

AN OTTOMAN PRINCE
WEARING A QIZILBASH *TĀJ*:
THE ENIGMATIC CAREER OF SULTAN
MURAD AND QIZILBASH AFFAIRS
IN OTTOMAN DOMESTIC POLITICS,
1510-1513

I ————— INTRODUCTION

It has long been recognized that the formation of the Qizilbash as a socio-religious entity during the late 15th and the early 16th centuries was intimately linked to the Ottoman-Safavid political confrontation. Hence the struggle between the two states fundamentally influenced the ideological background and religious orientation of the Qizilbash movement.¹ Accordingly, modern Safavid historiography has discussed aspects of the influential role of early Qizilbashes in shaping the Safavid state.²

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¹ A number of scholars among specialists on both Ottoman and Safavid history, and the religious history of Anatolia, drew attention to the dominant political character of the early Qizilbash movement during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. However, the only comprehensive study evaluating the Qizilbash movement within the context of Ottoman-Safavid confrontation hitherto published is Hanna Sohrweide's article in *Der Islam*. Cf. SOHRWEIDE, 1965. For a study focused on the relations between the two states, relatively overlooking Qizilbashes themselves, cf. ALLOUCHE, 1983. For a later attempt to picture the emergence of the Qizilbash movement within the political confrontation of the Ottoman and Safavid states, cf. YILDIRIM, 2008.

² For an introductory reading on the origins, development, and aspects of the Qizilbash

The impact of the Qizilbash movement on Ottoman internal politics and the religious orientation of the empire, however, has not been adequately treated.³

Classical Ottoman historians since the reign of Selim I (1512-1520) show a deliberate effort to keep the Qizilbash issues outside the Ottoman sphere of legitimacy, especially on religious and ideological levels. However, a closer examination of their works alongside the archival evidence leaves no doubt that Qizilbash affairs during the early decades of the 16th century were by no means an external problem for the Ottoman administration, but an intrinsically interconnected socio-religious and political phenomenon that had deep roots and consequences at home. The intimacy of Qizilbash affairs with Ottoman domestic politics is best demonstrated in the affiliation of two Ottoman princes, namely Prince Şehinşâh⁴ (d. 1511) and Prince Murad (d. 1513-1514?), with the Qizilbash movement.

This article scrutinizes the involvement of a prominent Ottoman prince, namely Sultan⁵ Murad, the son of Sultan Selim's brother Sultan Ahmed (d. 1513), in Qizilbash movements in the course of the Ottoman civil war between 1510 and 1513. It evaluates Sultan Murad's adherence to the Qizilbash movement through an attempt to investigate the role of Qizilbash affairs in the Ottoman domestic politics. I will argue that Murad's interest in the Qizilbash movement was essentially interconnected with political developments in the early-16th-century Ottoman Empire. Murad's cooperation with the Qizilbashes of the province (*vilâyet*) of Rum was either encouraged or approved by his father through purely political concerns: by doing so Ahmed aimed to recruit additional

movement and identity, the following studies may be consulted: AUBIN, 1959, 1984, 1988; MAZZAOU, 1972; MÉLIKOFF, 1975; SAVORY, 1980; ROEMER, 1985; BABAYAN, 2002.

³ For an attempt to observe aspects of the Qizilbash impact on Ottoman politics, cf. BELDICEANU-STEINHERR, 1975.

⁴ He was among four living sons of Bayezid II (d. 1512) when the dynastic struggle broke out in 1510. When the other sons of Bayezid II – Sultan Ahmed (d. 1513), Sultan Selim (d. 1520), and Sultan Korkud (d. 1513) – began to struggle for the throne, Prince Şehinşâh strangely refrained from any dynastic claims. This must most probably be because of his Qizilbash leanings, which is clearly revealed by contemporary archival documents. As a matter of fact, he died in 1511 without witnessing the final combat of Selim and Ahmed. For Prince Şehinşâh, cf. YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 399-400, fn 1342.

⁵ The title "Sultan" was, in the Ottoman classical period, used not only for Ottoman rulers but also for other members of the dynasty. In the early-16th-century Ottoman context the epithet seems to be rather an indication of dynastic lineage. In this article, I will stay loyal to the formulaic expression of the contemporary sources and employ the epithet "sultan" along with "prince".

fighting force against Selim's powerful army. Nevertheless, in a short while, Sultan Murad and his father conflicted on how to use armed Qizilbashes in the dynastic struggle. Ahmed, as a strong candidate to the Ottoman throne, obviously had to maintain distance – at the very least – from Qizilbash elements, whose central concern was indeed nothing else but to trouble, if not root out, the Ottoman administration in Anatolia. When the Qizilbash insurgents started to shake Ottoman authority in the province of Rum, therefore, Ahmed immediately cut off his tacit alliance with the Qizilbashes and even called Murad back to his camp. Nevertheless, Murad pursued a different line of struggle against his uncle Selim. He believed in a closer partnership with the Qizilbashes of the region and with their spiritual and temporal patron Shāh Ismā'īl. However, he could not effectively employ Qizilbash power in the Ottoman dynastic struggle against Selim's army. Rather, he himself seems to have become an instrument in the hands of Shāh Ismā'īl to weaken the Ottoman rule in Anatolia.

