



GRADUATE SCHOOL
ISTANBUL MEDENIYET UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL OTTOMAN STUDIES

**The Letters of Prince Bayezid: Emotion and Politics in
the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire**

Master's Thesis

Sueda Mercimekoğlu

July 2025



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THESIS JURY APPROVAL

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Having reviewed this thesis written under my supervision, I confirm that it has been written in accordance with Chicago Manual of Style and used its footnote reference format consistently throughout the entire text.

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that all information in this dissertation has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conducts, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZET

ŞEHZADE BAYEZİD'İN MEKTUPLARI: 16. YÜZYIL OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU'NDA DUYGU VE SİYASET

Mercimekoğlu, Sueda

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Uluslararası Osmanlı Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı

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Bu çalışma, Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın saltanatı sırasında yaşanan ve en çarpıcı hanedan krizlerinden olan Şehzade Bayezid olayını, baba-oğul ilişkisi ve mektuplaşmalar üzerinden incelemektedir. Osmanlı siyasi tarih yazımında Kanuni devri çoğunlukla askerî seferler, hukukî düzenlemeler ve devlet teşkilatındaki kurumsallaşmalar üzerinden ele alınmıştır. Ancak aynı dönem, hanedanın sürekliliğini tehdit eden, iktidarın paylaşım biçimlerini sorgulatan ve siyasî kararların seyrini doğrudan etkileyen şehzade rekabetlerinin de sahne olmuştur. Şehzade Bayezid'in isyanına ve nihayetinde idamına giden süreç, siyasî ve askerî yönlerinden ziyade, ortaya çıkardığı duygusal ve söylemsel gerilimlerle de dikkate değer bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Bu olayın merkezinde, bir sultanın otoritesi ile bir evladın sadakati arasındaki karmaşık ilişki, mektupların diliyle biçimlenen çok katmanlı bir trajediye dönüşmektedir.

Sultan Süleyman ve oğulları arasındaki ilişkilerin zaman zaman sınanmış ve hanedan içi dengelerin değişimini görünür kılmıştır. Bu ilişkilerdeki en belirgin kırılma noktalarından biri, 1553 yılında Şehzade Mustafa'nın idamıyla yaşanmıştır. Olay, sultanın adalet anlayışı, iktidar algısı ve baba olarak konumu etrafında şekillenen derin tartışmalara zemin hazırlamıştır. Çağdaş kroniklerde ve sonraki tarih yazımında ihanet, entrika ve baba-oğul çatışması temaları etrafında defalarca yeniden anlatılan bu vaka, Kanuni'nin oğulları arasındaki dengeleri köklü biçimde değiştirmiştir. Mustafa'nın ortadan kaldırılmasıyla birlikte taht mücadelesi yeni bir safhaya girmiştir. Bu dönemde Bayezid ile Selim arasındaki rekabet, hanedan

düzeninde zaten var olan kırılğan dengeleri giderek belirginleştirmiştir. Yaklaşık altı yıl süren bu gerilim, 1559'daki Konya Muharebesi'nde Bayezid'in yenilgisiyle son bulmuş ve baba-oğul ilişkisi bu noktada geri dönülmez biçimde çözülmüştür. Bu çalışma, söz konusu sürecin özellikle Şehzade Bayezid'in babasına hitaben kaleme aldığı mektuplar üzerinden okunabileceğini ve bu mektupların hanedan siyasetinin duygusal ve retorik boyutlarını görünür kıldığını savunmaktadır.

Bu analiz, dönemin siyasî ve söylemsel tanıklıklarını yansıtan birinci el belgeler üzerinden yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın temel kaynak grubunu, Topkapı Sarayı Arşivi'nde muhafaza edilen ve Şehzade Bayezid'e ait olan mektuplar teşkil etmektedir. Bu belgeler, şimdiye kadar çoğunlukla siyasî bir mücadelenin kayıtları olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Ancak bu tezde söz konusu mektuplaşmalar, hanedan düzeninde bir şehzadenin kendi konumunu nasıl algıladığını ve babasına hangi retorik araçlarla seslendiğini gösteren metinler olarak okunmuştur. Mektuplar, itaat ile direnç, beklenti ile hayal kırıklığı, bağlılık ile suçlama arasında salınan bir dilin duygusal ve retorik gerilimini açığa çıkarmaktadır. Bu yönüyle belgeler, sıradan bir idarî yazışmadan çok, siyasî ikna ve duygusal meşruiyet arayışının metinleri olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Tez, mektupların yalnızca içeriklerini değil, biçimsel ve dilsel özelliklerini de dikkate almaktadır. Hitap cümleleri, dua formülleri, taleplerin ifade ediliş biçimi ve zamanla üslupta gözlenen sertleşme gibi unsurlar, şehzadenin hem ruh hâlini hem de siyasî stratejisini anlamak için önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır. Bazı mektuplarda karşılaşılan spiral yazım biçimi ise, duygusal yoğunluğun yazının formuna yansıdığı istisnai örneklerdendir. Mektupların bir kısmının bizzat Şehzade Bayezid'in el yazısıyla kaleme alınmış olması da bu açıdan dikkate değerdir. Bu tür holograf belgeler, şehzadenin iradesini, duygusal tonunu ve söylemindeki kişisel dokuyu doğrudan yansıtmaktadır.

Bu mektupların varlığı, Osmanlı hanedan düzeninde meşruiyetin yalnızca askerî veya idarî araçlarla kurulmadığını, dil, üslup ve duygusal ton gibi ifade biçimleriyle de inşa edildiğini göstermektedir. Bayezid'in mektupları, başlangıçta itaatkâr bir oğulun sesini taşıırken zamanla babasının kararlarını sorgulayan ve kendi

konumunu savunmaya yönelik bir dile dönüşmüştür. Bu değişim, hanedan siyasetine içkin kırılmalıkların yanı sıra otoriteyle oğulluk arasındaki sınırların nasıl giderek bulanıklaştığını da açığa çıkarmaktadır. Böylece tez, tarihsel bir süreci anlatmanın ötesine geçerek Osmanlı siyasî kültüründe söylemin ve duygusal ifadenin meşruiyet kurucu işlevini görünür kılmaktadır. Bayezid'in süreci, bir yandan taht mücadelesinin kaçınılmaz doğasını yansıtırken diğer yandan sultanın hem yönetici kimliği hem de baba figürü arasında yaşadığı gerilimi açık biçimde ortaya koymaktadır.

Şehzade Bayezid vakasında belirleyici bir dönemeç, Kütahya'dan Amasya'ya nakledilmesine dair karardır. Osmanlı şehzade sistemi içinde sancak tevcihi, idarî deneyim kazandıran ve hanedan düzeninin sürekliliğini sağlayan olağan bir uygulama olarak kabul edilmiştir. Ancak bu tez, Bayezid'in tayinini siyasî bir dışlama ya da merkezin dışında bırakılma olarak yorumlamaktan ziyade, bu sürece eşlik eden yazışmalarda gözlenen dilsel ve retorik dönüşümlere odaklanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, olayın kendisinden çok, mektupların kendi içsel söylem örgüsünü ön plana çıkararak şehzadenin konumunu nasıl yeniden kurduğunu anlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bayezid'in ilk mektupları, bağlılık ve hürmet ifadelerinin belirgin olduğu, aynı zamanda tayinin uygulanma biçimi ve zamanlamasına ilişkin temkinli taleplerin yer aldığı metinlerdir. Bu yazışmalarda iase temini, yol güvenliği ve hazırlık süreçleri gibi konular ön plana çıkar. Ancak bu unsurlar, mektupların ikna edici gücünü artırmak üzere kullanılan gerekçelerdir. Böylece diplomatik teamülün gerektirdiği saygı dili ile uygulamanın ertelenmesi veya kolaylaştırılması yönünde sürdürülen müzakere dili, aynı metin bünyesinde iç içe geçer.

Üslupta gözlenen değişim, mektupların diplomatik biçimden kişisel bir söyleme doğru geçirdiği dönüşümü ortaya koymaktadır. Başlangıçta uzun unvan zincirleri ve dua formülleriyle açılan metinler, zamanla gerekçelendirme ve açıklama bölümlerinin belirginleşmesiyle farklı bir ağırlık kazanmıştır. Taleplerin ardına eklenen ayrıntılar, Bayezid'in ifadelerini kişisel bir istekten çıkarıp idarî mantık içinde temellendirilmiş taleplere dönüştürmektedir. Bu dönüşüm, şehzadenin kendisini aynı anda hem oğul hem siyasî özne olarak konumlandırma arayışını görünür kılmaktadır.

Mektupların biçimsel özellikleri de bu arayışın dilsel yansımalarıdır. Holograf örneklerde, yani Şehzade Bayezid'in kendi el yazısıyla kaleme aldığı mektuplarda daha doğrudan bir ton ve artan duygusal yoğunluk dikkat çeker. Satır akışındaki düzensizlikler, olağan uzunlukların aşılması ve tekrarların çoğalması, duygunun biçime sızdığı göstergeler olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bu tez, bu tür unsurları psikolojik bir çözümleme malzemesi olarak değil, retorik stratejinin dilsel ve biçimsel düzeydeki tezahürleri olarak ele almaktadır.

Bu tez, şehzade rekabetine dair karşılaştırmalı bir çözümleme yerine, Şehzade Bayezid'in söylemini kendi bağlamı içinde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Şehzade Selim'e ait mektuplar yalnızca genel çerçeveyi tamamlayan bağlamsal unsurlar olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın odağında Bayezid'in babasıyla kurduğu ilişki, bu ilişkinin dilsel ve duygusal boyutları ile şehzadenin mektuplarında şekillenen özne kurguları yer almaktadır. Bayezid'in yazıları, idarî gerekçelerle duygusal tonlamaların yan yana geldiği hatta iç içe geçtiği metinlerdir.

Bu mektuplaşmaların hangi retorik stratejiler ve dilsel kalıplar üzerinden anlam kurduğu, tezin temel sorusunu oluşturmaktadır. Bayezid'in hitap formülleri, dua kalıpları ve gerekçelendirme biçimleri bir arada değerlendirildiğinde, metinlerin hem diplomatik teamülün gerekliliklerini yerine getirdiği hem de kişisel kaygıları görünür kıldığı görülmektedir. Zamanla açıklamaların artması ve taleplerin daha ayrıntılı biçimde temellendirilmesi, şehzadenin bağlılık tonunu koruyarak kendi konumunu meşrulaştırma çabasına işaret eder. Böylece kurumsal dil ile bireysel strateji, aynı söylem içinde birbirini tamamlaya çalışan iki düzleme dönüşür.

Bu süreç, nihayetinde 1559 yılının Mayıs ayında Konya ovasında gerçekleşen muharebeyle son bulur. Bu karşılaşma, iki şehzade arasındaki bir askerî mücadeleden öte, uzun süredir mektuplarda biriktiği gözlemlenen gerilimin fiilî bir zemine taşınması olarak anlam kazanmaktadır. Bayezid'in mektuplarında giderek artan sitem, yinelenen gerekçelendirmeler ve keskinleşen hitap tarzı, bu çatışmanın aniden değil, duygusal ve dilsel çözülmenin son aşamasında ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir.

Bu aşamanın analizi, yalnızca mektuplarla sınırlı tutulmamış; dönemin kronikleri de tartışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. *Nüzhetü'l-Esrâr*, *Künhü'l-Ahbâr* ve *Nâdirü'l-*

Mehârib gibi eserler, Bayezid'in isyanını ve idamını ibret verici bir vaka olarak çerçeveleyip çoğunlukla siyasî düzenin ihlali bağlamında yorumlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada ise söz konusu metinler, mektuplardaki anlatım biçimlerini anlamlandırmaya ve dönemin zihniyet kalıplarını ortaya koymaya katkı sağlayan metinsel alanlar olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Kroniklerdeki ahlaki yargılar, Bayezid'in kendi mektuplarında ısrarla vurguladığı bağlılık ifadeleriyle karşılaştırıldığında, iki farklı anlatı düzlemi ortaya çıkar. Bayezid, yazılarında kendisini sultanın meşru ve itaatkâr oğlu olarak tanımlamaya çalışırken, çağdaş tarihçiler onu düzeni bozan bir isyancı olarak resmetmiştir. Bu zıtlık, bireysel öznenin kendini ifade etme girişimiyle siyasî meşruiyetin yazılı dil üzerinden nasıl kurulduğunu birlikte düşünmeye imkân tanımaktadır.

Nüzhetü'l-Esrâr, *Künhü'l-Ahbâr* ve *Nâdirü'l-Mehârib* gibi kaynaklar, Konya Muharebesi'ne dair bölümlerde Bayezid'in yenilgisini yalnızca askerî bir sonuç olarak değil, Tanrısal iradenin tecellisi ve hanedan düzeninin yeniden tesisine yönelik bir gelişme olarak yorumlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada ise söz konusu çerçeve, kroniklerin didaktik üslubunu ve dönemin ahlaki-siyasal tahayyülünü göstermek amacıyla ele alınmıştır. Bayezid'in mektuplarında görülen kırılğan özne tasavvuru, bu anlatıların sunduğu toplumsal ve ahlaki kalıplar içinde yeniden okunmuştur. Böylece şehzadenin dilinde belirginleşen kaygı, öfke ve beklenti ifadeleri, çağın siyasî söylemi ve anlatı stratejileriyle kesişen bir anlam alanına yerleştirilmiştir.

Konya Muharebesi bu bakımdan yalnızca bir askerî dönüm noktası olmaktan çıkmaktadır. Bayezid'in yazılarındaki trajik yoğunluğun son kez doruğa ulaştığı bir aşama olarak okunabilir. Yenilgi, kroniklerin sunduğu didaktik anlatı ile mektuplarda hissedilen kişisel ses arasındaki mesafenin en açık biçimde görünür hâle geldiği andır. Tezde bu muharebe, siyasî sonuçları bakımından ele alınmakla birlikte, esas olarak Bayezid'in dilinde izlenen çözülmenin tamamlandığı bir eşik olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Konya'daki mağlubiyetin ardından Bayezid'in İran'a sığınması ve idamına giden süreç, kroniklerde çoğunlukla Tanrısal irade ve düzenin yeniden tesisi

çerçevesinde ibretlik bir vaka olarak yorumlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada söz konusu anlatı, mektupların ulaştığı çözümler noktasını anlamlandırmak amacıyla sınırlı biçimde ele alınmıştır. Böylece Bayezid'in süreci, bir hanedan mücadelesinin ötesinde, dil ve duygu aracılığıyla izlenebilen trajik bir çözüm olarak okunmuştur. Çalışma, siyasî otorite ile bireysel ses arasındaki gerilimi görünür kılmış ve Şehzade Bayezid'in tarihsel konumunu çok katmanlı bir değerlendirme çerçevesine yerleştirmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şehzade Bayezid, Kanuni Sultan Süleyman, Mektuplaşma, Duygu Tarihi, Osmanlı Hanedanı, Konya Muharebesi, 16. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarihi

ABSTRACT

THE LETTERS OF PRINCE BAYEZID: EMOTION AND POLITICS IN THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Mercimekoğlu, Sueda

Master's Thesis, Department of International Ottoman Studies

July 2025

This thesis focuses on the conflict between Sultan Süleyman and his son, Prince Bayezid, which was a significant rift within the sixteenth-century Ottoman dynasty. At its core lies the dual bond of sultan and father, and of son and political rival. The study focuses on the letters that Bayezid sent while being transferred from Kütahya to Amasya. Rather than treating these letters as routine correspondence, the study treats them as texts marked by persuasion, complaint, and shifting tones of loyalty.

Adopting a thematic approach, the research traces how Bayezid's discourse evolved as his position weakened. His letters reveal a son attempting to defend his status while striving for paternal recognition, oscillating between submission and protest. His appointment to Amasya emerges as a turning point that intensified his sense of displacement and marginalisation within the dynasty. This divergence illustrates how dynastic crises were understood through different registers of authority and morality.

This study makes a valuable contribution to Ottoman historiography by demonstrating that Bayezid's downfall was not only a political or military defeat, but also a process articulated through the language of kinship and power. His correspondence reveals the intersection of authority, family loyalty, and emotion in the imperial household, presenting the Bayezid affair as a multifaceted episode in the early modern Ottoman period.

Keywords: Prince Bayezid, Süleyman the Magnificent, Correspondence, History of Emotions, Ottoman Dynasty, Battle of Konya, Sixteenth-Century Ottoman History

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To my parents

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INTRODUCTION

The long reign of Süleyman the Magnificent has been widely characterized in Ottoman historiography as a period marked by political and military achievements.¹ However, it was also a time shaped by intense dynastic rivalries. The succession struggles that unfolded during his reign did not concern political inheritance alone. They also gave rise to a layered narrative in which imperial authority, familial loyalty, and rhetorical confrontation came together. These tensions often stemmed from Süleyman's dual position as *sultan* (sovereign) and father, especially in moments when his political decisions entailed irreversible emotional consequences.

One such moment was the execution of his eldest son, Prince Mustafa in 1553, a turning point that has occupied a significant place in both contemporary and modern narratives. The drama surrounding Mustafa's death, often retold through themes of betrayal and intrigue, has overshadowed deeper structural tensions embedded within the imperial succession system. Yet it is in the extended and rhetorically charged conflict between Prince Selim and Bayezid that the emotional, textual, and political dimensions of dynastic fracture appear in sharpest relief.

This study, by focusing on the case of Prince Bayezid, examines how emotional disintegration and familial rupture unfolded within the broader framework of imperial power during the final decade of Süleyman's reign. While the relationship between the Sultan and his sons has often been interpreted through strategic or administrative lenses, this research turns to the written correspondence exchanged between Süleyman and Bayezid as a way of understanding the affective and rhetorical contours of their conflict. Bayezid's letters to Sultan Süleyman reveal his persistent attempts to defend his political position. At the same time, they expose an urgent need for recognition through rhetorical appeals that shift between expectation, resentment and fear.

Placing Bayezid at the center of the analysis as the eventual loser in this dynastic confrontation allows the thesis to explore the historical trajectory of his conflict with

¹ Gilles Veinstein, "Süleymān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online (EI-2 English)* (Brill, 2012).

Süleyman, as well as the rhetorical strategies employed in his letters to express the crisis. The correspondence between Süleyman and Bayezid stand as rare body of documents revealing the internal tensions within the imperial household. After his appointment as governor of Amasya, Bayezid's writing gradually shifts away from standard administrative tone conveying an intensifying sense of marginalization. The fear of disapproval and the anxiety of being cast aside become central themes. Within the context of an unregulated succession system, these texts reflect a political and emotional struggle for survival. Bayezid's increasingly sharp tone in response to his father's prolonged silence reveals a fragile subject seeking to assert his presence through language.

This study brings together historical narrative and rhetorical analysis, examining not only the content of the letters but also their form and linguistic choices. The term "rhetorical structure" here refers not only to what the letters convey, but to how they construct emotional tone, forms of address, strategies of persuasion, and the narrative representations of both the self and the addressee. In this context, the focus is not solely on what provoked Bayezid's anger, but also on how this anger was rhetorically constructed and through which discursive tools it was directed at his father, the intended recipient.

Themes such as pleading, anger, bargaining, and blame, which become increasingly prominent in Bayezid's discourse, have been traced through close textual readings of his letters. Rather than following a strictly chronological structure, this study adopts a thematic organization based on the emotional fluctuations present in the texts. While the narrative follows the general trajectory of Bayezid's political downfall, each phase is examined through a distinct emotional and rhetorical lens.

This methodological choice stems from the fact that Bayezid's psychological unraveling unfolds in an oscillating, nonlinear manner. In this way, the letters surpass their function as mere historical documents and reveal, step by step, the inner disintegration of a tragic figure.

The emotional intensity and discursive tension conveyed in the letters evoke the structure of Renaissance tragedies, particularly in how expressions of desperation

and the absence of reciprocal communication drive the protagonist toward irreversible collapse. The fragmentation observed in the prince's language sharpens with the continued absence of a reply from his father, gradually transforming the narrative into a tale of decline. This downfall transcends a purely political failure and turns into an internal collapse fueled by the unfulfilled desire for recognition, acceptance, and even affection.

