their campaign was relentless.

Murad III's most prominent favorite, a sworn enemy of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, was Şemsi Ahmed Pasha, who had previously been governor-general of Damascus (appointed in 1551), Sivas, Anatolia, and Rumelia. It had actually been Sokollu who moved Şemsi Ahmed Pasha from the governorate of Rumelia to Sivas in 1569. The animosity between the two of them thus originated during the reign of Sultan Selim II. Şemsi Ahmed Pasha was soon appointed the sultan's *musâhib* (royal companion) -- a post of significant influence but not as important as being governor-general of Rumelia. The turning point in Sokollu's career was Murad III's accession when Şemsi, after serving again as the sultan's *musâhib* for a certain time, was appointed to be chief royal counselor. He thus came into a position to plot against Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.²⁹²

Murad III and Şemsi Ahmed Pasha were backed in their anti-Sokollu propaganda by other influential courtiers as well, the most prominent being Vizier Lala Mustafa Pasha, the chief eunuch of the palace, Cafer Aga, the queen mother, Nurbanu Sultan, and the chief judge of Rumelia, Kadızade Ahmed Effendi.²⁹³ As one can note, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had a faction against himself that consisted of the most powerful elite members of the administration, who started to undermine the position of the grand vizier by first eliminating his relatives and other clients one by one. This campaign of the anti-Sokollu alliance lasted for five years and was

²⁹² Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites" 164-166.

²⁹³ Ibid., 167.

gradual, since Sokollu Mehmed Pasha had his own faction and was well rooted in the Ottoman government.

The first who felt the consequences of the anti-Sokollu campaign was Mehmed Pasha's personal secretary, Feridun Bey, who was eliminated from the office of the chancellor of the imperial council. As early as 1575, when Sokollu presented Feridun's *Münşeâtü's-Selâtin* to Murad III, the sultan had not even looked at it,²⁹⁴ thus demonstrating that Mehmed Pasha was no longer in the sultan's good graces. In 1576, Feridun Bey was not only dismissed but also exiled from Istanbul.²⁹⁵ However, two years after the assassination of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, Feridun Bey married Princess Ayşe Hatun, the daughter of Mihrimah Sultan and Rüstem Pasha, and was reappointed chancellor of the imperial council.²⁹⁶ Unlike Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's nephew, Buda *beylerbeyi* Mustafa Pasha, who lost his life due to his refusal to marry a royal princess,²⁹⁷ Feridun Bey showed allegiance to the new constellation of power in the capital by marrying Ayşe Hatun.

As I argued in Chapter II, the key supporter and the right-hand of Mehmed Pasha was his nephew, Mustafa Pasha, provincial governor of Buda. His assassination in 1578 deprived Sokollu of the strongest node in his family network. Soon, Sokollu's supporters in the capital and high posts were removed one by one: the head of the Janissary troops, Çıgalazade, the governor-general of Algeria and Cyprus Arab Ahmed Pasha, Feridun Bey's *kethüda*, Michael Cantacuzenos, Sokollu's *kethüda* Hüsrev, and *kapıcıbası* Sinan.²⁹⁸ More than thirty Sokollu-affiliated officials suffered demotion or worse.²⁹⁹ The final person from the Sokollu's clan to be

²⁹⁴ Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 110.

²⁹⁵ Peçevi, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 20, vol. 2, 6; Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 167-169.

²⁹⁶ Selaniki, *Ta'rih*, vol. 1, 130-131.

²⁹⁷ On this episode, see Chapter II.

²⁹⁸ Самарцић, *Мехмед Соколовић*, 532-535.

²⁹⁹ Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," 170.

assassinated was the grand vizier himself, who witnessed the gradual demise of his power and his elaborately built “*intisab-empire*” (power based on patron-client network).³⁰⁰ According to Peçevi, a dervish of the Hamzevi sect stabbed Sokollu during the afternoon audience in his palace.³⁰¹ However, the assassination of Sokollu is an event that requires further investigation. Some historians argue that it was revenge taken on Sokollu since he was one of the prosecutors of the heterodox Hamzevi sect.³⁰² A Protestant preacher in Istanbul, Salomon Schweigger, recorded that it was widely rumored in Istanbul that it was actually Murad III who ordered Sokollu’s execution.³⁰³ If this is true, Sokollu’s assassination can serve as an illustrative example of the means used in the struggle between court factions and by the imperial court itself in its centralizing policy in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

The tenures and influence of the grand viziers in a short period following Sokollu’s assassination are a good indicator of the change in the Ottoman structure of power in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Namely, in the following twenty-four years, under Murad III and his successor, Mehmed III (1595-1603), the grand vizierate went through the hands of fourteen persons, while Sokollu alone held this office for fourteen years. New powerful figures appeared on the political scene, especially the eunuchs of the palace who were the agents of the sultan’s absolute power, unlike the grand viziers.³⁰⁴

As was discussed in Chapter II, almost all the members of Sokollu family clan outlived Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha; they died on battlefields or from natural causes. Only Mustafa Pasha was assassinated by imperial order since he did not obey the will of the new

³⁰⁰ A term devised by Fleischer. See his *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, 47.