For this reason, Bayezid's letters are not simply documents that shaped the fate of an Ottoman prince. Although they initially functioned as part of a written dialogue, as his father's silence persists, they come to resemble dramatic monologues in which a political subject speaks in the hope of being heard, despite the absence of a reply.

In this context, the narrative framework of the thesis aims to trace the contours of a tragedy in the Shakespearean sense. Bayezid's destiny, like that of classical tragic heroes, revolves around a *hamartia*, a fatal flaw or critical misjudgment that seals his fate. The process set in motion by his appointment to Amasya, and the responses he displayed thereafter, led to an irreversible path defined by a tension between deviation from loyalty and outright rebellion. From that point on, the unfolding of events is no longer within the control of either the father's sovereign authority or the son's emotional will. Thus, Süleyman's dilemma as both father and ruler, and Bayezid's isolation as both son and dissenter, transform this historical episode into a stage for deep emotional rupture.

One of the foundational references in the literature is Şerafettin Turan's work, which he originally submitted as his thesis for an associate professorship in 1956 under the title *Kanuni'nin Oğlu Şehzâde Bayezid Vak'ası*.² First published by the Turkish Historical Society (TTK) in 1961 under the same title, it was later reissued in a revised edition in 1997 as *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*.³ The change of title, alongside the revision of certain section headings, signaled a shift. For instance, transforming "Factors Preparing Bayezid's Revolt" into the more general "Causes Leading to the Princes' Struggles for the Throne" was a change from a monographic

² Şerafettin Turan, *Kanuni'nin Oğlu Şehzâde Bayezid Vak'ası* (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1961).

³ Şerafettin Turan, *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 2nd ed. (Bilgi Yayınevi, 1997).

study of a single prince's fate. It was a shift to a broader account of dynastic struggles in Süleyman's reign. Although Turan emphasised that he had made additions, the differences between the editions primarily lie in stylistic simplification rather than substantial archival expansion; the appendices and documentary material remained essentially the same. This thesis relies on the third edition published in 2011, which reproduces the revised 1997 text but differs in layout and pagination.⁴

Turan's study represented an important step in moving beyond personality-centered narratives, framing princely conflict in terms of administrative instability and systemic fault lines. Yet the analysis remained largely confined to the political plane, leaving aside the rhetorical and affective dimensions embedded in the texts. This thesis acknowledges Turan's enduring contribution and archival groundwork while developing a different methodological approach to explore the emotional and textual dimensions of Bayezid's fall.

Turan also contributed an encyclopedia entry titled "Bayezid" for the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* in 1992. which serves as a condensed summary of his earlier research and remains the only encyclopedia entry on the subject in the existing literature⁵. This article serves as a concise version of his earlier research and remains the only dedicated reference on Bayezid in encyclopedic literature. No entry on Bayezid exists in major works such as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* or the *Ministry of Education's İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (MEB).

Kappert's interpretation is especially valuable for understanding the institutional pressures surrounding Bayezid's appointment to Amasya, which marks a crucial turning point in the narrative examined in this thesis. However, her analysis of Bayezid relies heavily on the political narrative developed by Şerafettin Turan and does not engage with the rhetorical or emotional registers present in the primary texts. Her focus remains on structural and administrative dynamics, leaving the affective dimensions of the princely experience largely unexplored.

⁴ Şerafettin Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 3rd ed. (Kapı Yayınları, 2011).

⁵ Şerafettin Turan, "Bayezid, Şehzade," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, V (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1992).

This thesis builds on Kappert's institutional reading but shifts the focus toward the emotional and discursive struggles that unfolded during Bayezid's tenure in Amasya. In doing so, it revisits the image of the "city of princes" not simply as a site of training and preparation but as a space of ambivalence, displacement and eventual rupture.

Petra Kappert's 1976 study *Die osmanischen Prinzen und ihre Residenz Amasya im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*⁶ remains one of the earliest works to examine the provincial experience of Ottoman princes within an institutional framework. Focusing on Amasya, she explores the political and administrative role of the provincial governorship, while also presenting the city as a space where claims to legitimacy and proximity to imperial power were shaped. Her designation of Amasya as a "city of princes" gives particular weight to the careers of both Şehzade Mustafa and Şehzade Bayezid, and her comparative reading of their governorships highlights the tensions between provincial autonomy and central authority.

Another early contribution to the historiography on Bayezid's conflict with the imperial center is İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı's article, "Babasından Sonra Saltanatı Elde Etmek İçin Kardeşi Selim'le Çatışan Şehzade Bayezid'in Amasya'dan Babası Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Göndermiş Olduğu Arıza."⁷ His work, written in the tradition of classical Ottoman historiography, stands as one of the earliest accounts to address Prince Bayezid's transfer to Amasya within a political framework. His narrative emphasizes dynastic rivalry, ambition, and disobedience, prioritizing chronological coherence and factual consistency. While drawing on primary sources, Uzunçarşılı approaches the episode through a normative lens, framing Bayezid's resistance primarily as a symptom of personal ambition. Emotional dynamics and discursive strategies remain outside the scope of his interpretation.

⁶ Petra Kappert, *Die Osmanischen Prinzen und ihre Residenz Amasya im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Netherlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1976).

⁷ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Babasından Sonra Saltanatı Elde Etmek İçin Kardeşi Selim'le Çatışan Şehzâde Bayezid'in Amasya'dan Babası Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Göndermiş Olduğu Arıza," *Belleten* 25, no. 96 (1960): 597–600.

Complementing this perspective, M. Çağatay Uluçay's study, "Kanunî Sultan Süleymân'ın Ailesi ile İlgili Bazı Notlar ve Vesikalar"⁸ provides detailed chronological information about the positions and movements of Süleyman's sons, particularly in relation to their provincial appointments and the evolving tensions within the imperial household. His account is especially useful for reconstructing the administrative setting of the conflict between Bayezid and Selim. Yet, like Uzunçarşılı, Uluçay remains within a documentary and descriptive mode, without engaging the emotional or rhetorical stakes of the episode. This thesis draws on both authors' contributions to frame the historical background, but moves beyond them by analyzing how these political shifts were experienced, narrated, and emotionally negotiated in Bayezid's letters.

Leslie Peirce's *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*⁹ offers a transformative reading of dynastic politics by situating royal women at the center of imperial decision-making. Departing from orientalist depictions of the harem as a sensualized private sphere, Peirce reinterprets it as a politically active and structurally embedded institution. Her analysis of the reign of Süleyman emphasizes the unprecedented influence of Hürrem Sultan and the succession struggles involving Mustafa, Bayezid, and Selim. Peirce describes the elimination of Süleyman's sons as a "dynastic tragedy,"¹⁰ presenting these events as deeply consequential for both the political structure of the dynasty and the emotional fabric of the imperial household. This perspective supports the broader argument of this thesis, which approaches the conflict between Süleyman and Bayezid as a crisis shaped by rhetorical strain, emotional fracture, and the dramatic logic of dynastic tragedy.

Although not directly centered on the specific case examined in this thesis, the work of Zeynep Nevin Yelçe offers valuable conceptual grounding for understanding the emotional and symbolic dimensions of imperial authority. Her studies on rulership

⁸ Çağatay Uluçay, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman ve Ailesi ile İlgili Bazı Notlar ve Vesikalar," in *Kanunî Armağanı* (Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1970).

⁹ Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁰ Ibid., 58. A similar point had already been made by Alderson, who emphasized the tragic implications of Bayezid's death for succession. See Anthony Dolphin Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty*, Reprint (Greenwood Press, 1982), 28.

rituals and representational strategies in the early modern Ottoman world offer a detailed analysis of how the sultan's authority was constructed through the body, ceremonial practices, and visual representation. Her discussion of royal wrath and the emotional framing of sovereignty is particularly relevant for understanding how Süleyman's treatment of his sons could serve as a performative expression of power and legitimacy.¹¹ Yelçe's contributions help situate Bayezid's fall within a broader logic of princely punishment, in which the emotional economy of fatherhood intersects with the spectacle of discipline and the symbolic maintenance of dynastic order.

Benjamin Arbel's article "Maps of the World for Ottoman Princes?"¹² provides an important perspective on the symbolic dimensions of princely rivalry in the mid-sixteenth century. Based on newly uncovered Venetian archival documents, the study shows that Sultan Süleyman's sons Mustafa, Bayezid and Selim commissioned large world maps from Venetian cartographers during a period of political tension. These maps are interpreted as expressions of dynastic ambition and instruments of representation. Arbel's findings contribute to this thesis by adding a visual and material dimension to the rhetorical and emotional strategies observed in Bayezid's letters and by showing that claims to legitimacy could also be conveyed through such symbolic objects.

A further relevant contribution can be found in the edited volume *Süleyman the Second and His Time*,¹³ where Alan Fisher¹⁴ offers insights into Süleyman's personality and his relationships with his family. His analysis sheds light on how the sultan's private life may have influenced his political decision-making processes. These perspectives provide a useful backdrop for interpreting the emotional dynamics and paternal gestures conveyed in the letters analyzed in this study.

¹¹ For the reflections of the fine line between mercy and wrath in the context of power, see N. Zeynep Yelçe, "Royal Wrath: Curbing the Anger of the Sultan," in *Discourses of Anger in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Karl A. E. Enenkel and Anita Traninger (Brill, 2015).

¹² Benjamin Arbel, "Maps of the World for Ottoman Princes? Further Evidence and Questions Concerning 'The "Mappamondo" of Hajji Ahmed,'" *Imago Mundi*, no. 54 (2002): 19–29.

¹³ Halil İnalçık and Cemal Kafadar, eds., *Süleymân the Second and His Time* (The Isis Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Alan Fisher, "The Life and Family of Süleymân I," in *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Cemal Kafadar (The Isis Press, 1993).

This thesis draws upon the theoretical insights of William Reddy and Barbara Rosenwein to explore how emotional expression shaped and reflected the political tensions between Süleyman the Magnificent and Bayezid.¹⁵ Reddy's notion of "emotional regimes" helps to identify the dominant norms of affective behavior at the Ottoman court, including expectations of obedience to the sultan, reverence for paternal authority, and the suppression of dissent. Bayezid's letters reveal the extent to which these norms were internalized, negotiated, or strained. His oscillation between submission and defiance reflects a struggle to remain legible within a framework that demanded loyalty while offering limited space for grievance.

Rosenwein's concept of "emotional communities", on the other hand, is useful for interpreting Bayezid's shifting sense of belonging. His expressions of longing, resentment, and disappointment suggest an emotional distancing from the dynastic core and a simultaneous effort to restore his place within it. By applying these conceptual tools, the thesis emphasizes that emotional language was not a peripheral or personal matter but a central component of dynastic communication. In moments of political rupture, affective performance became a means of asserting legitimacy, challenging authority, or appealing for reconciliation.

Feridun Emecen's *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*¹⁶ situates Bayezid's position within the shifting political landscape that followed Hürrem Sultan's death, highlighting changes in the relationship between the imperial center and provincial authority. His account offers a structurally informed reading of the conflict, focusing on the broader institutional balance that framed Bayezid's resistance. While his contribution provides a useful political backdrop, it remains grounded in administrative logic and does not engage with the rhetorical or emotional dimensions of the episode. This thesis departs from such institutional frameworks by analyzing Bayezid's downfall through the textual and affective ruptures articulated in his letters, particularly about paternal recognition and dynastic legitimacy.

¹⁵ Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What Is the History of Emotions?* (Polity Press, 2018); William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Feridun M. Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı* (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2022).

This study's primary sources are the letters preserved in the Topkapı Palace Archive (TSMA).¹⁷ As the administrative and symbolic centre of the Ottoman court, Topkapı Palace contains a substantial collection of correspondence between members of the dynasty and the sultan. Most of these documents were copied into official registers or retained as part of state communications. This thesis focuses on letters written by Prince Bayezid to Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. These texts provide first-hand insight not only into major political developments, but also into Bayezid's rhetorical stance, emotional fluctuations and strategies of self-representation. As most of Süleyman's replies have not survived, the existing materials only reflect one side of the correspondence. Therefore, the analytical framework of the thesis is organised around the thematic and rhetorical patterns that emerge from Bayezid's letters.

Following the transfer of the Topkapı Palace Archive (TSMA) to the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), a number of catalogue codes were revised. In this thesis, documents are cited using their current TSMA catalogue numbers, with the earlier codes provided in parentheses where available. For letters cited from Şerafettin Turan's study, the old codes are retained. All folio numbers are provided for reference purposes. Unless otherwise indicated, the letter passages cited in the thesis are based on the author's own transcriptions and translations of the original manuscripts. Selected transcriptions of the letters are provided in the appendix.

Complementary to the archival materials, textual sources from the period are examined as narratives that reflect contemporary perceptions and discursive frameworks related to the case. Among these, *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*¹⁸ are particularly valuable for tracing how the events were framed within the conventions of Ottoman historiography. Although these chronicles offer only scattered and indirect references

¹⁷ The primary sources used in this study are the letters exchanged between Sultan Süleyman and Prince Bayezid, preserved in the Topkapı Palace Archive (TSMA), particularly within the E (Evrak) series. The letters cited in the thesis are located in the following archival files: TSMA.E.657/43 (formerly catalogued as TA, E.3924); TSMA.E.753/38 (formerly catalogued as TA, E.6058); TSMA.E.753/39 (formerly catalogued as TA, E.6059); TSMA.E.758/73 (formerly catalogued as TA, E.6572); TSMA.E.812/30 (formerly catalogued as TA, E.7075/1). "TA" refers to the old catalogue numbering system of the Topkapı Palace Archive prior to its transfer to the Ottoman Archives.

¹⁸ Feridun Ahmed Bey, *Nüzhet-i Esrâr'ül Ahyâr Der Ahbâr-ı Sefer-i Sigetvar: Sultan Süleyman'ın Son Seferi (Sultan Süleyman's Last Campaign: Pleasures of the Secrets of Auspicious Men from the News of the Szigetvár Campaign)*, ed. H. Ahmet Aslantürk and Günhan Börekçi, with Abdülkadir Özcan (Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2012).

to Bayezid, their rhetorical tone, choice of labels, and moral commentary contribute to the discursive construction of political deviance and princely failure. In later sections of the thesis, selected passages from these works are integrated into the analysis, where they are placed in dialogue with the letters. This approach enables the letters to be read not only as personal appeals but also as texts shaped by and responding to the narrative and ideological frameworks of their time.

In addition to narrative chronicles, this study also considers selected foreign reports, with particular attention to Busbecq's *Turkish Letters*¹⁹ as external perspectives that shaped contemporary and later understandings of the conflict. While such sources differ in genre and intention from Ottoman chronicles, their rhetorical framings and emotional cues contribute to the broader discursive landscape surrounding the Bayezid affair. These texts are used selectively, with attention to their positionality and limitations, to contextualize and contrast the imperial emotional scripts reflected in the letters.

One of the few primary sources that offers a Western perspective on the princely struggles of the period is *Turkish Letters* by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, composed during his diplomatic mission to the Ottoman court in the mid-sixteenth century. In the second part of his collection, Busbecq provides a vivid account of the rivalry between Bayezid and Selim. His narrative, shaped in part by questions raised during his time in Istanbul, frequently blurs the line between historical observation and literary construction. It is evident that he sought to capture the sensational impact of the executions of Mustafa and Bayezid on a European audience.

Rather than offering a neutral report, Busbecq presents Bayezid's fate through the lens of misfortune and abandonment. His imagined dialogues between Süleyman and his son, paired with interpretive commentary, dramatize the conflict in ways that resonate with contemporary European expectations about despotism and dynastic violence. This rhetorical structure stands in marked contrast to Ottoman archival sources, which tend to frame the affair in bureaucratic or legal terms. Busbecq's

¹⁹ Charles Thornton Foster and F. H. Blackburne Daniell, eds., *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq: Seigneur of Bousbecque, Knight, Imperial Ambassador*, Volume 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

account, by contrast, offers a distinct emotional register centered on grief, wrath, and paternal distance. In this study, his narrative is not merely flagged for potential bias but is approached as a discursive artifact that reflects the emotional and political codes of its context. Its comparison with Ottoman sources enables a broader analysis of how the Bayezid affair was mediated across cultural and ideological boundaries.

This thesis consists of two main chapters. The first outlines the political and historical background necessary to understand the rivalry among Süleyman's sons. It opens with a profile of the sultan's familial and political position, then follows the dynamics of succession through the provincial governorship system and the shifting balance of power between the princes. A central focus is the correspondence between Bayezid and Sultan Süleyman. These letters are examined as political interventions shaped by emotional strain and personal urgency. The chapter traces changes in tone, rhetorical strategy, and expression between the brothers, culminating in Bayezid's reluctant move to Amasya.

The second chapter turns to the period after Bayezid's arrival in Amasya, where signs of isolation begin to surface more clearly. His letters from this period reflect a growing distance from the imperial center and increasing signs of emotional withdrawal. The narrative does not proceed strictly chronologically but follows shifts in language, tone, and intensity. Bayezid's pleas, accusations, and increasingly desperate language are read as part of a broader process of breakdown. The chapter closes with the Battle of Konya and Bayezid's defeat, interpreted not simply as a loss in the field but as the result of a prolonged erosion of trust, loyalty, and communication.

Although the chapters follow the general arc of historical events, their structure is shaped by the emotional and rhetorical shifts that define Bayezid's path. The division marks the movement from a shared dynastic conflict to a more solitary and strained voice, framing the trajectory through both political and affective disintegration.

CHAPTER ONE

1. A SULTAN AND HIS SONS

1.1. The Political and Family Profile of Sultan Süleyman

The Ottoman sultan Süleyman, the only son of Yavuz Sultan Selim and Hafsa Sultan, was born in Trabzon on November 6, 1494.²⁰ Today, he is more commonly known by the epithet “Kânunî” (the Lawgiver), though he was commemorated by contemporary authors with titles such as “the Magnificent,” “the Great Turk” and “Sahib-kıran.”²¹ As the tenth sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Kânunî Sultan Süleyman was also one of the longest-reigning rulers in Ottoman history. His reign, which would become the longest of any Ottoman ruler, was shaped by the tension between inherited grandeur and the imperative to stabilize succession in an increasingly complex political environment.

Süleyman’s accession to the throne has often been regarded as relatively unchallenged, since he was the only surviving male heir. However, the assumption that his enthronement was a smooth and untroubled process does not imply that he was unaffected by the political tensions he witnessed during his early years. As a young prince, Süleyman witnessed how his father, Selim I, forced Bayezid II into abdication and marched toward the throne by defying dynastic norms and establishing his own rules of succession.²² The deposition of Selim's father had a significant impact on the political landscape of the time, and also led to questions about how future generations would remember and recount this event. The contested nature of this process was subsequently addressed in the *Selimnâmes*, which were carefully constructed narratives rather than neutral records. Instead of providing a single

²⁰ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 11–12.

²¹ The term *sâhib-qirân*, meaning “lord of the auspicious conjunction” was a dynastic title associated with rulers believed to possess exceptional fortune and universal sovereignty. The title was attributed to Timur and was later used for some Ottoman sultans such as Süleyman the Magnificent. This symbolic and political use of the term in the early years of Süleyman’s reign is examined in Barbara Flemming, “Sahib-kırân Und Mehdi: Türkische Endzeiterwartungen Im Ersten Jahrzehnt Der Regierung Süleymâns,” in *Between the Danube and the Caucasus*, ed. György Kara (Akadémiai Kiadó, 1897).

²² Nevin Zeynep Yelçe, “The Making of Sultan Süleyman: A Study of Process/es Image-Making and Reputation Management” (PhD, Sabancı University, 2009), 43.

justification, these texts reflected various attempts to portray Selim I's controversial actions as necessary steps towards achieving imperial stability. At the same time, they revealed the fragility of dynastic order and the difficulty of recounting such an irregular succession without legitimising future breaches.²³ These early experiences would inform Süleyman's later approach to governance, particularly his cautious, and at times ruthless, response to perceived threats within his own family.

Süleyman the Magnificent, who reigned for nearly half a century (1520–1566), is particularly noted for the difficult decisions he faced within the dynastic sphere. His eldest son, Mustafa (b. 1515), was born to Mahidevran Sultan, while two other sons, Mahmud and Murad, whose mothers remain unidentified in the sources, are also mentioned but with uncertain details.²⁴ His consort Hürrem Sultan bore several children who became central figures in the politics of succession: Mehmed (b. 1521), Mihrimah (b. 1522),²⁵ Selim (b. 1524),²⁶ Abdullah (b. 1525–26),²⁷ Bayezid (b. 1527)²⁸ and Cihangir (b. 1531).²⁹ Originally a concubine of Ruthenian origin, Hürrem Sultan gradually acquired an unprecedented degree of influence at the imperial court.³⁰ Upon marrying Süleyman, she gradually acquired a significant role within the imperial household and exerted considerable influence in court politics.

Following the early deaths of Mahmud, Murad and Abdullah, the remaining five princes became potential candidates for the throne: Mustafa, Mehmed, Selim, Bayezid and Cihangir, although Cihangir's physical infirmity and need for medical

²³ Fikret Yılmaz, "Şehzade Selim'in Kefe ve Edirne Seferi (1510-1511): Sebeb-i Ziyaret Tevliyet-i Hilafet mi, Yoksa Evlat ve Baba Hasreti miydi?," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, no. LXV (2025): 4–5.

²⁴ The mothers of Mahmud and Murad, who were born during Süleyman's years as prince in Manisa, remain unidentified. In addition, Feridun Emecen discusses the possibility of a previously unrecorded son named "Selimşah," whose name appears in a berat dated 1515. According to Emecen, this would make Selimşah Süleyman's first-born son, preceding Mustafa and Mahmud, although the evidence allows only cautious consideration. Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 42–43.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 69

²⁶ Feridun M. Emecen, "Selim II," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2009), 36:414.

²⁷ Leslie P. Pierce, *Empress of the East: How a European Slave Girl Became Queen of the Ottoman Empire* (Basic Books, 2017), 111.

²⁸ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 147.

²⁹ Peirce notes Cihangir's birth in 1531 and his physical deformity. Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 61; See also Fisher, "The Life and Family of Süleymân I," 14 who states that Cihangir died in Aleppo in 1553 shortly after the execution of his brother Mustafa.

³⁰ Pierce, *Empress of the East*, 114.

treatment effectively disqualified him from active competition. This situation stood in sharp contrast to the calm atmosphere that had surrounded Süleyman's own accession, leading to intense tensions during the process of dynastic succession.

The succession struggles that Süleyman observed during his time as a prince, including the contest that brought Selim I to power, seem to have left him with a lasting concern for dynastic stability. These experiences fostered a cautious political outlook and an uncompromising approach towards any challenge to his authority.³¹ These experiences fostered a cautious political outlook and an uncompromising approach towards any challenge to his authority. Determined to eliminate potential threats, he acted with vigilance and severity against those he considered dangerous. The executions of high-ranking officials such as Hain Ahmed Paşa (d. 1524), Kara Ahmed Paşa (d. 1555) and Pargalı Ibrahim Paşa (d. 1536), despite his former closeness to the throne, exemplify this pattern.³² The later elimination of his sons, Mustafa and Bayezid, reflected the same stance, extending the logic of political survival to the realm of dynastic rivalry.

The reasons behind the execution of Mustafa are still up for debate, but recent research suggests that the decision was based on a perceived threat, as well as Süleyman's growing determination to intervene in succession more directly.³³ The future of the dynasty was no longer left to palace dynamics or popular support; instead, it was secured through the sultan's own authority. This shift became more pronounced in the final decade of his reign. The rivalry between Bayezid and Selim had become a rupture that threatened the very coherence of the dynasty, no longer a private dispute. Bayezid's ultimate flight, handover and execution reveal that Süleyman once again faced a crisis comparable to that with Mustafa. The circumstances were more severe this time, however, involving a prolonged confrontation that unfolded in a more complex political environment. Meanwhile, the

³¹ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 44; Metin Kunt, "State and Sultan up to the Age of Süleyman: Frontier Principality to World Empire," in *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World* (Longman, 1995), 29.

³² Feridun M. Emecen, "Süleyman I," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2010), 38:64.

³³ Zahit Atçıl, "Why Did Süleyman the Magnificent Execute His Son Şehzade Mustafa in 1553?," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, no. XLVIII (July 2016): 67.

powerful image of Süleyman, shaped by his military triumphs in the 1520s and 1540s, began to fade as he showed signs of ageing and illness³⁴ and as dynastic unrest increased.³⁵

This study does not directly focus on dynastic ruptures themselves, but rather engages with how these tensions during Süleyman's reign informed the emotional and symbolic aspects of sovereignty. An early and significant instance of such rupture was the execution of Mustafa. More than a political decision, this act unsettled the structure of the royal household and appears to have cast a shadow on the sultan's image as a father. While Süleyman may have aimed to remove a perceived threat and reaffirm his authority, he seems to have underestimated its broader repercussions among the military elite and the public.³⁶ In its historical context, the execution suggested a lasting tension between dynastic order and paternal identity.

Nearly eight years later, the fact that his other son, Bayezid, met a similar fate is hardly coincidental. As the tension between Süleyman's roles as father and ruler continued to grow, he once again faced a comparable crisis. This time, however, the situation unfolded in a much more complex political environment. Bayezid's open defiance and prolonged absence from court deepened the crisis, especially as the negotiations over his surrender dragged on. Süleyman had long suffered from gout (nikris), and the pressure caused by the rivalry between Selim and Bayezid appears to have worsened his condition.³⁷ In this period, Süleyman struggled more visibly with the emotional weight behind his political decisions.

During the final years of Süleyman's reign, the pressures of governance and the rivalries within the royal household became increasingly visible.³⁸ While remembered in historical memory as "Süleyman the Magnificent", the decisions he made regarding his sons also reflect the personal weight that accompanied the

³⁴ Metin Kunt, "Süleyman ve Nikris," in *Muhteşem Süleyman*, ed. Özlem Kumrular (Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), 93–99 a study of the sultan's chronic health problems and their political implications. For a more specific focus on his gout (nikris) and related treatments, see Vural Genç, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın Nikris Hastalığına Atfedilen Farsça Bir Reçete," *Belleten* 80, no. 287 (2016): 41–58.

³⁵ Atçıl, "Why Did Süleyman the Magnificent Execute His Son Şehzade Mustafa in 1553?," 97.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Fisher, "The Life and Family of Süleymân I," 11.

³⁸ Kunt, "State and Sultan up to the Age of Süleyman," 29.

projection of such grandeur. These relationships were shaped by layers of expectation, control and vulnerability that are often overlooked in standard historical accounts. The legacy of his reign may thus be understood not only in terms of institutional success or military expansion but also through the emotional strains that blurred the boundary between his role as a ruler and his position as a father, as reflected in both contemporary narratives and his correspondence with his sons. These strains also shaped the competition among the princes, where the allocation of provincial governorships became a crucial arena in which dynastic tensions were played out.

1.2. The Struggles over Provincial Governorships and the Rivalry among the Princes

To understand the intense rivalries among Süleyman's sons, it is first necessary to consider what it meant to be an "Ottoman *şehzade*". The birth of a *şehzade* (prince) was greeted with elaborate ceremonies in the palace and considered a dynastic event of great importance. From a young age, the princes received a broad education under the guidance of selected tutors. They learnt to read and write in Arabic and Persian, studied history, etiquette and statecraft, and received training in horsemanship and martial exercises within the palace grounds.³⁹ They were also exposed to intellectual disciplines that would shape them as potential rulers. A circumcision ceremony,⁴⁰ celebrated with grandeur, marked their transition to public life.⁴¹ However, the most significant step in a prince's journey was his appointment to a provincial governorship (*sancak beyliği*), which introduced him to the political sphere and established him as a potential candidate for future sovereignty.

The Ottoman succession system lacked a fixed legal framework for the orderly transfer of the throne.⁴² Later discussions came to associate these rivalries with the so-

³⁹ Haldun Eroğlu, "Şehzade," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2010), 38:480.

⁴⁰ For a detailed description of the princes' circumcision ceremony (*sûr-ı hitân*), see Hülya Tezcan, *Osmanlı Sarayının Çocukları: Şehzadeler ve Hanım Sultanların Yaşamları, Giysileri* (İstanbul, 2006), 129–38.

⁴¹ Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (The MIT Press, 1991), 30.

⁴² Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, trans. Norman Itzkowitz and Colin Imber (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 59.

called “Law of Fratricide” included in the *Kânûnnâme* attributed to Mehmed II.⁴³ The clause permitted the new sultan to eliminate his brothers for the sake of dynastic unity, and it has often been cited as an institutional response to succession conflicts. Although the authenticity and dating of the text remain debated,⁴⁴ over time the theme of fratricide was retrospectively endowed with symbolic significance as part of the broader ways in which dynastic rivalry was conceptualized.⁴⁵ The concrete expression of such rivalry, however, emerged most clearly in the provinces, where the appointment of princes to governorships became both a political practice and a marker of dynastic standing.

This competitive environment was deeply rooted in the administrative structure of the empire and found one of its clearest expressions in the appointment of princes to provincial governorships. These assignments were not simply routine bureaucratic tasks. They provided princes with an opportunity to demonstrate their political presence, cultivate local alliances and develop their own networks of influence. Through these posts, the princes were expected to demonstrate their governance capabilities while also building a public image that could bolster their future power claims. Equally essential was the fact that the governorships provided the institutional and social framework for establishing a princely household.

In these provinces, princes began forming families of their own and enacting the roles of future sultans, both administratively and domestically.⁴⁶ Thus, the governorship became a space where political signalling, administrative training and dynastic reproduction were closely intertwined. The household of a prince, however,

⁴³ Abdülkadir Özcan, ed., *Kânûnnâme-i Âl-i Osman* (Kitapevi, 2003), 6:18 The relevant clause reads: “Ve her kimesneye evlâdımdan saltanat müyesser ola, karındaşların nizâm-ı âlem için katl etmek münâsibdir. Ekser ulemâ dahi tecvîz etmişdir. Anınla âmil olalar.” (For the welfare of the state, the one of my sons to whom God grants the sultanate may lawfully put his brothers to death. A majority of the ulema consider this permissible).

⁴⁴ Baki Tezcan, “The *Kânûnnâme* of Mehmed II: A Different Perspective,” in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, ed. Kemal Çiçek (Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 3:662. Tezcan notes that the earliest surviving copy was produced in 1620 and examines why the text gained circulation in the early seventeenth century.

⁴⁵ Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty*, 5–6.

⁴⁶ Juliette Dumas, *Au cœur du harem: Les princesses ottomanes à l'aune du pouvoir (XVe–XVIIIe s.)*, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage: Politics, Society and Economy* 75 (Brill, 2022), 68–69 The author, through the example of Ottoman princesses, notes that princely households were formed in provincial governorates, where the princes’ wives, concubines, and children resided, as in the cases of Manisa and Konya.

was never limited to his immediate family. It also encompassed a wider circle of attendants and functions that defined his role in the provinces.⁴⁷

Governorships held by Ottoman princes carried more than administrative or political weight. Being sent to the provinces marked the beginning of a prince's visible public role and symbolized the transition from a private existence under the sultan's roof to a relatively independent political actor in the public sphere.⁴⁸ Despite common assumptions, princes were not left on their own. They were accompanied by scholars, secretaries, experienced officials, and military advisors appointed by the court.⁴⁹ These entourages ensured a degree of continuity with the imperial center while also shaping the way each prince governed locally. Over time, the combination of princely authority, court-appointed advisors, and local alliances contributed to the emergence of a princely household. Here, the interwoven nature of dynasty and government was expressed through political interaction, intellectual activity and symbolic representation.⁵⁰

This process was not merely symbolic. The choice of *sancaks* reflected the court's political calculations and the broader priorities of the empire. Princes were not assigned randomly. Their appointments were aligned with geopolitical concerns and shaped by the balance of power among imperial factions. For instance, Bayezid II was appointed to Amasya, which was widely regarded as an eastern frontier (*uç sancak*) due to its military significance and proximity to the eastern borders. Such locations were strategically chosen not only for their geopolitical value but also to test the prince's ability to govern under pressure and maintain authority in potentially volatile regions.⁵¹ Similarly, Manisa gradually gained symbolic prestige due to its proximity

⁴⁷ On the household as a political and administrative institution and on the notion of the "satellite household," see Jane Hathaway, "Households in the Administration of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 40 (2013); for a recent study that revisits the concept in the context of princely households, see Fatma Süheyla İslamoğlu, "Taşradan Payitahta Şehzade Murad'ın (III.) Kapu Halkı" (Master's Thesis, İstanbul 29 Mayıs University, 2023).

⁴⁸ Metin Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth (Perchance to Return)," in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, ed. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 71.

⁴⁹ Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth," 64. Drawing on Selânikî's account, Kunt emphasizes the size and diversity of a prince's retinue as well as its role in maintaining administrative continuity and ceremonial authority in the provinces.

⁵⁰ İslamoğlu, "Taşradan Payitahta Şehzade Murad'ın (III.) Kapu Halkı," 19.

⁵¹ Haldun Eroğlu, *Osmanlı Devletinde Şehzadelik Kurumu* (Akçağ Yayınları, 2004), 106–10.

to the capital. After the accession of Selim I, the assignment of his son Süleyman to Manisa reinforced the emerging tradition that positioned this location as a politically advantageous post. Over time, such appointments were not just reflections of geographic strategy but indicators of a prince's rising prominence in the imperial succession landscape.⁵²

During the reign of Bayezid II, Selim I's father, the struggle for the throne had already begun through the appointments of princes to provincial governorship, indicating that the location of such appointments held significant political weight. Among the princes, the province assigned to them and the political climate of that region played an influential role in determining succession. Provinces like Kütahya, Amasya, Konya, Manisa and Kastamonu became central bases due to their geographical and political positioning.⁵³ Although these appointments were not based on a fixed system, like Manisa and Kütahya were often preferred due to a combination of practical considerations, including their location and their emerging role within the evolving traditions of dynastic succession. Provinces such as Amasya and Konya carried strategic and symbolic weight.⁵⁴ Their significance shifted over time, shaped by changing political priorities as well as broader developments in the empire's geography and administrative structure.⁵⁵

During Süleyman's reign, the placement of princes in different provinces became increasingly politically significant, as these appointments were closely observed as signs of favour and potential. Mustafa was assigned to Manisa in line with established custom in February 1533.⁵⁶ In 1541,⁵⁷ he was transferred to Amasya and Mehmed was appointed to Manisa instead. It is said that Süleyman favoured Hürrem Sultan and her sons, and that he made this arrangement deliberately.⁵⁸ The sequence

⁵² Feridun M. Emecen, *XVI. Asırda Manisa Kazâstı*, 2nd ed., XIV (Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 26; *Die Osmanischen Prinzen*, 5.

⁵³ İlhan Şahin, "Sancak," in TDV *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2009), 36:98; Kappert, *Die Osmanischen Prinzen*, 4.

⁵⁴ Pierce, *Imperial Harem*, 45.

⁵⁵ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Sancığa Çıkarılan Osmanlı Şehzadeleri," *Belleten* 39, no. 156 (1975): 679.

⁵⁶ Uluçay, "Kanunî Sultan Süleyman ve Ailesi ile İlgili Bazı Notlar ve Vesikalar," 229.

⁵⁷ Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 24.

⁵⁸ See Pierce, *Imperial Harem*, 80–82. Pierce rejects the view that Mustafa's transfer to Amasya in 1541 constituted a demotion (tenzil-i rütbe) in favor of Mehmed. Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Reaktion Books, 2005), 194. Necipoğlu discusses Süleyman

continued with Selim's transfer to Manisa on August 6, 1544⁵⁹ and Bayezid's appointment to Konya in 1546.⁶⁰

This delicate balance began to deteriorate, especially after the death of Hürrem Sultan in 1558.⁶¹ The resulting imbalance is often interpreted as a reflection of Süleyman's political weakness during the final years of his reign and his diminishing control over court dynamics. The weakening of Selim's symbolic image in Manisa and the growing popularity of the more energetic and dynamic Bayezid contributed to this tension. It has also been claimed that Hürrem Sultan supported Bayezid and saw him as a potential successor. However, this support never translated into an overt political move against Selim.⁶²

During the rivalry between Bayezid and Selim, political allegiances within the court shifted in subtle but significant ways. Some contemporary sources suggest that Hürrem Sultan may have viewed Bayezid more favorably, though her stance remained largely indirect. Her daughter Mihrimah Sultan and son-in-law Rüstem Paşa,⁶³ however, are known to have supported Bayezid's claim more visibly. Mihrimah is even reported to have offered financial support to Bayezid after their mother's death.⁶⁴ According to some accounts, she was deeply affected by the eventual outcome of the conflict and her husband's role in it. Yet her involvement, though discreet, contributed to the perception of imbalance and further complicated Selim's position in the eyes of the political elite.⁶⁵

and Hürrem's affection for their sons, cited in sources such as Gelibolulu Âlî, Navagero, and Trevisano, and examines how this affection found expression in the grand complex commissioned in 1544 in memory of Prince Mehmed.

⁵⁹ Emecen, "Selim II," 414.

⁶⁰ "... Şehzâde Sultan Bâyezîd Karaman sancağına çıktı. Şa'ban ayının gurresinde İstanbul'dan göçüp Karaman'a müteveccih oldu, hicretün tokuzyüzelliüçünde idi.". See F. Giese, *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Nihat Azamat (Marmara Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1992), 151.

⁶¹ Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 105.

⁶² Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 550.

⁶³ Foster and Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq*, Volume 1, 179; Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 33.

⁶⁴ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 297.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The execution of Mustafa in 1553,⁶⁶ prior to the Nahcivan Campaign, further intensified the tension between Selim and Bayezid. After this point, their rivalry transformed from a dynastic competition into a political confrontation. With Mustafa and Cihangir's death, the Ottoman palace was left with two prominent contenders, making the choice between them all the more critical. Thus, Süleyman the Magnificent was forced to make difficult decisions not only as a ruler but also as a father, caught between competing loyalties and dynastic priorities.

The reappointment of Selim to Konya and Bayezid to Amasya was a decisive moment that revealed the final orientation of succession planning. Amasya, due to its past associations with exile and its greater distance from Istanbul compared to Konya, was considered a less advantageous location and often interpreted as a form of political banishment. Bayezid, perceiving this appointment as exile, expressed his disapproval through various letters to his father, in which he claimed that he had been exiled and threatened. Selim, on the other hand, remained silent and began preparations for departure toward Konya. This conduct reinforced his image in Süleyman's eyes as the more experienced and disciplined candidate.

The political tension surrounding the assignment of *sancaks*, when viewed from a broader perspective, reflects a struggle for centralization within the Ottoman polity. In this regard, framing the rivalry among princes as "succession wars" signifies the institutionalized nature of political conflict within the Ottoman state structure and its broader ambition for centralized and absolute authority.

1.3. Formal and Stylistic Features of the Letters

Following the imperial order that reassigned him from Kütahya to Amasya, Bayezid's letters show a clear change: they became much longer and more emotional. In formal terms, Bayezid's letters are notably long and uninterrupted, often filling the entire page. Written without any space left between the lines, these letters reflect Bayezid's emotional intensity and his strong desire to express himself. At times, he even drew a

⁶⁶ The entry records the execution of Prince Mustafa and the dismissal of Grand Vizier Rüstem Paşa, replaced by Kara Ahmed Paşa, on 27 Şevval 960 (October 5–6, 1553). This date marks a critical turning point in the succession struggles of Süleyman's reign, as well as a moment of political reconfiguration at the highest levels of the Ottoman court. See İsmail Hami Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Kronolojisi*, 2nd ed. (Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2011), 2:283.

spiral across the page with his writing, an unconventional attempt to convey his sentiments. In this period, when many letters were written by secretaries, holograph letters carried particular significance, as they made the emotional appeals appear more immediate and convincing.⁶⁷

Most of his letters begin with similar formulaic expressions in which declarations of respect and affection towards his father precede his requests. Phrases such as “*ayağınız turabıyım*” (I am the dust at your feet), “*makbul oğlunuz*” (your worthy son), and “*beni mağbûn eylediniz*” (you have wronged me) illustrate Bayezid’s tone of both pleading and grievance.