³⁰¹ Peçevi, *Ta’rîh*, vol. 1, 20.

³⁰² Adem Handžić and Muhamed Hadžijahić, “O progonu hamzevija u Bosni 1573. godine,” *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 20-21 (1970/1971), 64-65.

³⁰³ Börekçi, “Factions and Favorites,” 170.

³⁰⁴ Fetvacı, “Viziers to Eunuchs,” 134; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 101-104.

power clique created around Sultan Murad III. The lives of other members who were less powerful than Mustafa Pasha were spared. Some of them even advanced in their careers, but only after the death of their patron, the grand vizier; Lala Mehmed Pasha became the grand vizier in 1604 and Ferhad Pasha became the *beylerbeyi* of Buda in 1588. Other members of the Sokollu family were not seen as a significant threat; Mustafa Pasha, on the other hand, was seen as the main supporter of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. In order to destroy a social network, it was apparently enough to remove only few major nodes.³⁰⁵ However, this was not the end of Sokollu family's influence in Ottoman politics.

To what extent some of Sokollu's descendants still dominated the Ottoman political scene not only in the sixteenth but also in the seventeenth century as well is clear from the example of İbrahim Hanzade, Sokollu and İsmihan's son, and his descendants.³⁰⁶ A segment of a *mecmû'a* (a manuscript that includes variety of narratives) from around the middle of the seventeenth century is dedicated to İbrahim Hanzade and his progeny. The *mecmû'a* was composed by Istanbul bazaar-painters or a city-based artist based upon city rumors. According to these rumors, if the Ottoman dynasty were to die out, the İbrahim Hanzade family would succeed to the throne and the sultans were obliged to respect the lives of its members.³⁰⁷ Similarly, in 1703 when the people of Istanbul rebelled against Sultan Mustafa II (1695-1703), the *divan* was gathered to decide who would be the next sultan. Some rebels suggested enthroning of the *han* of Crimea or a member of İbrahim Hanzade's lineage as alternative.

* * *

³⁰⁵ See the example of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha prior to his appointment to the grand vizierate: Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (*Cins*) Solidarity," 263.

³⁰⁶ After Sokollu's death, İsmihan remarried. See Chapter II.

³⁰⁷ Tülün Değirmenci, "An Illustrated *Mecmua*: The Commoner's Voice and the Iconography of the Court in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Painting," *Ars Orientalis* 41 (2011), 207-208. See also Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 333; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 95; Feridun Emecen, "Osmanlı hanedanına alternatif arayışlar: İbrahimhanzadeler örneği," *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara, 4-8 Ekim 1999: Kongreye sunulan bildiriler*, (Türk Tarih Kurumu: Ankara, 2002), Vol. 3. Part 3, 1877-1886.

Through all the chapters above, I have described the way the family network, one type of social network, operated in the second half of the sixteenth century through the example of the Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his clan. Further, I have demonstrated the mechanisms this family employed in order to build up an “*intisâb* empire” to the extent that contemporaries called Sokollu Mehmed Pasha a “virtual sultan.” Social networks are a phenomenon already underlined in the secondary literature on the Ottoman Empire, but they have so far been analyzed mostly in the context of the seventeenth century. However, as this thesis has argued, family networks and household strategies became central to Ottoman politics even in the sixteenth century and were directly related to the restructuring of power at the very center of the imperial government, initiated by Süleyman’s reforms. Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and his family are one of (if not the most) representative examples when it comes to understanding how these networks operated in the context of the changing constellation of power and how they accumulated prestige at the expense of the sultan and other elites.

I hope that this thesis will encourage further research into the subject of social and family networks in the second half of the sixteenth century, since Sokollu Mehmed Pasha’s family network was only one among many that came into existence in this period. Due to Sokollu Mehmed Pasha’s long tenure under three successive Ottoman sultans and his key role in the Ottoman foreign diplomacy, many secrets relative to his policy and networking strategies are probably still waiting to be revealed in Ottoman, Spanish, Venetian, Habsburg, Ragusan and other archives. Furthermore, the destiny of İbrahim Hanzade’s descendants, who represent a separate branch of Sokollu family, is an interesting topic for future research.

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