As mentioned earlier, fifty letters from Bayezid and seventeen from Selim have survived. In contrast, Selim’s letters are shorter, more direct, and written in a formal tone. He generally emphasized his loyalty to his father, relayed events in a straightforward manner, and refrained from any overt displays of emotion. Compared to Bayezid’s writings, Selim’s letters appear more measured and controlled in both content and form. These differences reflect the contrasting temperaments of the two princes and at the same time point to their distinct political strategies. While Bayezid wrote in spirals, driven by emotional intensity and desperation, Selim adopted a composed tone and adhered to conventional diplomatic forms.⁶⁸

One question that arises is why Bayezid resorted to drawing spirals in his letters. This also raises questions about a father’s response to his son’s excessive behaviour and emotional explosions, as well as the son’s persistent attempts to gain his father’s approval. Bayezid’s use of language can be interpreted as an attempt to compensate for a deep-seated sense of inadequacy. In contrast, Süleyman appears to have believed that he could maintain control over the situation as long as he continued to pacify his son. Indeed, in the early stages, Süleyman dismissed Bayezid’s outbursts and merely sought to calm him down. Under such circumstances, it is understandable that, perceiving that he was not being taken seriously by his father, Bayezid would

⁶⁷ Carolyn James, “Letters,” in *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Routledge, 2017), 122.

⁶⁸ Selim’s letters are briefly taken into account for comparison, yet detailed analysis is reserved for Bayezid’s corpus. This choice reflects the scope of the study, which concentrates on the rhetorical and emotional dimensions most clearly observable in Bayezid’s writings.

escalate the tone of his letters. The profound disappointment Bayezid experienced, believing that he had fallen from his father's favour or even been "expelled from his paradise", ultimately drove him to engage in increasingly extreme behaviour. These letters reveal Bayezid's emotional breakdowns, desperate pleas to his father and defiance, as well as the faint traces of hope that his father had not given up on him entirely.

1.3.1. Thematic Differences and Emotional Intensity

In this study, the letters of Bayezid are not examined in strict chronological order. Instead, they are considered in relation to their emotional tone, rhetorical structure, and narrative function. However, the proposed categorisation is not rigid or uniform. As many of the letters cannot be precisely dated and often contain overlapping emotional layers or contradictions in expression, clear distinctions cannot always be drawn. This complexity reflects the limitations of the sources and the ways in which Bayezid's fluctuating state of mind was expressed in writing.

Accordingly, this classification should be understood as an interpretive effort that, while not precisely aligned with modern psychological states, nonetheless seeks to attribute a certain internal coherence to the historical subject. Rather than being reduced to fixed themes, the letters are considered as parts of a cumulative narrative in which anger, disappointment, and a persistent sense of grievance gradually intensify, at times culminating in emotional breakdown. This approach enables the letters to be integrated throughout the thesis without disrupting the overall narrative flow, while also sustaining the dramatic tension of the broader tragic structure. The aim is not to treat the documents as part of a cold chronological inventory, but rather to consider them within a multilayered narrative that seeks to capture the underlying emotional dynamics of the historical conflict.

1.3.2. The Meaning of the Correspondence in the Context of the Father and Son Relationship

The dominant patterns that emerge from Bayezid's letters include his persistent belief that he had been treated unjustly, his complaints that he had been placed in a difficult position due to Selim's slanders, and his repeated appeals to Sultan Süleyman in hopes

of receiving justice. In his letters addressed to his father, Bayezid frequently refers to Selim using descriptors such as “slanderer,” “disgraced,” and “adulterer.” While attempting to expose his brother’s faults in order to persuade Süleyman, Bayezid simultaneously constructs a narrative of victimhood to his own benefit. In this respect, the letters serve not only as instruments of personal complaint but also as reflections of a broader struggle for political legitimacy.

In Selim’s letters, by contrast, Bayezid is often portrayed as disobedient to the sultan’s commands. Nevertheless, Selim expresses sorrow over his younger brother’s misfortune, and he prays to God for Bayezid’s reformation, stating, “Almighty God, possessor of absolute power, turner of hearts, and source of goodness and generosity, May He turn his heart toward peace and reward, transform the sultan's situation for the better, and bring tranquility to the sultanate.”⁶⁹ Through such expressions, Selim projects an image of moral rectitude and filial prudence within the correspondence. These rhetorical strategies reveal the extent to which both princes were engaged in a contest to appear as the “legitimate” heir in the sultan’s estimation.

At first, it seems that Sultan Süleyman regarded these letters as a means of receiving information from his sons and maintaining communication. Over time, however, the correspondence came to function as one of the textual arenas in which perceptions of the two princes were formed and recalled, and may have been among the materials later consulted in connection with Süleyman’s eventual choice between his two sons.

These letters constitute written traces of a powerful father-son conflict. Bayezid’s language oscillates between anger, despair, and heartfelt pleading. While the forms of address conform to traditional expressions of respect, the subtext often reveals deep resentment, a longing for approval, and emotional disappointment. In Bayezid’s eyes, Sultan Süleyman is both a sovereign and an authoritative figure issuing commands. Yet, woven into the fabric of his letters is also the voice of a son

⁶⁹ “Hak Teala kâdir-i mutlakdır, mukallibü’l-kulûbdur, berr ü cûddur ki kalblerini selâm ve sevâba tahvil edüb ahvallerini hayra tebdil eyleyüb pâdişaha huzur-ı kalb ve memlekete işrahât hasıl ola.” BOA, TSMA.E. 753/38, fol. 9 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 6058/9). Also cited by Şerafettin Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 110-111.

who seeks understanding from his father. In this sense, the correspondence transcends Ottoman political history and may also be read as the documentary record of a deeply personal and emotional tragedy.

The absence of Süleyman's own letters renders the correspondence more of an echo chamber than a true dialogue. Through indirect references in his sons' writings, it becomes apparent that the sultan adopted varying tones—sometimes stern, sometimes conciliatory. However, the increasing emotional tension in Bayezid's letters implies that the response he expected from his father either never arrived or failed to meet his expectations. This silence or inadequacy led Bayezid to feel not only politically marginalized, but also symbolically orphaned. Over time, Bayezid's words ceased to reach his father and began to reverberate into a void.

At the same time, these letters may also be read through the lens of sibling rivalry. The figure that disrupts the texture of communication between Bayezid and Süleyman and at times becomes decisive is Selim. The careful rhetorical strategy observed in Selim's letters sharply contrasts with Bayezid's emotionally charged and at times excessive tone. This contrast is not only a reflection of personal differences in character but also represents two distinct models of princely behavior presented to Süleyman. Selim's language is a political maneuver, carefully constructed around themes of control, loyalty, and prudence. Bayezid's discourse, by contrast, is scattered, contradictory, and profoundly personal. This difference renders Süleyman's eventual choice more than a political decision; it imbues it with deep symbolic meaning. The chosen heir becomes not merely the successor to the throne, but the embodiment of a particular narrative, order, and emotional paradigm. In this respect, Süleyman's choice also provides significant insight into how he conceptualized his own authority as a father.

Thus, Bayezid's downfall should not be viewed solely as a political failure. The unfolding sequence of events constitutes the documentation of a tragic familial dissolution. These letters are dramatic texts that record the collapse of paternal authority, the alienation of the son, and the transformation of sibling rivalry into an

institutionalized preference. It is precisely these dimensions that allow the letters to be read not just as historical sources, but as constituent parts of a tragedy.

Viewed from this perspective, Bayezid's emotional outbursts, Süleyman's cautious reserve, and the father's inner dilemma may all begin to make more sense. For this reason, the dynastic conflict between father and son, as shaped through these original letters, is analyzed here alongside the political and emotional context of the period. Having outlined the interpretive approach and the general profiles presented in the letters, the following section turns to a more detailed discussion of the historical background and a discursive analysis of the correspondence.

1.4. The Appointment of Bayezid to Amasya and Selim to Konya

From the moment Bayezid received the order to relocate to Amasya, his letters display an intensifying blend of grievance, marked by evident disappointment. The rivalry between the princes also reshaped their relation to their father: while Selim remained outwardly compliant and communicative, Bayezid became increasingly distant, and this shift is legible in the tone and aims of his correspondence. The tragic dimension of the conflict lies both in dynastic politics and in a personal rupture between father and son, for Bayezid's efforts to resist his fate can be read as attempts to recover paternal approval.

The rivalry between the princes first manifested itself in the form of strategic provincial appointments. Selim had governed the sanjak of Konya for around two years when he was reassigned to Manisa in March 1544. Consequently, Selim's transfer to Manisa was interpreted by his contemporaries as a sign of imperial confidence, further intensifying the underlying competition between the brothers.

In 1553-1555, prior to the Nahcivan campaign,⁷⁰ the succession dispute took a different turn. This was with the death of Mustafa. At that time, Bayezid was sent to Edirne under protective custody. On October 6, 1553, Mustafa was executed in

⁷⁰ For a detailed analysis of the political and ideological background of the 1553-1555 Nahcivan campaign, and the impact of Prince Mustafa's execution on the morale of the Ottoman army, see Zahit Atçıl, "Warfare as a Tool of Diplomacy: Background of the First Ottoman-Safavid Treaty in 1555," *Turkish Historical Review* 10, no. 1 (2019): 4.

Rumelia following allegations that he was supporting a rebellion led by a certain *Düzme Mustafa* (False Mustafa).⁷¹ Bayezid was then ordered to suppress the rebel forces. This False Mustafa, allegedly in correspondence with the grand vizier and seeking alliance, was ultimately captured in Istanbul and executed.⁷² This incident prompted Sultan Süleyman to dispatch Sokollu Mehmed Paşa to Edirne with full authority. The so-called False Mustafa was interrogated and executed on December 31, 1553 and shortly thereafter Sultan Süleyman returned to Istanbul. At this point, the sultan questioned Bayezid's sincerity in quelling the rebellion and grew increasingly suspicious of his stance. While the father wished to punish Bayezid, Hürrem Sultan reportedly intervened to prevent it.⁷³

The rebellion was swiftly suppressed by Bayezid's forces. However, there are conflicting accounts, some of which suggest that Bayezid was negligent in suppressing the uprising, while others imply a degree of deliberate delay. Such politically sensitive claims further undermined Bayezid's standing in the eyes of his father.⁷⁴ Indeed, when Bayezid was reassigned to Kütahya in 1558,⁷⁵ reveal repeated attempts at remorse and self-justification. His efforts to apologize and explain his actions suggest that he was aware of his father's disappointment. What made matters worse was that even Hürrem, his mother and main supporter, failed to secure his forgiveness afterward. In one letter, Bayezid openly confesses his conflicted feelings:

⁷¹ For details of the rebellion, see Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 55–63.

⁷² Celalzade also claims that Bayezid corresponded with the vizier of the rebels, as cited in Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 137.

⁷³ Foster and Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq*, Volume 1, 186.

⁷⁴ Busbecq was quite certain that the rebellion had been orchestrated by Bayezid himself. He states that the attempt failed only due to his father's swift intervention. See Foster and Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq*, Volume 1, 185; Ahmet Refik claims that the rebellion was a joint conspiracy between Hürrem and Bayezid. According to this interpretation, Hürrem Sultan aimed to avoid being held responsible for the execution of Mustafa and to ensure the enthronement of her own son. See Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Kadınlar Saltanatı* (Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), 1:49–50; Turan provides a detailed account of the rebellion and remains cautious about the claim that it was entirely orchestrated by Bayezid. However, he argues that Bayezid hoped to benefit from the uprising. He also refers to a *arz tezkiresi* (petition) indicating that Bayezid met with Üveyl Tavlıca, one of the rebellion's ringleaders. See Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 61.

⁷⁵ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 548.

“[...] If our humble soul is granted its wish, If this sinful head is blessed with the forgiveness of His Majesty, I swear by my life and soul, I would not know how to express my joy.[...]”⁷⁶

As a result, Bayezid was ultimately assigned to the sanjak of Kütahya. This appointment should be considered in light of his standing at court. Moreover, the perception in some quarters that he was the most favorable heir may have strengthened his position. His reputation as a cultivated and generous prince had already attracted the attention of scholars and poets. Even before this period, *Şevkî* dedicated his *Menâkıb-ı Emir Sultan* to Bayezid, referring to him as a “fortunate young prince” (*şehzâde-i cüvân-baht*) and praising his generosity by likening it to that of *Hâtîm et-Tâî*.⁷⁷

His appointment to Kütahya was met with public enthusiasm, and even poets wrote about it. In fact, when Bayezid was reassigned from Konya to Kütahya, a divan poet in his retinue named *Firâkî Abdurrahman Çelebi* even presented him with a *kaside* (panegyric poem).⁷⁸ During his governorship in Kütahya, it seems that people had high hopes for his future; when he met *Kutbüddin Mekkî*, he promised that if he became sultan, he would fully restore the Muslim pious endowments and augment them from his own resources. He also said that he was prepared to swear an oath to reassure his interlocutor.⁷⁹

Bayezid's time in Kütahya lasted five years. His discord with his elder brother, Selim, who governed the nearby sanjak of Manisa, soon became a topic of discussion in Istanbul. Bayezid began sending his brother threatening and disparaging letters,

⁷⁶ TSMA.E. 758/73, fol. 2 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 6572/2). Also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaaları*, 62.

⁷⁷ Fatih Bayram, “Kanûnî Devrinde Yavuz’un Hatırasıyla Yaşayan bir Şâir: Şevkî Sâî ve Eserleri,” in *Suleyman the Lawgiver and His Reign: New Sources, New Approaches* (İbn Haldun Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020), 182.

⁷⁸ For the *kaside* see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Kütahya Şehri* (Devlet Matbaası, 1932), 234.

⁷⁹ Kâmil Ekrem, “Hicri Onuncu-Milâdi On Altıncı Asırda Yurdumuzda Dolaşan Arap Seyyahlarından Gazzi-Mekkî Seyahatnamesi,” *Tarih Semineri Dergisi*, no. 3 (1937): 40.

adopting a harsh and insulting tone.⁸⁰ Selim, reporting these letters to their father, portrayed Bayezid as a bully and a disruptive figure, while presenting himself as a loyal and respectful son. Upon learning of this correspondence, Süleyman's first reaction was to instruct Bayezid to treat Selim with due respect and to refrain from insulting him.

Bayezid denied the accusations, claiming he had not used abusive language toward Selim. He objected that Selim had exaggerated the issue and reported it to the sultan unjustly. However, the tension between Selim and Bayezid continued to escalate, and at a certain point, Sultan Süleyman found it necessary to intervene in the conflict himself.

The mutual accusations exchanged between the princes were distressing. Realizing that he needed to make a decisive intervention to resolve this animosity, Sultan Süleyman sought a solution. Given the proximity of the brothers' sanjaks and the increasing risk of direct conflict between them, the sultan decided to send each prince to a more distant province. On September 6, 1558,⁸¹ by imperial decree, each prince received a *terakki* (an augmentation to his stipend) of 300,000 *akçe* (the basic Ottoman silver coin and unit of account)⁸²: Selim was transferred from Manisa to Konya, and Bayezid from Kütahya to Amasya. Accordingly, Selim's son, Murad, was assigned to the sanjak of Akşehir, while Bayezid's eldest son, Orhan, was appointed to the Çorum sanjak.⁸³ Taken together, these measures appear designed to keep the princes geographically apart and at some remove from the political center. Although

⁸⁰ He uses the term *muhanнат*, implying cowardice: "Selim Han benim hayfumdan helâk olmuşdur şükür Hudâ'ya ben ondan küçük olam ol büyük karındaşum ola yine benden böyle korka gâyet lekelik muhanнетlikdür" See TSMA. E. 753/39, fol. 6 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 6059/1). Also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 111; "Sultan Bayezid, 'adâveti gün günden mezîd' idüp birâder-i mihterini meydâna da'vet ve ta'n-âmîz mektûblar ile nezgepler gönderüp izhâr-ı şecâ'at ve edebden hâric vaz' u harekete başladı... El-kıssa Bâyezîd Hân'un Şah Selîm'e yazdığı mektûblar ki 'aynıyla cenâb-ı pâdişâhîye ulaştı." See Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî, *Künhü'l-Ahbâr* (4. Rükün), 1st ed., ed. Derya Örs, trans. Suat Donuk (Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2024), 5:277-78.

⁸¹ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamanı*, 549.

⁸² On the terminology: Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, The Modern Middle East Series 14 (Columbia University Press, 1983), 158-59; Recep Ahışalı, "Terakki," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 40 (İstanbul, 2011); See also H. Bowen, "Akçe," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online* (EI-2 English) (Brill).

⁸³ Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 77.

intended to defuse tensions, the reassignments had the opposite effect; the situation continued to deteriorate and the rift between the brothers widened further.

What followed this decision marked a turning point in the conflict: a tragic misstep. While Selim obeyed his father's order and accepted the transfer to Konya, Bayezid resisted the same decree and refused to accept the appointment to Amasya. The fact that both princes responded differently to the same order caused a noticeable shift in how they were perceived by Süleyman. From that moment on, Bayezid's actions and behavior only served to deepen the divide between him and his father.

1.4.1. Bayezid's Resistance to the Appointment to Amasya

Bayezid's refusal to comply with the order to relocate to Amasya cannot be viewed as simply an attempt to evade an administrative command. To him, Kütahya was more than just a provincial assignment; it was a place that symbolised his legitimate position within the dynasty. The years he spent there had enabled him to consolidate his political network and nurture a sense of belonging that bolstered his claim to the throne. Therefore, leaving Kütahya signified not only a geographical move, but also the disruption of his identity and his vision for the future.

By contrast, Amasya carried a very different meaning for Bayezid. Once considered one of the most important princely provinces, by the mid-sixteenth century it was increasingly seen as being outside the dynastic core.⁸⁴ In Bayezid's eyes, his appointment there signalled isolation from his rivals and exclusion from the heart of the dynasty.⁸⁵ Therefore, his reluctance was less about defying authority and more about resisting symbolic marginalisation.

The letters that Bayezid sent to his father clearly reveal this concern. Sometimes he claimed that his preparations were incomplete; at other times, he cited the difficulties of travel, always seeking to postpone the relocation. These excuses were

⁸⁴ Kappert, *Die Osmanischen Prinzen*, 4–5.

⁸⁵ As Bayezid was making his way from Kütahya to Amasya, the Anatolian beylerbeyi Cenabi Ahmed Paşa sent an *ariza* (report) to Sultan Süleyman, in which he described Bayezid's own perspective on this decision: "El-hâsıl, ekser melâlet ve nedâmetleri tahtdan ba'îd düşdükleridir. 'Selim Hân hazretlerini yakın sancakda karâr etdirdiler, nazar-ı şerifleri andadır, bana değildir" deyü buyurub gücenmiştir ve muttasıl 'âkıbetleri tedârikinde olmuşlardır." Quoted in Şerafettin Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 254. From TSMA. E. 753/7 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 6027/1).

rhetorical devices through which he sought to preserve his dynastic identity and maintain his claim to legitimacy. Essentially, his refusal to abandon Kütahya was an attempt to resist the redefinition of his role.

Even after being forced to leave Kütahya, Bayezid did not change his stance. En route, he stopped at every staging post to compose new letters in a final attempt to persuade his father. Through these writings, Bayezid addressed not only the sultan, but also presented himself as a wronged and emotionally abandoned prince. This heightened the dramatic dimension of the conflict, providing the backdrop to the persuasive letters that will be examined in the following section.

1.5. Letters As a Tool of Persuasion

In the letters Bayezid wrote to his father, his conviction that he had been wronged is clearly evident. One of the recurring expressions in his correspondence is his self-description as *mağbûn* (deceived or wronged) and his portrayal of Selim as *ber-murâd* (having attained his desire). Bayezid composed these letters with the belief that he had been misled or betrayed, while Selim had achieved his ambitions. In Bayezid's eyes, the injustice he suffered was the result of Selim's slanders and schemes. He could not come to terms with the fact that his father had subjected him to such treatment and believed that Selim was solely responsible for the turn of events.

One of these letters reveals Bayezid's deep sense of injustice and loss. He laments the fact that Selim has succeeded in his aims by separating him from his post and residence in Kütahya. Having already been devastated by the death of his mother, Hürrem Sultan, on 15 April 1558,⁸⁶ he now felt that his father's decision had caused him further sorrow and that he no longer knew where to go or what would become of him.

“[...] What I resent is that the will of Selim Han has been realized; you have deceived me. Am I Selim Han's servant that you have been insisting on my sultan all this time, saying, “Send Bayezid to Amasya” Moreover, on Selim Han's word, for his sake, you

⁸⁶ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamani*, 545.

took me away from my home and place and left me in Amasya. Oh, I am ruined. It would be a pity for me if I die in this grief. Oh, oh... The separation of my deceased sultan mother and that misfortune had already destroyed us; that pain had already crushed us, yet you did not have patience with even one of them. You humiliated me in the eyes of everyone and brought us to this position. What can I do now? [...]"⁸⁷

In the same letter, Bayezid stated that he had never expected such treatment from his father.⁸⁸ This treatment clearly referred to his transfer to Amasya. Since the significance of this assignment for Bayezid has already been discussed, the focus here is on how Bayezid transformed this decision into a narrative of victimhood in his letters. In his correspondence, he repeatedly described himself as deceived. This persistent emphasis shows how he positioned himself as the aggrieved son and shaped both his emotional stance and rhetorical strategy around that narrative.

Another prominent theme in Bayezid's letters is his expression of suffering and his repeated allusions to death. From the moment he was reassigned from Kütahya to Amasya, he appears to have perceived this decision as a personal exclusion. He openly denigrated the city of Amasya, repeatedly stating that residing there was tantamount to death.

It is also possible that Bayezid associated Amasya with a sense of danger because it had previously been the *sancak* of his elder brother Mustafa, who was executed there.⁸⁹ This connection may help explain the tone of concern and despair that runs through his correspondence, yet such possibilities remain open to further consideration.

⁸⁷ TSMA. E. 657/43, fol. 20 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 3924/1). Also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavğaları*, 88-89. Probably dated November 1558.

⁸⁸ Ibid., in the original text "beni yerümünden yurdumdan ayırdınız bana zulm ve hayf eylediniz hiç beni pâd-i şâhumdan böyle ummazdum."

⁸⁹ Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavğaları*, 80.

“[...] In your letter, you stated that I had written some words of complaint and spoken ill of Amasya. My sultan, I say again that my grievance reaches from earth to sky. I do criticize Amasya, for how could I not? I cannot remain here under any condition. I would rather choose death. [...]”⁹⁰

Bayezid’s emotional state appears to follow a highly complex trajectory. On the one hand, he equates residing in Amasya with death; on the other, he adopts an openly aggressive stance toward his brother Selim in his letters. This particular letter is dominated by themes of profound despair and intense anger. Bayezid’s anger occasionally reaches a point where it transgresses the expected bounds of filial respect. Indeed, he does not hesitate to write, “*Tell your brave son that Amasya befits him,*” a statement that reflects both bitterness and defiance.

“[...] I will not remain in Amasya. You have wronged me and done me an injustice. For the sake of Selim Han, and at his word, you sent me to Amasya. If Amasya is truly such a fine place, then give it to Selim Han, and grant me Karaman instead. Let us see whether Selim would accept Amasya. If it is indeed such a desirable place, then tell your son — your brave son — that it befits him. Give Amasya to Selim. [...]”⁹¹

In the same letter, Bayezid’s continued resistance to going to Amasya is also evident. He swears, insisting that he cannot remain in Amasya of his own volition. It is equally clear that Süleyman sought to persuade his son by emphasizing Amasya’s

⁹⁰ TSMA. E. 657/43, fol. 19v (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 3924/14). Also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 100.

⁹¹ Ibid.

historical significance, noting that it was from this province that Sultan Bayezid II had ascended to the throne.⁹² In response, Bayezid rejected this argument, stating that Amasya was no longer a *uç sancak* (frontier province) of strategic importance.

Moreover, Bayezid accused his father of being swayed by the slanders of the *haramzades* (baseborn men), asserting that while sultans would ordinarily be expected to act in the best interest of their sons, this was no longer the case. Through such statements, he implicitly criticized his father's judgment and questioned his loyalty as a parent.

"[...] By God, I swear I will not remain here of my own will. Later, you will regret this, and the blame will not be on me. You have wronged me and shown me injustice. You have deceived me, and granted Selim his desire. In your letter, you also wrote: 'Our ancestors were greater than us; each of them resided in Amasya for many years, and for this, one must give thanks to God.' But my sultan, if our ancestors did reside in Amasya, back then it was not a place of exile but a frontier province. The sultans among my ancestors would choose their sons themselves, and they would never heed the words of *haramzedes* (baseborn men) regarding their son. [...]"⁹³

Reluctant to leave Kütahya, Bayezid this time invoked the winter season as a justification for delay. He argued that the harsh conditions of travel and the size of his entourage would hinder mobility, potentially resulting in the loss of lives along the way. Yet behind these logistical concerns lay a strategic motive: by spending the winter

⁹² Kappert, *Die Osmanischen Prinzen*, 9. Kappert emphasizes that Amasya was regarded as a prestigious governorship due to its frontier position and its association with succession, and she explicitly distances herself from Babinger's interpretation of Amasya as a place of exile for princes.

⁹³ TSMA. E. 657/43, fol. 19v (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 3924/14). Also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 100.

in Kütahya, Bayezid hoped to buy time and ultimately persuade his father to reverse the decision regarding his transfer.

At this stage, Bayezid is adopting a more conciliatory tone than he was earlier. Although he still resists the order, he now presents his case in terms of obedience and mercy. This shift does not reflect a change of character, but rather a tactical adjustment, revealing his lingering hope that the Sultan's decision might still be overturned.

"[...] My sultan, if you still possess any mercy, then at the very least, permit me to spend this winter in Kütahya. In early spring, I will not delay and will set out toward Amasya after *Nevruz*.⁹⁴ If this is pleasing to your noble will, I shall be content. If it is not, and you command me to go regardless, I will not oppose your imperial order and will depart immediately. However, I know that the hardship of winter will cause me great suffering. It will also bring difficulty to many Muslims, especially given the large number of animals with me, most of which will likely perish in the cold. Whatever you deem appropriate in your mercy, please act accordingly. I will not disobey your command. Whatever your will may be, kindly inform me without delay. Hoping once again for your grace and compassion, I have sent this letter. [...]"⁹⁵

Bayezid's psychological resistance to leaving Kütahya is clearly reflected in his letters. At first, he refused to accept the decision and displayed open defiance; when this failed, he shifted to negotiation. Eventually, he began calculating how to emerge

⁹⁴ *Nevrûz* or *Nawrûz*, the Persian New Year, marks the vernal equinox. R. Levy et al., "Nawrûz," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online (EI-2 English)* (Brill, 2012).

⁹⁵ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 12 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924). This letter is also referred to (without archival reference) by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 81-82.

from the crisis in the most advantageous way, requesting substantial promotions (*terakki*) from his father as a form of compensation.

To this end, Bayezid sent envoys to appear before the Sultan and plead his case. However, Sultan Süleyman told the envoys that his son had to obey his orders. He responded firmly: “To oppose my will is to oppose my decree. If he still expects favour from this state and hopes to share in its fortune, let him abandon his stubbornness and gird himself with the belt of obedience.” Furthermore, Süleyman commanded that, with winter approaching and the province of Amasya in need of protection, Bayezid was to be forcibly removed and sent to his new post if he disobeyed again. In short, Bayezid was expected to leave Kütahya immediately and take up his new governorship.⁹⁶ Eventually, when Bayezid agreed to leave Kütahya, he continued to stall at each staging post (*menzil*), pressing for the fulfillment of his demands before proceeding further. As he calculated how to emerge from the crisis with maximum advantage, his strategic missteps only served to hasten the inevitable end awaiting him. Indeed, with every halt along the way, Bayezid began to draw closer *menzil by menzil* to his ultimate fate.

Bayezid departed from Kütahya on October 28, 1558.⁹⁷ During his journey, he lingered at various staging posts and continued to send letters to his father from each stop. As noted above, throughout this period, he sought to persuade Süleyman to reverse his decision. These letters continued even after Bayezid reached Amasya. Over the course of nearly two months, he spent time in locations such as Eskişehir, Ankara, Katarsaray, and Çorum, before finally arriving in Amasya on December 21, 1558.⁹⁸

Compelled to leave Kütahya under the pressure of his father’s warnings and the insistence of intermediaries, he first arrived in Eskişehir. There, he deliberately delayed his journey under the pretext of securing provisions and composed a new letter to the Sultan. In this letter, while informing his father that he had complied with

⁹⁶ Derviş Mustafa, *İtaatnâme*, fol. 20a. Modern transcription in Pınar Tarlak, “Klasik Dönem Taht Mücadeleleri: Kanuni ve Oğulları” (Master’s Thesis, Bahçeşehir University, 2016), 118. “Eger devletden behre ve sa’âdetden hisse istid’â iderse ‘inâdı terk ve kemer-i inkiyâdı meyânına berk itsün ve emr üzere varub mahal-ı me’mûre gitsün.” For an earlier use, see Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 84-85.

⁹⁷ Derviş Mustafa, *İtaatnâme*, fol. 13b (via Tarlak, 65).

⁹⁸ Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 90.

the order to depart from Kütahya, Bayezid also expected some form of compensation in return for his obedience. Addressing the Sultan directly, he requested the delivery of thirty thousand gold coins, as previously promised. Furthermore, he demanded to be granted the rank of *beylerbeyi* (governor general)⁹⁹ upon his arrival in Amasya. Failing that, he asked instead for a substantial promotion. He wanted *ten times one hundred thousand akçes*. He also wanted *has* (revenues assigned to officeholders)¹⁰⁰ for the members of his retinue.

What is particularly striking here is Bayezid's demand to be appointed *beylerbeyi* of Amasya. In classical Ottoman administrative practice, princes were typically assigned to provincial governorships with vilayet centers, while the title of *beylerbeyi* was not a rank typically requested or held by a prince. Viewed from this perspective, Bayezid's request for a *beylerbeyilik* can be interpreted as an attempt to reassert his status and political legitimacy in the eyes of his father. At the end of the letter, Bayezid states that the fulfillment of these demands would "console his heart" (*gönlüm tesellâ olur*), thus implying that his obedience carries an emotional cost. Otherwise, he warns, "May no excuse remain" (*bahâne kalmasun*), making his expectations unmistakably clear.

The following letter reveals that Bayezid's departure from Kütahya was not just a physical move, but also part of a wider political and emotional negotiation process. For him, loyalty was not demonstrated through unquestioning obedience; rather, he presented each act of compliance as deserving of recognition and reward.

"[...] I am writing to you from Eskişehir, having departed from Kütahya. Please send Selim Han to Karaman without delay and the gold as promised. I have already endured great losses and hope you will at least provide 30,000 gold coins. Please also

⁹⁹ As Kunt has shown, the office of *beylerbeyi* (governor general) was the highest rank in the provincial hierarchy, vested with both extensive fiscal resources and military authority. It was therefore not a position ordinarily associated with princes. See Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650*, The Modern Middle East Series (Columbia University Press, 1983), 13.

¹⁰⁰ On the nature of the *has* as revenues rather than an office, see Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants*, 13.

bestow upon me the rank of *beylerbeylik* in Amasya. If not, then a tenfold promotion to one million gold coins, the *sancak* of Osman and two estates worth 200,000 gold coins for my servants would be enough. If you grant these favours, you will console my heart, and I shall depart with peace of mind. May no excuse remain. [...]"¹⁰¹

In order to inform his father of his departure from Eskişehir in November 10, 1558¹⁰² and Bayezid composed a new letter. This letter was written in response to Süleyman's previous message, in which he had promised to fulfill Bayezid's requests, with the exception of *beylerbeyilik*,¹⁰³ on the condition that he left Eskişehir. In his reply, Bayezid stated that he had, in fact, departed from Eskişehir seven days earlier. Nevertheless, he also expressed his disappointment that his father had placed trust in the words of his accusers, namely Selim.

Noteworthy phrases such as "*Is it not a pity for me?*" and "*Now, show some justice!*" reflect not merely a defensive posture but also an attempt to construct a rhetorically charged narrative aimed at appealing to his father's emotions. These expressions clearly reveal Bayezid's ongoing effort to frame himself through the lens of victimhood. The overall rhetoric of the letter is oriented toward persuasion, revealing a deliberate strategy to gain both sympathy and political leverage.

"[...] My sultan, in your noble letter you stated that you would grant me a promotion, assign the sanjak of Osman, provide timars for my two sons, and send gold, that you would fulfill all

¹⁰¹ TSMA. E. 753/39 fol. 4 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 6059/6). Also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavğaları*, 81. Turan refers to; M. Çağatay Uluçay, "Selim-Bâyezid Mücadelesi," *Tarih Vesikaları* 3, no. 18 (1961): 386.

¹⁰² Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavğaları*, 86.

¹⁰³ Turan provides a detailed enumeration of Bayezid's *murads*(requests), ranging from large cash grants and sancaks for his sons to promotions for his retainers and symbolic gifts. Within this extensive list, his demand for a *beylerbeyilik* appears unusually bold, standing out as an extraordinary claim that carried significant political significance. See Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavğaları*, 96.

my wishes except for the governorship, and that I should depart from Eskişehir without delay. Everything you wrote is now understood. May each of your days be like a thousand, my sultan. I am your humble servant. My sultan, it has been seven days since I left Eskişehir. Now I ask that you judge fairly. Am I not also deserving of some compassion? Without informing me, you have formed suspicions against me based on idle words. But as you see, it has been seven days since I departed from Eskişehir, and from this point forward I am prepared to continue on my way. [...]"¹⁰⁴

Süleyman, who continued to monitor Bayezid's movements at each staging post, had received word that his son had departed from Eskişehir and reached Ankara. The sultan regularly sent new instructions, clearly asserting his authority and maintaining strict oversight over Bayezid's journey. In requesting another letter from Bayezid shortly after he had advanced a few steps beyond Ankara, Süleyman subtly indicated his suspicion that his son was attempting to stall and manipulate the situation. Indeed, instead of following the designated route promptly, Bayezid frequently delayed his progress and often provided incomplete or belated information in his letters.

In his response, Bayezid complained about his father's lack of trust. He stated that more than ten days had passed since he had left Ankara and that he had already reached Çorum. He expressed his frustration that his father still doubted his presence in Çorum. At the same time, Bayezid continued to insist that Selim, too, should now leave Bursa – thereby persisting in his calls for reciprocal action.

¹⁰⁴ TSMA. E. 753/39 fol. 3 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 6059).

"[...]Your noble letter has arrived, and everything you wrote is now clear. You stated that I should remain true to my word, that there are three stops beyond Ankara, and from there I should send a letter. You also said that if I fail to keep my promise and do not send one, I would be considered unfaithful to my oath. You wrote that I keep saying "I am going, I am going," but that I am still in Ankara. Everything you have said is now understood, my sultan. But it has been more than ten days since I left Ankara. I had informed my sultan several times in my letters that I would travel two or three stops beyond Ankara and then send a letter. You said you would send everything you had promised, and indeed I am now in Çorum, and I have written this letter here. So now, without further delaying what you promised out of your grace, please send it. I am waiting. How long has it been since you first made these promises? And yet still you delay. What more can I say? If I were to write everything I know, you would be offended. But knowing everything and saying nothing is also a virtue. Here I am in Çorum, constantly occupied day and night with prayers for your well-being, as you know. Ah, you have wronged me. My condition is extremely sorrowful. You must know that I am consumed by grief, distress, and resentment. I have become afraid of these places. In such a disheartened state, how can I possibly hope for any good? I have now come to Çorum as well, yet still you do not believe me. Meanwhile, Selim Han has been residing in Bursa for many days, and you do not urge him to act with the same urgency. May you remain in health. Is this justice? I am in Çorum, yet you are still saying I am in Ankara. Is it not unfair? Is it not a pity for me? [...]"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 21 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 3924/8). This letter was also cited by Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 90.

One of the cities Bayezid passed through on his journey to Amasya was Çorum. His stay there lasted longer than expected, prompting yet another warning from Sultan Süleyman. In response, Bayezid expressed the belief that his father harbored *suizan* (ill suspicion) toward him and urged him not to heed the slanders of those around him. In the letter, he insisted that he did not deserve such treatment and declared that he would no longer make any requests of his father.

However, immediately following this statement, Bayezid contradicted himself by proceeding to list new demands. These kinds of contradictory and inconsistent expressions not only revealed his intentions but also compelled the sultan to exercise even closer oversight over his son. Moreover, such inconsistency likely contributed to the perception that Bayezid was an unreliable and untrustworthy figure in the eyes of the sultan.

“[...] My sultan, I had sworn many times that I would never go to Amasya, yet what can I say? For the sake of Your Majesty, I have accepted that sin and have set out for Amasya. I wrote this letter in Çorum. I could have remained in Çorum and its surroundings, but for the sake of Your Majesty, I accepted it and now proceed toward Amasya. On the tenth day of Rabi' al-Awwal, I will arrive in the city of Amasya. I have accepted this humiliation, though what use is it? It does not ease the burden on me even as much as a straw. Time and again, you listen to the words of corrupt men and suspect me. I know well what slanders have been spoken in these lands. I know everything that has been said to you. In the end, all you heard proved to be lies. Then why do you still believe those who bring false news? Is this fitting? Where has justice gone? I will say no more. Do as you see fit. Now I have arrived in Amasya and await your good pleasure. From this point forward, you have no further excuse for distance.

In accordance with your promise, grant all that I have requested.

[...]”¹⁰⁶

At this stage, Sultan Süleyman was closely monitoring the movements of both Selim and Bayezid as they proceeded toward their new provincial appointments, and he had intensified his precautions. He dispatched Pertev Paşa to Bayezid and Sokollu Mehmed Paşa to Selim, both in the role of advisors (*nasihatçi*). Süleyman’s primary aim was to eliminate the possibility that Bayezid might launch an attack – either on his brother or, more gravely, on the sultan himself. To preempt any reaction from Bayezid, Süleyman also appointed an advisor to Selim, thus maintaining the appearance of balance.

According to the *ariza* (report) submitted by the pasha assigned to Bayezid, the prince was indeed present in Çorum at the time. The fact that Sultan Süleyman required independent confirmation of his son’s whereabouts – even after Bayezid had already reported them – demonstrates the extent to which mutual trust had entirely eroded between father and son.

“[...] The humble servant respectfully reports the following: it was stated that no further news had yet been received. Our own man has not yet arrived. However, according to information brought by others who traveled separately, it is confirmed that, as reported yesterday, he has indeed arrived in Çorum. [...]”¹⁰⁷

At a certain point, the letters Bayezid composed during his transfer from Kütahya to Amasya ceased to be mere complaints. They evolved into texts of explicit bargaining and conditional loyalty. While Bayezid continued to employ a language of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ TSMA. E. 812/30 (formerly catalogued as TA, E. 7075/1).

obedience, it becomes clear that he gradually escalated his demands. In each successive letter, he introduced new conditions, attempting to exert influence over his father's decision-making process. Oscillating between a tone of supplication and one of veiled threats, these letters reflect both the psychological anxiety and political insecurity triggered by the Amasya appointment. For Bayezid, loyalty had ceased to be a virtue – it had become a commodity to be negotiated.

Bayezid also conveyed his displeasure with the Amasya appointment through emotional and somatic expressions. In his letters, he described Amasya as “a filthy place with a vile climate.” In the following letter, he again requested a change of post, claiming that his constitution was incompatible with the region's climate. It is evident, however, that this complaint was not simply about health or temperament. Rather, Bayezid was now using physical discomfort as yet another bargaining chip. He repeatedly asked his father for forgiveness for his past insolence and expressed hope that the sultan had not been hurt by his behavior – thus reinforcing his narrative of victimhood.

Toward the end of the letter, Bayezid directly compares himself to his brother by proposing that Manisa be given to Selim and Kütahya be reassigned to him. This suggestion marks a bold move: he not only questions the fairness of the current arrangement but also presents a solution that would restore him to a more favorable and symbolically powerful position.

“[...] Who would leave someone in a place like Amasya, with its bad air? Where is your sense of humanity? I have written to my sultan many times, and even if I showed some impertinence due to my restlessness, I always apologized at the end of each letter. I had hoped that you would not be offended by me. Now, let the past be the past, and release me from this prison. If you are planning a campaign against the infidels, I will certainly not be an obstacle. I will remain in Amasya and wait patiently until your return. Once you return from the campaign, grant me the

sanjak of Kütahya once again, and bestow the sanjak of Manisa upon Selim Han. [...]”¹⁰⁸

In another letter, Bayezid once again lost his restraint and complained about Selim. Upon learning that Selim had passed through Kütahya on his way to Konya, Bayezid asked his father to warn him. He even asserted that Selim should have taken the route through Seydi-Gazi instead of Kütahya. This boldness may have stemmed from a self-protective instinct, reflecting Bayezid’s heightened sense of vulnerability. However, the inconsistency in his rhetoric appears to have undermined his credibility in the eyes of his father, making it increasingly difficult for Sultan Süleyman to take Bayezid seriously.

“[...] My sultan, Selim Han’s intention is to pass through Kütahya on his way to Konya. If this is truly the case, I am absolutely not content with it. I beg Your Majesty to issue a firm warning to Selim. He must not pass through Kütahya. Let him go through Seydi-gazi instead. May my sultan remain in good health. [...]”¹⁰⁹

1.5.1. The Unraveling of Discourse: Emotional and Rhetorical Fractures in Bayezid’s Letters

The correspondence that intensified following Bayezid’s reassignment to Amasya provides rich material for examining texts marked by personal, emotional, and symbolic ruptures. At first glance, these letters appear to be structured around a discourse of loyalty and obedience in line with dynastic tradition. However, the anxiety, mistrust, and fragility that permeate between the lines bring the tragic tension at the heart of the narrative into sharp relief.

¹⁰⁸ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 24v (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924).

¹⁰⁹ TSMA. E. 753/39 fol. 3v (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 6059).

In the opening lines of his letters, Bayezid does not merely declare his obedience to the sultan, his father, but also attempts to present such obedience as the moral and political foundation of his legitimacy. A recurrent phrase found in nearly every letter, “I have no business apart from the noble command” (*emr-i şerifinizden gayrı bir işim yoktur*) it serves not only to express loyalty but also to reveal that Bayezid perceives himself as having no alternative course of action, and that his sphere of maneuver is entirely constrained.

At this point, the language of obedience is not merely a passive gesture of submission; it is also a strategic rhetorical construction through which Bayezid seeks to assert his legitimacy. His discourse is thus not one of resignation, but rather of constrained agency articulated through a carefully constructed performative vocabulary.

However, as the letters progress, this discourse undergoes formal shifts. Bayezid’s language increasingly falters, giving way to a series of emotional tones delivered in quick succession. In some letters, his voice rises with intensity; in others, he speaks with suppressed anger. For instance, the expression “*gamm ve gussa ve gayretten helâk bilesiz bilmem nice idem n’eyleyem*”¹¹⁰ (From sorrow, grief, and wounded pride, I am perishing. I know not what to do.) stands as a deeply poignant question directed from a son cast into solitude toward his father. It is, at the same time, a stark declaration of helplessness.

In yet another letter, Bayezid writes: “What can I do, what shall I do, I do not know. My sultan does not protect us, does not hear our words, he sees us as enemies. Oh! There are matters between us that astonish the entire world. Oh! We are left without support. Praise be to God, every man expects compassion from his father, yet there is none from you.”¹¹¹ Through these lines, Bayezid not only blames his father’s

¹¹⁰ The phrase “I am perishing from grief and sorrow” (*gamm ve gussadan helâk oldum*) appears in many of/several letters. As an example of Bayezid’s spiral-like rhetoric and repetitions, this expression can also be found in numerous letters identified in the archives. See TSMA. E. 657/43 fols. 1, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 15, 19, 20, 22 (Formerly in TA, E. 3924); TSMA. E. 753/39 fol. 2,4,5 (Formerly in TA, E. 6059).

¹¹¹ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 3 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924). For the transcription, see Appendix I.

silence but also calls into question his compassion. His increasingly turbulent tone reflects deep emotional turmoil and a growing sense of abandonment.

Bayezid's rhetorical instability in such passages bears striking resemblance to the psychological fluctuations of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Just as Hamlet wavers between despair, accusation, and disillusionment in the face of betrayal and collapse, Bayezid's voice is marked by the same oscillation between desperation and indignation. These expressions serve as key examples of the rising emotional tension that permeates Bayezid's narrative and signal the tragic dimension of his inner crisis.

As previously noted, the fact that Sultan Süleyman's letters have not survived does not disrupt the narrative balance between the correspondents; rather, it amplifies the dramatic impact of Bayezid's account by turning it into an echo reverberating within a void. This silence is not merely a matter of unanswered letters, it becomes a strategic manifestation of power, one that renders the sovereign body invisible. The repeated and increasingly intense lamentations in Bayezid's letters represent a struggle for presence, constructed in direct response to that silence.¹¹² What becomes significant is not whether Süleyman responded to his son's letters, but rather Bayezid's spiral-like desperation in seeking a reply. His efforts reflect not only a desire to maintain political relevance, but also a deeply human yearning to be heard and acknowledged.

In this section, the analyzed letters are examined through both thematic layers and the emotional oscillations present in Bayezid's rhetoric. These letters, woven with tones of pleading, reproach, negotiation, and resignation, set the stage for the visible unraveling of an Ottoman prince. Through the recurring discursive patterns and emotional registers, we observe the steady erosion of Bayezid's sense of self and position.

Certain rhetorical themes and motifs emerge consistently throughout Bayezid's letters. These recurring elements allow us to trace the fluctuations in his

¹¹² William M. Reddy defines "emotives" as speech acts that convey and shape emotional experience. Bayezid's increasingly urgent laments in the face of his father's silence function in this way, as affective performances that articulate emotional and political meaning. See Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 105.

emotional state as well as the unraveling of the bond between father and son, a bond which in Bayezid's view had already been severed. While this study attempts to categorize the letters thematically, establishing a precise chronological order is not feasible. Therefore, the selected themes are drawn from recurring rhetorical tendencies that shift in tone depending on the nature of the sultan's responses, some softening over time while others intensify emotionally.

These themes resist strict categorization, as each letter is marked by a unique and singular emotional tone. Nevertheless, by accounting for the affective density and rhetorical complexity of a historical subject, we can observe how Bayezid positioned himself, often through a passive-aggressive mode of expression, and the particular issues he sought to articulate.

What is most palpable across the letters is that Bayezid, beyond his deteriorating political standing, was also beginning to lose his psychological cohesion. His requests, oaths, and complaints become increasingly contradictory, repetitive, and emotionally fragile. At this point, Bayezid had come to realize that he could no longer gain anything without taking deliberate action. However, from this moment on, things would no longer unfold as he hoped. The rupture between him and his father would deepen, and he would ultimately find himself isolated against his brother. Once he arrived in Amasya, events began to unravel rapidly and the course of events soon reached a point of no return.

CHAPTER TWO

2. AMASYA AND THE UNRAVELLING

Following his arrival in Amasya on December 21, 1558,¹¹³ Bayezid initially responded with complaints. When his new strategy of negotiation failed to produce results, he eventually came to terms with the situation and began preparing to turn it to his advantage. In his continued correspondence with his father, he expressed discontent about being stationed in Amasya, while simultaneously attempting to bargain. At this point, Bayezid aimed to secure the fulfillment of his "desires" as swiftly as possible to finalize his preparations for marching against his brother, Selim.

Although he fell into deep despair upon realizing that he could no longer change his father's opinion, he was still determined not to surrender to fate. It is worth noting here that Bayezid did not immediately rebel against his father. Even though the sultan was still alive, Bayezid had come to understand that the longer this situation continued, the more he would be pushed away from the throne and placed at a disadvantage. Convinced that his father openly supported his brother Selim, Bayezid acted accordingly. This alone reveals the extent to which the relationship between Sultan Süleyman and Bayezid had deteriorated.

The most striking justification for this rupture from Bayezid's perspective was his transfer to Amasya, a decision he believed was unjust and deceptive. In his letters, Bayezid not only accused his brother Selim but also leveled accusations at his father. He went so far as to state that his father was neither a just parent nor a righteous ruler, having shared in this "sin." Given these developments, it is clear that Bayezid's time in Amasya could hardly have been one of peace and prosperity. Fully aware of the precariousness of his position, Bayezid had already begun preparing to act.

¹¹³ Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, 90.

As detailed in Chapter One, Bayezid wrote dozens of letters in an attempt to resist the command transferring him to Amasya, seeking instead to remain in Kütahya. In this chapter, the focus will shift to Bayezid's experience in Amasya and the unfolding dynamics that eventually culminated in the Battle of Konya, the climactic confrontation between the two princes, often referred to as the *Şehzadeler Savaşı* (War of the Princes).

These letters go beyond the emotional appeals of a disillusioned son; they take on the tone of a political challenge within the broader atmosphere of the time. Moreover, the fact that the letters are undated enables us to approach them as part of an evolving rhetorical process, rather than isolated events. In this way, if the letters are read sequentially and interpreted through the emotional weight of Bayezid's words, one can trace the stages of this historical rupture without the need for precise chronological boundaries.

At the outset of the process, Bayezid's tone is shaped by the articulation of personal demands such as insistent, emotional, and laden with sorrow. His addressee is still his father. Yet over time, this relational framework begins to shift: the recipient of his letters ceases to be merely a father and increasingly becomes, in Bayezid's eyes, a sovereign detached from the realities of the realm. Correspondingly, the paternal figure itself begins to unravel.

When examined through the lens of this correspondence, one can observe that the unreciprocated appeals generally belong to the early phase of the process – when emotional expectations still held sway. This is followed by a period characterized by a reproachful and angry tone, marking a political challenge that becomes especially pronounced just before Bayezid's reassignment to Amasya. Toward the end of the process, Bayezid's voice once again softens: his tone is that of a repentant son who has come to terms with loss and once again addresses his father directly.

This transformation reflects not only an emotional rupture but also a political fracture, one that finds expression in the evolution of the letters themselves. As such, the thematic differences embedded in the correspondence offer valuable insights into both Bayezid's psychological trajectory and the shifting contours of his political stance.

2.1. Bayezid's Days in Amasya and Letters Marked by Complaint

Despite the passage of time and the mounting pressures against him, Bayezid retained an intense will and unwavering belief. This impulsive prince, convinced that his expectations had been ignored and that his voice was no longer heard by his father, had already begun to drift away from reality. At a point where he was verging on denial he nevertheless attempted with all his remaining strength to take control of his fate and reverse its course.

Bayezid was well aware that his prolonged delays on the road, lasting nearly three months, had thoroughly eroded his father's trust in him. After stalling at various *menzils* along the route, Bayezid eventually arrived at his designated post in Amasya. His first action upon arrival was to write to his father and inform him that he had reached the province. He attempted to demonstrate that, regardless of what had transpired, he remained obedient to the sultan's command. In fact, his letters were written in a tone that gave the impression he had never disobeyed his father's orders.

In his first letter from Amasya, Bayezid began with a lengthy series of formal greetings and prayers, expressing concern for his father's well-being. He stated that he prayed to God for his father's recovery and remarked that good health was befitting of a sultan. The letter concluded with a brief notice informing the sultan that he had officially arrived in Amasya.

"[...] My Sultan, may God protect your blessed body from all harm and grant you good health and long life. I swear by God that being deprived of your presence has left me in such deep unrest that it defies expression. I pray that you are in full health, as befits your noble intentions, and that all is well throughout the world under your reign. My Sultan, has your foot fully recovered? May all the hardships destined for Your Majesty instead befall this humble servant, so long as you remain in good health. We are now in Amasya. On the day we arrived, I received

your esteemed letter. I wrote this reply in Amasya and sent it to be laid at the dust beneath your feet. [...]"¹¹⁴

Bayezid actually saw himself as abandoned to his fate. Although he adopted a tone of reluctant acceptance, he did not refrain from unleashing the anger he struggled to contain. This emotional oscillation and internal contradiction worsened after his arrival in Amasya. In particular, as the sultan failed to fulfil his requests, his tone became increasingly threatening. He repeatedly emphasised that he would not remain in Amasya unless his conditions were met. This pattern of passive-aggressive behaviour is even more pronounced in the letters he wrote during his time in Amasya.

In one such letter, Bayezid, seemingly no longer certain of what he truly wanted, intensified the terms of his bargaining expressing his frustration with heightened aggression. His rising anger is reminiscent of a scene from *Othello*, in which Desdemona's response to Othello's wrath comes to mind.¹¹⁵ Just as Bayezid's rage is directed at his father, Sultan Süleyman becomes fixated on his son's anger and fails to comprehend the meaning behind his words. Like Othello, he focuses not on the deeper emotional distress but on the surface expression of anger.

Bayezid stated that he would no longer remain in Amasya and requested reassignment to either the province of Kütahya or Ankara – later in the same letter, he also mentioned Kastamonu as a possible alternative. He made it clear that unless his demands – including financial advancement (*akçe terakkisi*), the reassignment of his province, were fulfilled, he would act against the sultan's will. He justified this stance by claiming that it was the result of the chaos and discord allowed to flourish in the court, thus placing responsibility for his defiance on those around the throne.

The most striking passages, where Bayezid's emotional turbulence and threatening tone reach their peak, are those in which he accuses his father of lying. He asserts that it is unbecoming of a sultan to lie and goes so far as to say that a true

¹¹⁴ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 13. (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924).

¹¹⁵ Rosenwein and Cristiani, *What Is the History of Emotions?*, 8.

Muslim would not speak falsehoods. Such statements not only reflect Bayezid's deep sense of betrayal but also mark a rhetorical escalation that blurs the line between filial address and outright denunciation.

"[...] 'A Muslim does not lie', you have said this many times in your letters. I believed in my sultan's word. I assumed that my sultan would remain true to his oath and never go against his promise. I came to Amasya for your sake. Now, when I hoped for even greater favour from you, is it appropriate to fall short in this way and contradict your word and your pledge? Where is your promise? Does a sultan lie? Is this fitting? By God, I swear I will never find comfort again. God forbid that my sultan would speak falsely. Since you have now granted me promotion as I requested, I ask that you also grant an additional six hundred thousand akçes. Replace my current sanjak with the sanjak of Kastamonu. My sons do not need annual stipends of one hundred thousand akçes; instead, grant them timars worth three hundred thousand each. As you promised, give me thirty thousand gold coins. Grant me the ceremonial belt I asked for and bring me solace. If you provide all that I have asked for, I will remain in Amasya with your consent. If not, I swear by God that I will act against your will. I will go to Kütahya, or Engüri (Ankara), or to any place I choose, and the blame will not be mine. You will be the cause. If unrest and disorder follow, the fault will not lie with me. I have spoken the truth; the rest is for my sultan to judge. Am I not worthy of compassion? Why do you deceive me? [...]"¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 17 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924).

In the following letter, Bayezid once again questions both his father's piety as a Muslim and his legitimacy as sultan. Here, he dares to confront his father not only as a disobedient son but also as a political actor who challenges the justice of sovereign authority. The demands he began voicing even before departing from Kütahya persist throughout his time in Amasya. On this occasion, Bayezid cites the upcoming circumcision ceremony for his sons as a justification for requesting gold.

Yet what truly stands out in the letter is not the financial request itself, though such requests are numerous and repetitive, but the deeper discontent that lies beneath. The tone throughout suggests that Bayezid had reached a point where death and rebellion were preferable to silence and submission. His rhetorical stance conveys that, even if his material demands were met, his unrest would persist until he alone stood as the sole heir to the throne.

He also complains about the dilapidated state of the Amasya palace, reminding his father of the expenses he had personally incurred for the Kütahya residence. He even goes so far as to say that the Amasya palace ought to be demolished and that the province should be given to his brother, Selim.

The final lines of the letter mark a sharp intensification in tone. Bayezid accuses his father of being unaware of the true state of the realm and delivers a pointed warning: if the sultan continues to ignore his admonitions, he will act as he sees fit. In this letter, Bayezid moves beyond the tone of a reproachful son; he advances into open political defiance. With his words, he challenges not only his father's paternal authority but also the very structure of sovereign power.

"[...] With the reply to this letter, I ask that you grant thirty thousand gold coins. In your days of prosperity, I will hold the circumcision ceremonies of my sons among both friends and foes and celebrate their weddings as you desire. My sultan, for the sake of God, send thirty thousand gold coins with your response to this letter. You also wrote, "You know Karaman and what

kind of place it is. You know its palace too; it is yours, and it has been given to you as a mark of favour." My sultan, I swear that Karaman is, in every respect, better than Amasya. Its palace is also superior. I am more than willing, a thousand times over, to go to Karaman, if only I am no longer in Amasya. Give Amasya to Selim, and grant Karaman to me. You say the palace was given as a gesture of generosity, but by God and by oath, this is false. It was never truly granted. The houses were in ruins, and I rebuilt the place myself. If God allows, I hope the palace in Amasya will collapse entirely by spring. It is, from the beginning, not a place fit for anyone to live. It is not suitable. You have been misled. And if your knowledge of the affairs of other Muslim lands is in a similar state, then the condition of your realm is truly in disrepair. May God protect us. I do not disobey your command, my sultan. But if you do not offer me solace, I will act according to my own judgment. I will count the entire world as my enemy. Still, above all, may my sultan live on."¹¹⁷

When Bayezid's mental world is examined, it becomes clear that he was a character with a complex and emotionally intense mode of expression. The emotional weight carried by his words is so human, timeless, and universal that it can touch today's readers even though centuries have passed. However, this unstable state of mind must have caused unease, especially for those around him and particularly for his father. For Bayezid was a member of the Ottoman dynasty and a prince who claimed a legitimate right to the throne. In this context, his outbursts, excessive reactions, and uncontrolled behaviors were perceived as a serious threat to political stability.

When compared with Selim's calm, balanced, and rule-abiding attitude, Bayezid's reactive temperament becomes even more striking. Although he stated in

¹¹⁷ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 19 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924/19).

his correspondence that he would behave calmly if reassigned to another province instead of Amasya, it is evident that behind this discourse lay a strategy inclined to create pretexts and manipulate the situation. His claim that the air of Amasya did not suit him and that he would prefer death over living there was not merely a physical complaint; it was also part of a dramatic attempt at persuasion. His repeated requests for both material and emotional consolation from his father reflect his desire to influence him on an emotional level.

Especially in the letter below, the depth of Bayezid's suffering can clearly be felt through the tone of his complaints. This letter is one in which, in addition to reporting his arrival in Amasya, he expresses his inability to endure remaining there any longer. It reads as though it were written in the voice of a child who acknowledges having been punished and now waits to be released from it. A pleading tone dominates his language once again. However, between the lines, there is also a hidden intention to have his request accepted, should the opportunity arise. While repeating his request to be reassigned to Ankara, he emphasizes the unbearable nature of his current state. Another recurring element is his inability to adjust to the air of Amasya. He sees no difference between living there and dying.

"[...] My sultan, the only true forgiveness for my sin would be for you to have mercy on your servant and release me from Amasya. At the very least, grant me the sanjak of Engüri. By God and by oath, I would never disobey your noble command. I swear by God that I have been brought to the brink of death by grief and sorrow. I am weary of my own life. I have never been able to adjust to Amasya. Its air does not agree with my constitution. I am ready to die, but I cannot consent to remain in Amasya. What am I to do? What choice do I have? I came to Amasya for the sake of your honour and have lingered here until now. Your command has been fulfilled. For the sake of God, release your servant and grant me the sanjak of Engüri. I swear

by God that my condition in this place is bitter. Even if a person were in paradise, without peace of heart, it would feel like hell. I swear by God that I have never been able to grow accustomed to this place. I'm fed up with myself. [...]"¹¹⁸

In another letter written in a similarly plaintive tone, Bayezid continues his complaints, stating this time that he had built palaces and gardens in Kütahya and had grown accustomed to its climate, which made being in Amasya extremely difficult for him. He claims to have already spent a great deal on Kütahya and now considers his presence in Amasya to be no different than an insult. Bayezid's perception that every action taken by his father is a personal offense or intended to harm him does not appear particularly sound. It becomes clear from his increasingly erratic tone, his jumping from topic to topic, and the exhaustive listing of his demands that his nerves had been deeply worn down.

Furthermore, in this letter, he states that he would not oppose a military campaign if one were to be launched, which indicates that the tension among the princes had begun to influence the political agenda. This suggests that Bayezid was able to follow the political developments unfolding in the capital and believed that he had some degree of influence over the campaign that was being considered.

"[...] In Kütahya, there were many residences, gardens, and all necessary provisions. I had grown accustomed to the air of those places. But I cannot adjust to the climate of Amasya. The stables and other facilities are either destroyed or have been sold off. I cannot make a living here. It has become unbearably difficult for me. What has happened now feels like an insult to me, and it does not befit my sultan to treat me this way. From now on, I ask that all my requests be granted. At the very least, have mercy on

¹¹⁸ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 6 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924). For the transcription see, Appendix I.

me. My sultan, I swear by God, I cannot remain in this place. If you should set out for campaign in the spring with prosperity, I will not stand in the way of your expedition. [...]"¹¹⁹

2.2. The Road to Battle: Final Complaints and Taking Action

The correspondence between Bayezid and Süleyman yielded no resolution. Although Süleyman initially believed that assigning his sons to distant provinces would allow him to breathe easier, Bayezid's persistent refusal to accept the situation and the looming threats had already compelled him to take sides. As Bayezid himself voiced, Süleyman had now reached the point of choosing Selim. Bayezid's erratic state of mind and the negative, unpredictable impression he left on his father made Selim the "comfort zone" for Süleyman. Thus, Bayezid had fulfilled a "prophecy" he had never wished to come true.

Süleyman could no longer keep his sons apart, and he now had to choose which prince to support. Despite all warnings, Bayezid secretly began preparations to march against his brother Selim by gathering troops. He was recruiting men using the cash and promotions he had requested from his father, effectively attempting to form his own army. Indeed, the information Selim provided to their father regarding his brother confirmed these actions.

"[...] In short, Bayezid went to Eskişehir after making prior preparations for the province. Once he settled there, a number of men began gathering around him. Gradually, groups of fifty and a hundred distinguished individuals from various regions also started to join him. [...]"¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol.7 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924).

¹²⁰ TSMA. E. 753/38 fol. 6 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 6058).

Selim's complaint did not seem unfounded. In response to his father's warning in a letter, Bayezid stated that he had come to Tokat for hunting and that he was already far from Karaman, that is, from Konya. He also added that he would stay there for hunting for four or five days and would then immediately return to Amasya. In this letter, it is quite clear that he pretended to be unaware so as not to alarm his father and used a notably conciliatory tone in order not to escalate the matter.

"[...] My sultan, I wrote this letter in Tokat and sent it to be laid at the dust of your feet. We stayed here for four or five days and are now preparing to return to Amasya. May my sultan live long. I am your humble servant, crawling in the dust. I am never outside your noble will or command. Whatever your desire may be, inform me of it in the reply to this letter, and do not withhold your noble advice from me. I have never disobeyed your command. Amasya is in no way a place to remain. I came to Tokat for a few days of hunting, nothing more. I am keeping my distance from Karaman as well. Once again, I beg at the dust of your blessed feet that, from now on, you do not listen to the words of my brother or other hypocrites. May my sultan live long. I ask you to protect your servant. I am your servant, your sacrifice, the dust beneath your feet. The rest lies with the will of my sultan. [...]"¹²¹

Although the exact course of events cannot be determined with certainty due to the undated nature of the letters, Bayezid's journey to Tokat cannot be considered an ordinary hunting activity. For the subsequent letters clearly show that preparations for war had effectively begun, that provincial governors were gathering around Selim,

¹²¹ TSMA. E. 657/43 fol. 18 (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 3924).

and that Bayezid's troops were being dispersed. In this context, Bayezid's departure for Tokat under the pretext of hunting actually renders his political isolation visible, implying that he was weakened and turned into a target prior to the conflict. In his letter, Bayezid states that his father's concern is unfounded and that he has done nothing "outside" of his command. He adds that he would not be afraid of Selim passing nearby with a thousand soldiers while he is hunting with forty or fifty men, and notes with scorn that Selim's anxiety seems laughable to him, expressing pride and thanking God. These remarks reveal the sense of loneliness he felt before the impending conflict and the resentment caused by being left defenseless in the face of Selim.

"[...] Selim Han has been utterly consumed by fear of me. Praise be to God. Though I am younger than he is, and he is the elder brother, for him to fear me in this way is sheer cowardice and baseness. By God, while he cannot pass even a single station without a thousand men around him, I would go about my hunts and affairs with only forty or fifty men, never once feeling afraid. What is truly strange is this: even if I am in Engüri and he is in Bursa, he still lives in fear, unsure of what I might do, day and night. He stations military guards at four points around him. This is the height of cowardice and disgrace. Praise be to God, I have never had any intention of harming him. [...]"¹²²

The letter below is one of the clearest signs that swords were about to be drawn. Bayezid writes that provincial governors and soldiers have gathered around his brother Selim, while the troops surrounding him have been dispersed. He perceives his father's tolerance of this situation as an injustice and openly accuses him of leaving him defenseless. Stating that treasure, ammunition, and soldiers were secretly sent to

¹²² TSMA, E. 753/39 fol. 6 (formerly catalogued in 6059).

Selim, he implies that this support is meant to strengthen his brother against himself. These lines resemble a declaration that war has now become inevitable and that Bayezid, in his despair, has begun to prepare himself accordingly.

“[...] Let my brother first dismiss his men, and then I too shall give permission and depart. Is it right to believe the lies of others and inflict such oppression on your son? Those who are just know to protect me. I am deeply unsettled by what your *beylerbeyi* has done. He is the true cause of this unrest. Either accept him, or console me and grant what I ask. I am never outside your will. If your *beylerbeyi* is truly your chosen one, what can I do? Even so, I remain within your pleasure. But I must make my own preparations. I am your servant, your sacrifice, my sultan. But is this not unjust to your servant? You knowingly cause me to fear you. Anyone with a sense of justice would know this: by God, I have grown sick of my own life. Where is justice now? The world is full of strange affairs. I never expected this from my sultan. You say “let the past be the past,” yet you prepare so much against me. You send my brother secret treasure, weapons, and every kind of provision. Troops gather around him. Is it your intention to strengthen him and send him against me? If your true aim is to kill me, why go through my brother? Why not do it directly? I have never disobeyed your command though. [...]”¹²³

However, even at this point, Bayezid continues to employ a discourse of victimhood. His voice, which occasionally rises in a threatening tone, now turns into that of a son seeking his father's mercy and asking for forgiveness. He attempts to

¹²³ TSMA. E. 758/73 fol. 4v (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 6572).

express in words his awareness that he has hurt his father with both his words and actions. He asks his father not to be offended by what he has said and begs for his pardon. His claim that he is weary of life and can confide his troubles only to his father seems to be a plea that tests the emotional bond he still hopes exists between them. Declaring that he has no one but his father, the prince apologizes to him for all his mistakes.

“[...] What can I do? I have grown weary of my very soul. I have not turned away from this world. But even so, it is only to my sultan that I can express my condition. I have no one but you. The only hand I can hold, the only hem I can grasp, is that of my sultan. [...]”¹²⁴

Bayezid is remarkably adept at expressing his remorse, love for his father and expectations of him. However, he conveys his unrelenting anger just as powerfully in his letters. The unstable and immature image he projects appears to have caused his father to lose trust in him. Taking all these factors into account, it seems highly unlikely that Bayezid will escape his impending fate. Matters had already spiralled out of control. The succession struggle between the two brothers had escalated into preparations for a war that threatened their father's reign.

At this point, Bayezid's correspondence comes to a temporary halt. However, the course of the war and the development of the issue can still be traced through contemporary accounts. Indeed, most of the available information on the Princes' War is conveyed through historical narratives based on primary sources. Therefore, analysing and comparing the structural features of these narratives helps us to trace the flow of historical events and to better understand the positions and roles of the figures involved.

¹²⁴ TSMA, E. 753/39 fol. 1. (formerly catalogued in TA, E. 6059). For the transcription, see Appendix I

2.3. The Beginning of the End in the Tragedy: The Battle of Konya

The battle that began on the Konya Plain on May 29, 1559,¹²⁵ marked an irreversible turning point for Bayezid. From this date onward, it is no longer possible to speak merely of a rivalry between brothers. The matter had turned into a challenge against the imperial order itself. Faced with the army of Selim, who had the explicit support of their father behind him, Bayezid's poorly organized and undisciplined troops quickly disintegrated. The war ended in Bayezid's crushing defeat within two days.

The defection of some of the provincial governors he had gathered around him further deepened his political isolation. In contemporary narrative sources, the labels attributed to Bayezid such as "impetuous" (*'anid*), "rebel" (*âsi*), and "insurgent" (*bâgi*), serve as powerful indicators of how the political understanding of legitimacy functioned during the period. Most of these characterizations appear in texts written during the reign of Sultan Selim and shaped Bayezid's historical image as a "condemned figure" identified with defeat. In *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*,¹²⁶ Feridun Ahmed Bey offers a detailed account not only of the outcome of the battle but also of the preparatory phase. Elements such as the organization of the army, the transport of munitions, and the intelligence gathered are carefully described, and the process leading to Bayezid's defeat is conveyed through both political and military dimensions. While the structure and movements of the army are portrayed in detail, Selim's forces are depicted in a triumphant and unified composition.

Although the work primarily focuses on the Zigetvar Campaign, the final campaign of Sultan Süleyman and the occasion of his death, it occasionally shifts backward in time to list the Sultan's major campaigns in chronological order. Within this framework, the thirteenth campaign recounts the rebellion of Bayezid. The preparation phase of the war and its aftermath are portrayed as an experience that shaped the ascension period of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. The structure of the narrative becomes even more pronounced with the harsh expressions the author uses for Bayezid. The situation is introduced directly with the phrase: "*When Sultan Bayezid*

¹²⁵ Emecen, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ve Zamani*, 556.

¹²⁶ Feridun Ahmed Bey, *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*.

committed rebellion and treason".¹²⁷ This characterization shows that the text constructs a partisan narrative from the outset and portrays Bayezid as an absolute rebel. After noting that the *fetva*¹²⁸ (legal opinion) was issued and that Sultan Süleyman crossed to Üsküdar, the author presents the events largely through the figure of Sokollu.

According to *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*, Beyberbeyi of Anatolia Cenabi Mehmed Paşa reported to Sultan Süleyman that Bayezid was marching on his elder brother Selim with seventy to eighty thousand bandits.¹²⁹ However, this figure is presented in a markedly hyperbolic fashion, especially considering that Selim's forces were already superior in number.¹³⁰ The narrative further employs accusatory language by describing Bayezid as *eşkıyâ-yı bâgîyye* (rebellious brigand), *müfsîd* (corruptor) and *anîd* (obstinate), thereby framing his political stance as deviant and disobedient.

According to the chronicler, Sultan Süleyman arrived at *Tekfur Çayırı* (Tekfur Meadow) and encamped there for approximately three days, dispatching messengers to the surrounding area to ascertain Bayezid's current situation. During this time, an *emr-i şerîf* was reportedly sent by the Sultan, instructing Sokollu Mehmed Paşa to make contact with Selim and determine the course of action. In the same passage, Feridun Ahmed Bey recounts a personal dream in which he saw two moons in the Ali Paşa Mosque in Istanbul. The second moon, which came from the east (Bayezid), was surrounded by a cloud after rising briefly and then fell to the ground violently and disappeared. The author interprets this vision as a sign that Bayezid would "fall into collapse, accompanied by the wrath of God, at night".¹³¹

¹²⁷ "Sultan Bâyezîd bagy u hıyânet eyledükde 'amme-i 'ulema fetva virmeğin sa'âdetle Üsküdar'a geçüb altı ay mikdârı anda ikâmet eylediler." Feridun Ahmed Bey, *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*, 224.

¹²⁸ The *fetva* was a juridical opinion issued by a religious authority to sanction political action in accordance with Islamic law. For the text of the *fetva* concerning Bayezid's execution, see Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kaçgıları*, 271.

¹²⁹ "Sultân Bâyezîd câdde-i 'inâda kadem basub büyük karındaşı üzerine yetmiş seksen bin mikdârı eşkıyâ uydurub gitdüğü mukarrer olduğu haber virdiler." Feridun Ahmed Bey, *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*, 225.

¹³⁰ "Bâyazîd-i anîd dahi yigirmi bin mikdârı haşerât ve Anadolu ıstılâhınca Yumlu nâmına bir bölük ehl-i fesâdât cem' idüp Konya'ya teveccüh eyledi." (Mustafa Âlî thus records the size of Bayezid's forces as twenty thousand.) Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî, *Künhü'l-Ahbâr* (4. *Rükün*), 5:279; For a different estimate, see Turan, *Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kaçgıları*, 153. He suggests a figure of thirty thousand.

¹³¹ "İttifâkan şark tarafından evvelâ bir ay doğdı... 'akabince bir ay daha tulû' eyledi. ... Sonra gelen ay ol bulutdan kemâl-i şiddet ile şark tarafına düşüp zâ'il oldu. Bu hâlet ile uyandım. 'Sonradan tulû' iden ay Sultân Bâyezîd'dir... bu gice gazabı'llâh mukârın olub dâm-ı inhişâma düşdü' diyü kendü kendümden ta'bîr eyledüm." Feridun Ahmed Bey, *Nüzhet-i Esrâr*, 225.

Instead of being just a supernatural story, this episode shows how the chronicler translates political conflict into a way of talking about the moral and cosmic order. The dream reinforces the author's perception of the hierarchy, turning Bayezid's downfall into a divinely sanctioned outcome. Thus, rather than simply recounting the historical episode, the author configures it rhetorically through their interpretive lens, affirming an order in which rebellion becomes synonymous with moral and cosmic disorder.

According to the same narrative, a second report from Cenabi Mehmed Pasha indicated that Bayezid's army had begun to disperse and that he had fled with his son Orhan. Upon hearing this, the Rumelian and Janissary troops stationed in Istanbul were mobilized with Selim's support, and a large-scale military operation was launched to capture Bayezid. Although Feridun Ahmed Bey mentions that certain viziers and military supporters remained with Bayezid, he openly states his preference for Sokollu, "out of regard for the favor of his patron." At this stage, the author's narrative conveys information and reflects a specific interpretation of historical loyalty.

The account in *Nüzhet- i Esrâr* intensifies the political tension of the final scene before the Battle of Konya. Before the battle even began, the sides had taken their positions, and the lines between *rıza* (consent) and *bagy* (insurrection), between loyalty and betrayal, had already been sharply drawn. The prophecy woven into the narrative through the author's dream reflects how, in Ottoman political culture, the wrath of the sovereign was perceived as a manifestation of divine punishment. Bayezid's "falling with utmost violence to the eastern side" no longer signifies a mere defeat; it is the manifestation of divine will.

Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî elaborates on Bayezid's rebellion in detail both in *Künhü'l-Ahbâr*¹³² and in *Nâdirü'l-Mehârib*¹³³, which he dedicated to Murad III. In the portrait he paints, Bayezid is a prince who, harbouring "vain hopes" of the throne, rises up against his father and brother Selim, ultimately falling victim to his own

¹³² Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî, *Künhü'l-Ahbâr* (4. Rükün), vol. 5.

¹³³ Gülhizar Kara, "Gelibolulu Mustafa Âlî'nin 'Nâdirü'l-Mehârib' Adlı Eserinin Edisyon Kritiği ve Muhtevasının Değerlendirilmesi" (Master's Thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 2009).

ambitions. Âlî portrays him as someone who “disregards the sultan’s orders”, “provokes sedition” and “prepares his own downfall”.

In Âlî’s narrative, Bayezid’s rebellion is not only seen as a political uprising. The author also evaluates it as an action that violates moral and religious norms. He depicts Bayezid as both a traitor and a stubborn figure, stating that he defiled a spiritually significant city like Konya with his soldiers and interprets his flight to the Safavids as an overt threat to the Ottoman dynastic order. On the other hand, Sultan Süleyman is portrayed as a ruler acting with paternal compassion, while Bayezid’s refusal to respond to his father’s calls and his killing of envoys are presented as grave faults. Behind the rebellion, Âlî identifies Lala Mustafa Paşa as the primary instigator. This approach demonstrates how the author reconfigures the historical event within the framework of Ottoman political legitimacy and moral order.¹³⁴

Nâdirü’l-Mehârib, one of Mustafa Âlî’s early works on the internal conflicts of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, is particularly important for its treatment of the struggle for the throne between Bayezid and Selim. The work contains strong interpretations reflecting not only the military and political dimensions of the event but also the author’s understanding of dynastic loyalty. When Âlî later recounts the same conflict in *Künhü’l-Ahbâr*, he explicitly references *Nâdirü’l-Mehârib*. In his own words, the relevant sections of *Künhü’l-Ahbâr* constitute a summary of his earlier work.¹³⁵ This is significant not only because he narrates the same historical event in a similar manner across different works, but also because he openly cites his previous text as a source.

Considered together, these two narratives reveal that Âlî’s concerns transcend the chronology of political events, encompassing the moral and symbolic significance of the rebellion. In both works, he places the conflict within the sacred geography of Konya, transforming the battlefield into a moral and spiritual arena. Selim is portrayed as a figure supported by his father’s authority and the city’s saints, while Bayezid is depicted as someone who violates this sanctity through his rebellion. The emphasis on

¹³⁴ Âlî, *Künhü’l-Ahbâr*, vol 5, 275-80, 280-313.

¹³⁵ Âlî, *Künhü’l-Ahbâr*, vol 5, 276.

Mevlânâ Rûmî and other saints lends the narrative a spiritual hierarchy, in which divine grace appears to align with the dynastic order. In this sense, Âlî's depiction of the war becomes part of a moral geography, associating Bayezid's defeat with the desecration of the sacred through rebellion and his victory with the re-establishment of order.¹³⁶

The intersection between moral narrative and political order provides further clarification of how Ottoman historians conceived the notion of divine justice. Such narratives also allow us to understand the function of the wrath-mercy duality, central to Ottoman political thought, within the construction of the sovereign's image. In the early modern Ottoman world, the sultan's wrath was not merely conceived as a personal emotion or a political reaction, but rather as the worldly manifestation of divine justice. In this context, the ruler's anger was the earthly counterpart of God's wrath.¹³⁷ In other words, the sultan's anger was perceived as a legitimate and inevitable response to a violation of divine order. Therefore, Bayezid's defeat can be interpreted not only as a political purge but also as a fateful punishment corresponding to the disruption of a sacred order.

Here, wrath takes on the role of establishing and reinforcing order. The sultan's punishment is intended to eliminate chaos and restore the central structure and authority of the state. Bayezid's punishment is evaluated within this framework. Therefore, the destiny that has been handed to him is not just that of a prince who rose up against his father and the established order of the state, but also that of an agent who caused a disturbance to a metaphysical balance. For this reason, the punishment must be carried out in full for the narrative to be internally coherent. It is implied that Bayezid was punished not only by worldly authority, but also by spiritual authority. This approach demonstrates that the purging act is framed within both worldly and otherworldly legitimacy. As such, Bayezid's downfall is portrayed not simply as the suppression of a rebellion. It is also portrayed as the rightful punishment of one who defied the divine order.

¹³⁶ Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan*, 63–64.

¹³⁷ Yelçe, "Royal Wrath," 443.

CONCLUSION

This thesis approaches the political conflict between Sultan Süleyman and Bayezid as a complex, layered process shaped by dynastic structures, emotional fracture, and rhetorical confrontation. Through the analysis of archival letters, narrative sources and supplementary materials from the period, the study has traced the intertwining of the personal, the political and the symbolic in the fate of a prince who ultimately failed to maintain his position within the imperial order. The focus has been on the texts, particularly Bayezid's letters, not as neutral documents, but as discursive spaces where authority was negotiated, sentiment was expressed, and distance was measured.

Momentum for reflection and introspection is revealed in Bayezid's correspondence, which was written during times of uncertainty and isolation. His letters were not simply reflections of his circumstances, though they were also acts of resistance, justification and appeal. Through language, Bayezid sought to maintain his relevance despite being silenced. He oscillated between humility and pride, submission and accusation. Each shift in tone marked a rhetorical strategy. It also marked a response to the erosion of paternal recognition.

The absence of Sultan Süleyman's voice does not weaken the structure of the conflict narrative. In fact, it draws attention to silence as a political tool. The lack of reply transformed Bayezid's letters into monologues. These were urgent, uneven, and often repetitive. These rhetorical patterns were no coincidence. They signalled a gradual breakdown in communicative symmetry, mirrored in the prince's increasingly erratic emotional state. The language he uses points to a deeper instability: not only in his political position but in his perceived place within the dynastic community.

The trajectory traced in this thesis is from Bayezid's assignment to Amasya. It also covers his final letters before fleeing to Iran. The tragic unfolding of events has been framed by this structure. The tragedy here does not reside in a single moment of downfall, but in the steady and visible disintegration of relational bonds and political coherence. Rather than proposing a literary comparison, this structure provides a

conceptual framework through which to interpret the irreversible consequences of flawed judgement, delayed response and symbolic exclusion. Bayezid's fate followed a pattern of intensifying alienation that could not be reversed by diplomacy or loyalty. His letters vividly capture this progression.

Throughout the study, particular attention has been paid to rhetorical structure and emotional modulation. These are not supplementary to the historical narrative. They are integral to it. The acts of writing, pleading, accusing and anticipating are political in their own right. They reveal how emotional expression was embedded within Ottoman princely communication. Rather viewing these expressions as subjective digressions, the dissertation has approached them as meaningful performances of identity, shaped by the expectations and anxieties of imperial proximity.

While the first chapter provided a contextualisation of the dynastic competition and highlighted the administrative mechanisms of succession, the second chapter focused on the discursive unravelling that characterised Bayezid's later correspondence. This thematic division enables a reading that does not reduce the conflict to a power struggle. Instead, it opened up the possibility of observing how language, silence and emotional tone shaped the path to collapse. The study suggested a new way of understanding the political culture of the Ottomans. It said that this culture should include feelings and the ways in which politicians spoke.

This thesis is distinct from works of literary analysis, comparative literature and theory-driven emotional history. However, it engages with ideas and methods that extend beyond conventional historical narration. By examining how texts can construct a sense of presence, perform recognition and articulate loss, this study contributes to the ongoing debates surrounding the ways in which authority, legitimacy and familial loyalty were perceived, expressed and contested within early modern empires.

Rather than offering a general theory, the aim has been to highlight how a specific set of documents can be read. These documents were produced under pressure. They were shaped by asymmetry. And they were suspended in silence. This

set of documents can be read for the layered negotiations they contain. Bayezid's narrative of downfall is not solely about the politics of succession; it is also about the emotional grammar of imperial estrangement. Although ultimately overpowered, Bayezid's voice leaves behind a record of someone who tried to speak while being gradually rendered inaudible.

By combining close textual analysis with an awareness of emotional tone, this study offers an alternative approach to reading the Ottoman past, taking the interplay of discourse, affect and power seriously. It encourages future scholars to examine comparable moments of fracture and expression, in which both the spoken and the unspoken words shaped the historical experience of the empire.

In this light, the thesis provides more than just an in-depth analysis of political documents. It seeks to understand how power, emotion and language became linked within a historical period of dynastic fracture. The work draws from approaches such as intertextuality, comparative literature, and emotional theory to deepen its perspective, without defining itself as a study of these subjects. Rather than fitting the case of Bayezid into fixed analytical moulds, the thesis allows the texts to shape the conceptual framework. This method does not seek to replicate literary forms in history, but focuses on the ways in which historical figures communicated through layered and often unstable rhetorical choices. A space for further research into the emotional and textual life of early modern imperial politics is marked by the result, which is not a synthesis but a gesture.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I: Selected Transcriptions of Bayezid's Letters

TSMA.E. 657/43

Folio 3

Sa'âdetüm başum tâcî devletüm sultânüm pâdişâhum hazretlerinün mübârek huzûr-
ı şerîflerine hezâr hasret ile selâmlar ve senâlar irsâl idüb mübârek hâkipây-ı
şerîflerüne yüzüm sürmekden sonra benüm pâdişâhum mübârek mizâc-ı şerîfiñüz
nicedür kerem idüb ahhâr-ı selâmetinüzi i'lâm idesiz bu hâksâr bendenizi sorarsanız
hayr du'ânuza meşgûl bilesiz hem-ân murâdum budur ki Hakk te'âla mübârek vücûd-
ı şerîfinüzi hatardan saklaya ve mübârek hâkipâyınıza yüzüm sürmek müyesser ola
âh ben kulunu sorarsanız gamm ve gussa ve gayretten helâk bilesiz âh ben kuluna
zulm eyledinüz karındaşımı ber-murâd idüb beni mağbûn eyledinüz âh ben bu
gayretten ölmezsem 'acebdür hiç ben sultânumdan böyle ummazdum âh sözüm çok
idi demekden fâ'ide olsa ne diyem şükr Hudâya bilâ-sebebe beni kendinüzden
ürkütinüz benüm bî-huzûrluğımı hem-ân Hudâ bilür ne idem n'eyleyem bilmem
sultânüm ise bizi esirgemez sevmezsiz bizi düşmân bilürsiz âh âh arada ahvâl vardur
ki cümle-i 'âlem yıkılmışdur ah bî-kes kalduk şükr Hudâya her kişi şefkâtı atasından
umar âh sizden ise şefkât yokdur 'aceb sizde uğraduk mektûb-ı şerîfinüz geldi her ne
kim dimişsiz ma'lûm oldu eğer terakkîdür tedârik üzeredür esbâbda kim gidecekdür
olmağa yakındur Mehmed'den sonra bir ağa ile eğlendürmeyüb gönderirüm deyü
buyurmuşsız benüm pâdişâhum vallâhi billâhi hâtırum muhkem yıkılmışdur hergiz
tesellâ olmak yokdur ammâ ki nice idem hem-ân sultânümün hâtırı için bu belâyı
ihtiyâr etdüm ammâ ki bana çok iftirâlar oldu çok sû-i zanınız oldu benüm hâtırum
muhkem yıkılmışdur beş altı kerre mektûb-ı şerîfinüzde vâdinüz olmuşdur cümle-i
murâdların oldu iderem deyü imdi benüm pâdişâhum 'inâyet idiniz geçende Amasya
virdinüz vakt üç kerre yüz bin akçe terakkîden gayrı on kerre yüz bin akçe terakkî
bana 'inâyet idesiz cümle on üç kerre yüz bin akçe terakkî olur ve oğlum Osmân
kulunuza üç yüz elli bin ile Kastamonı sancağın 'inâyet idesiz geçende Çankırı sancağı
demiş idim feragât eyledüm Kastamonı sancağın üç yüz elli bin ile 'inâyet idesiz ve
Mahmûd ve Abdullâh kullarınıza üçer yüz bin akçelik haslar 'inâyet idesiz benüm
pâdişâhum eksük istemezsem 'inâyet idesiz eksük vermeyesiz cümle istediklerümi

viresiz ve ben kuluna otuz bin altun ‘inâyet idesiz bu yolda çok ziyân gördüm ‘inâyet idesiz otuz bin altun gönderesiz lâlâya defterdâra Orhan’un lâlâsına defterdârına münâsib gördüğünüz üzere terakkî ‘inâyet idesiz benüm pâdişâhum yine murâdum budur ki Osmân kulunuza lâlâluğî bizüm defterdârımız olan Hüseyin kulunuza viresiz ve bana defterdârlığı şimdilik nişâncımız olan Ahmed kulunuza ‘inâyet idesiz nişâncı Ahmed kulunuz günâhkâr mücrim kulunuzdur günâhkâr ammâ ümizdür ki günâhını ben kuluna bağışlayasuz murâdumdur yerden göke dek minnetdür bu def’a murâdumı hâsıl idesiz bana defterdârlığı nişâncımız olan Ahmed kulunuza ‘inâyet idesiz benüm sultânüm nihâyet merteb bî-huzûrlugum vardur hâtırum muhkem yıkılmışdur bârî bu murâdlarum hâsıl olmak ile beni tesellâ idesiz işte ben kulunuz dahı sultânümün hâtırı içün Engürî’de kışlamadum vallâhi evvel murâdum Engürî’de kışlamak idi yine rızâ-yı şerîfünüzü gözledüm Engirü’de kışlamadum işte gitmek üzereyüz bu kâğıdı Kattâr-serây nâm menzilde yazub gönderdüm ben sultânümün rızâsını gözledüm hâtırum hoş idesiz bu murâdlarum eğlendürmeyesiz viresiz ve nişâncı Ahmed kulunuzı bana defterdâr idesiz bu def’a beni sevindüresiz âh bana olan hayfı sizde bilirsiz bârî beni tesellâ idesiz ben bunca belâyı ihtiyâr idüb rızânuz gözledüm size lâyük ne ise idesiz kurbânunuz ayağunuz turâbıyam ve Osmân’a defterdârluğî Ferruhşâd oğlu Ali kulunuza ‘inâyet idesiz pâdişâhum sa’âdetlü pâdişâhumı Hakk te’âlaya ısmarladum bâkî fermân pâdişâhumundur hazret-i pâdişâhum
Kulun Bâyezîd

Folio 6

Benüm sa’âdetüm pâdişâhum mektûb-ı şerîfünüzde buyurmuşsınız ki bundan evvel olan ahvâlden geçdüm hem-ân şimden sonra eyülük gerek deyü buyurmuşsınız benüm pâdişâhum günâhum ‘afv olduğu oldur ki ben kulunu esirgeyesiz bu Amasya’dan halâs idesiz bârî Engürî sancağın bana ‘inâyet idesiz vallâhi billâhi hergiz emr-i şerîfünüze muhâlefet itmezem vallâhi billâhi gamm ve gussadan ölmelü oldum cânumdan bî-zâr oldum hergiz Amasya’ya alışamadum havâsına mizâcum alışmadı ölmeğe râzıyam Amasya’da durmağa râzı degülem nice idem n’eyleyem işte sultânümün hatrı içün Amasya’ya gelüb bu zamâna dek eğlendüm emr-i şerîfünüz yerine geldi Allâh rızâsı içün olsun ben kulunu âzâd idesiz bana Engürî sancağın ‘inâyet idesiz vallâhi billâhi

bu yerde hâlüm makedderdür bir kimse eğer cennetde olsa dahı gönli hoş olmayınca hem-ân cehennemde gibidür imdi vallâhi billâhi hergiz alışamadum cânumdan dahı bî-zâr oldum husûsâ sultânüm dahı Amasya'yı gördünüz bilürsünüz nasıl kim yerdür husûsâ kim sultânüm dahı nice def'a dimişsiz ki Sultân Bâyezîd merhûm ile Sultân Ahmed merhûm insâf nice Amasya'da ola bilürler idi âdem duracak yer degüldür deyü buyurdunuz Çatalca'da sultânüm ile buluşduğumda dahı bana dimiş idünüz imdi ben kulunu esirgeyesiz bu Amasyadan halâs idesiz bana ya Engüri sancağın ya Kastamonı sancağın 'inâyet idesiz yâhûd Kütahya 'inâyet idesiz Selîm Hâna Manisa sancağın 'inâyet idesiz eğer virmezsenüz kaîl-iyem bana ya Bağdad ya Kara Hamîd sancağın 'inâyet idesiz hem-ân tek beni Amasya'dan halâs idesiz benüm sultânüm bu sözlerüme incinmeyesiz n'eyleyem hâlüm gâyet makedderdür benüm bu denlü bî-huzûrluğumı sultânuma bildürdim lütf kerem sultânümundur yâhûd ben kulunuzu murâdum üzere tesellâ idesiz hergiz emr-i şerîfünüze muhâlefetüm yokdur kulunuzam kurbânınızam ayağunuz turâbıyam cânüm başum yolunuza fedâ ola hem-ân 'âlemde pâdişâhum sağ olsun benüm pâdişâhum

TSMA.E. 753/39

Folio 1

Sa'âdetüm devletüm sultânüm pâdişâhum hazretlerinü mübârek huzûr-ı şerîflerine selâmlar ve senâlar irsâl kılmakdan sonra mübârek hâkipây-ı şerîfinüze yüzüm ve gözüm sürmekden sonra mübârek mizâc-ı şerîfinüz nicedür ahabâr-ı selâmetinüzi i'lâm idesiz bu hâksâr bendenüzi sorarsanız hayr du'ânuza meşgûl bilesiz murâdum hâkipây-ı şerîfinüze yüzüm sürmekdür hayrlar ile nasîb ola mektûb-ı şerîfinüz geldi bir gününüz bin ola Hakk te'âlâ mübârek vucûd-ı şerîfinüzi hatarlardan saklaya her ne kim demüşsiz ma'lûm olundu inşallâh cümle cevâblarımı vesâ'ir mesâlihimi arpa emini kulunuz ile gönderürem yakında gitmek üzeredür ve mektûbda evvelbahâr oldu mı bir münâsib yılaka varub huzûr idesin dimişsiz ben bunca yıldır ki şehriden yılaklara gitmeğe öğrenmedüm gitmek olsa dahı kande varam Lâdık? harâbdur altmış yetmiş bin akçe ile olmaz estağfurûllâh ben bu yerlere ve şimdengerü hergiz nesne yapmayam sizün eyyâm-ı sa'âdetinüzde benüm huzûrum olup dur beni düşmânlar sözü ile mağbûn eyledinüz elimden ne gelür ne huzûrum vardur bir derd ve

mihnetdür çekerüm nasîbim bu imiş Amasya gibi zindân havâsı alçak yerde beni bırakdınız eğer bana muhabbetiniz olsa bunda göndermezдіңіз geçende Kattarserâyına şikâra vardığım için benüm kasduma beglerbegiler cem‘iyyet etdürürsüz ‘âlemde âdemündür pâymâl oldukdan sonra ölmek yeğdür Amasya’da ne ahurlar vardur hergiz nesne yokdur belki yılda iki yüz bin akçe kirâya gider kimi kârbânserâyyla benüm Kûtâhya’da hergiz harcum yok idi râhat idim bunda günde bin kez ölürüm oğlancıkları sünnet etmek isterdüm onu dahı komazsız her merâmın ile istediğim esbâbı bârî ‘inâyet idesiz ve bir mikdâr altun daha ‘inâyet idesiz bârî sünnet etmeğe mümkün olsa sultânuma lâıyk ne ise öyle idesiz âh sözüm çok derdüm çokdur eğer dersem yine incinürsüz hem-ân sağ olun sa‘âdetlü pâdişâhumı Hakk te‘âlâya ısmarladum lutf idüb bu sözlerime dahı bî-huzûr olmayasız n’eyleyem cânımdan dahı bîzâr oldum ben dünyâdan dışra degülem hem-ân hâlime sultânuma anladuram sultânımdan gayrı kimsem yokdur el benüm etek sultânımdur cümle hatâlarumuza pişmân olduk hem-ân sultânımdın sağlığı gerek bir gününüz bin ola hazret-i pâdişâhum

Kulunuz Bâyezîd

Folio 4

Sa‘âdetüm başum tâcı devletüm sultânım pâdişâhum hazretinün mübârek huzûr-ı şerîflerine hezâr hasret ile selâmlar ve senâlar irsâl idüb mübârek hâkipây-ı şerîflerine yüzüm ve gözüm sürmekden sonra benüm pâdişâhum mübârek mizâc-ı şerîfinüz nicedür kerem idüb ahhâr-ı selâmetinüzi i‘lâm idesiz dâimâ sıhhat ve selâmetde olasız Hakk te‘âlâ bir gününüzü bin ede eğer bu hâksâr bendenüzi sorarsanız rûz-ı şeb hayr du‘ânuza meşgûl bilesiz âmmâ ki gamm ve gussa ve gayretten helâk olmuşumdur bilmem ne idem sultânımdan ben böyle ummazdum Selîm Hân’un hatrı için bana böyle zulm eylediniz ‘adâletiniz böyle midür ol oğlunuz ise bende oğlunuz degül miyem bana da yazık degül midür insâf böyle mi olur işte ben Kûtahya’dan gitdüm düşmânlarımı ber-murâd eylediniz beni nâ-murâd eylediniz ne diyem nice idem bilmem gammdan helâk oldum ayrık min-b‘ad tesellâ olmak yokdur işte ben gitdüm hem-ân Selîm Hân dahı Manisa’da eglenmesün Karaman’a gitsün ol Karaman’a giderse Manisa’da nesnesi yok hem kendünün maksûdı beni Amasya’ya göndermek idi ol cân-ı dilden tesellâ olupdur hem-ân hayf ve zulm bana olmuştur Kûtahya’ya

geldükde bir köy denlü idi bunca saraylar eyledüm serâylar bağça ve âhur ve sâ'ir her ne lâzım olursa hep eyledüm idi yigirmi bin altun ziyâde kendüm harc eyledüm idi ve cümle kullaruma ısmarladum ki Kütahya'yı ma'mûr eylesünler deyü her biri evler yapub uc yerlerden ziyade olub bir büyük şehir olmuş idi bunca zamân Kütahya hevâsına gönlüm ve mizâcum alışmış iken hergiz günâhım yoğ iken hem-ân Selîmün hatrı için beni mağbûn eylediñüz merdûd eyledinüz nice idem sultânuma layık mıdır eğer bana olan zulm beyâna kâbil degüldür demekden fâ'ide yokdur ne diyem işte hele Kütahya'dan gitdüm bu kâgıdı Eskişehir'de yazub gönderdüm imdi Selîm Hân'ı da eglendürmeysiz hem-ân Karaman'a gönderesiz ve bundan evvel vâdinüz üzere altun göndersiz bunca ziyânım olmuşdur ümizdür ki bârî otuz bin altun gönderesiz istediğim üzere bana Amasya'da beylerbeyilik eğer beylerbeyilik kıyamaz isenüz cümle on kerre yüz bin akçe terakkî ve Osmân'a sancak ve Mahmûd ve Abdullâh kulunuza haslardan ikişer yüz bin akçelük has 'inâyet idesiz eğer bunları 'inâyet iderseniz bir mikdâr gönlüm tesellâ olub tesellâ-yı hatr ile giderüm bahâne kalmasun lutf idesiz 'inâyet idesiz böyle kış zamânında beni esirgemedinüz böyle hakâret ile gönderdiniz 'arzım pâymâl etdinüz imdi söz çok idi demekden fâ'ide olsa ne diyem hem-ân sağ olun işte gitdüm düşmânlarum rahat olsun olan oldu lutf idesiz istediğim murâdlarımı hâsıl idesiz beni lutf ile utandurasuz ümizdür ki bu mektûb cevâbıyla otuz bin altun gönderesiz sâ'ir istedigim murâdlarımı dahı eglendürmeyüb ben Amasya'ya varmadan eglendirmeyesiz 'inâyet idesiz beni söndüresiz bu murdâr fânî dünyâda birkaç gün sizün sağ lutfunuza geçinüb rahat olalum benüm pâdişâhum lutf ve kerem pâdişâhumumundur bu mektûb cevâbına intizârdıyam sultânım sağ olsun sa'âdetlü pâdişâhumı Hakk te'âlâya ısmarladum cemî'-i zamânda Hakk te'âlâ mu'ininüz ola bâkî fermân pâdişâhumundur hazret-i pâdişâhum

Bâyezîd

Appendix II: A Sample of Letter of Prince Bayezid

T.C. BAŞBAKANLIK OSMANLI ARŞİVİ DAİRE BAŞKANLIĞI (BOA) C

[illegible]

TSMA.E.0753

Appendix III: A Sample Letter of Prince Selim

T.C. BAŞBAKANLIK OSMANLI ARŞIVI DAİRE BAŞKANLIĞI (BOA) ©

سعادتمندی من و پادشاهم صفی‌الدین محمد کمالی که شایسته کمال است و در هر یک
افتخار و سرب‌خیزیت و عالیه تجدد و عدست شانه‌ها نموده اند که در هر یک
نیز حق اولاد که اگر بر مویس لطف و کرم بودند بر علقه ثابت قدم احوال دنیا
استحقاق ریسور لدر که در هر یک و عالی قوتی و عاقبتی استحقاق ملاقات
خدمت نمایند ملاقات ریسور لدر عا و اجیب الوضو و و ایهب المتعوض
خداوند استحقاق اولاد که در هر یک علی‌الغالب التوسیع فی اوقات
میدان اولوب که در هر یک کثرت بود و سوزن مسرت اولاد استحقاق
و سلطان صفی‌الدین که در هر یک و در هر یک لطف ابد و بکتوب شریف و در هر یک
اخبار سلامت مسرت اند که در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک
و در هر یک سعادتمندی من و پادشاهم صفی‌الدین محمد کمالی که شایسته کمال است و در هر یک
عزت و دولتی که در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک
صفتی که در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک
سختی ادم جمع آنکه کمالی و انی الله اعلم اگر اولاد صرام زاد که
کرم اولی منی لازم اینم سو که در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک و در هر یک
بیم‌الوقت

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