SCHOLARSHIP TO DATE

Sultan Murad's Qizilbash affiliation was first noticed by modern scholars during the early 20th century. However, a contextual analysis of his Qizilbashism in the light of contemporary events and its religio-political implications has not yet been attempted. Among modern historians it was Hüseyin Hüsameddin who first drew attention to Qizilbash activities in the province of Rum, particularly in Amasya, under Sultan Ahmed's governorship. Although rightfully evaluating events in the context of the dynastic struggle between Selim and Ahmed, Hüseyin Hüsameddin's account falls short of perceiving the proper sectarian and "ethnic"-cultural nature of the contemporary developments.⁶ Apart from a clear nationalist tone dominating his approach, Hüseyin Hüsameddin more or less repeats the *Selim-nāme* type of history writing.⁷ Perhaps the most interesting point in his account is

⁶ For some shortcomings of Hüseyin Hüsameddin's account, cf. *infra*, fn. 19.

⁷ It is now a well-known fact among Ottoman historians that Selim's unusual succession by forcing his father to abdicate and some of his harsh practices, which were clearly beyond Islamic law and the Ottoman tradition, created serious discontent among several echelons of the Ottoman society. This must account for the appearance during the reign of Selim I of a recognizable style of history books called *Selim-nāme*, dedicated to his

his silence on the Qizilbash affiliation of Sultan Murad; on one occasion he even depicts Sultan Murad as defending Amasya against Qizilbash insurgents.⁸ Throughout the long section about Sultan Ahmed's government in Amasya, he severely criticizes Ahmed, accusing him of falling under the illusion of the Persian (*Acemî*) literati and thus disregarding the rising Shī'ite threat.⁹ Nevertheless his attack limits itself to Ahmed's ignorance and fondness for pleasure. Indeed a careful reading unveils Hüseyin Hüsameddin's prudent labor towards keeping the dynasty's name clear from ideological and religious attachments to the Qizilbash movement.

Çağatay Uluçay's series of three articles appearing in *Tarih Dergisi* are still the most informative publications on the activities of Sultan Murad during the civil war.¹⁰ Nevertheless, though resorting to relatively rich archival documents, Uluçay's work fails to provide an analytical framework for discussion. In many aspects his study bears heavy traces of the *Selim-nâme* tradition. In addition to the obvious Selim-centric approach, his implicit Sunni-dominated view, which regards Qizilbashes as "faulty others", taints Uluçay's assessments, as well as remarkably hinders his recognition of the Qizilbash role in contemporary Ottoman domestic politics. Similarly, he does not attempt to provide any contextual scrutiny of Murad's adherence to the Qizilbash movement. Yet the archival evidence first introduced by Uluçay is still among the principle sources for the contemporary events and will be utilized by the present study as well. As far as Sultan Murad's Qizilbash connection is concerned, Selahattin Tansel's well-known studies,

reign with the foremost aim of clearing Selim's name and legitimizing his unprecedented acts. Examples of the *Selim-nâme* genre even proliferated under the auspices of Selim's son Süleyman. Though relatively rich in number and certainly valuable in content, the *Selim-nâme* literature has not received the attention of modern scholars as it deserves. Among a few examples might be counted the inventory study of Tekindağ, which unfortunately falls short of discussing the historiography of this peculiar genre; the study of Uğur, promising in title but not fulfilling in content; and two works of Kerslake on the *Selim-nâme* by Celalzâde Mustafa. Cf. TEKINDAĞ, 1970; UĞUR, 1985; KERSLAKE, 1975 and 1978. For a recent attempt of a critical analysis of both the *Selim-nâme* literature and the secondary publications on *Selim-nâmes*, cf. ÇİPA, 2007, p. 73-127.

⁸ According to Hüseyin Hüsameddin, Sultan Murad defended Amasya against the assault of Qizilbashes under Zinnün's command. Cf. HÜSEYİN HÜSAMEDDİN, 1927, p. 263. As will be discussed below, however, Hüseyin Hüsameddin's account does not only fail on Murad's stand against the Qizilbash affairs, but also includes serious mistakes concerning the narrative account of contemporary events.

⁹ Cf., for example, *ibid.*, p. 269.

¹⁰ ULUÇAY, 1954a, 1954b, 1955.

which were published years later than Uluçay's articles, provide a negligible contribution to the field in terms of both historical data and methodology.¹¹

Following these two efforts to probe this critical period of the Ottoman history – however much they were rather like modern extensions of *Selim-nāme* literature – has been a long silence. Two recent dissertations simultaneously attempted to revisit the governing factors during Sultan Selim's succession. Erdem Çıpa focuses on the Rumelian supporters of Selim against his father and brothers. Developing his arguments around the foremost role – as he argues – of the Rumelian military, Çıpa pays less attention to the role of Qizilbash affairs during the struggle for succession.¹² My own dissertation deals with the issue as part of a more comprehensive survey on the origins of the Qizilbash movement in Anatolia.¹³

As summarized, the available scholarship is concerned with Sultan Murad and his Qizilbash affiliation only indirectly, in the context of the civil war between Selim and Ahmed. Consequently the significance and the historical implications of his conversion to the Qizilbash sect has not been adequately elucidated. This study thus stands for the first attempt to develop a biography of Sultan Murad, though limited to his last years, and to understand the reasons for and nature of Murad's Qizilbash affiliation, with special reference to the Qizilbash influence on contemporary Ottoman domestic politics.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE CIVIL WAR, 1510-1513

Before embarking on an analysis of Sultan Murad's deeds, it is necessary to provide a brief panorama of the Ottoman domestic political climate which surrounded Murad's career. During the last years of his reign, Bayezid II (1481-1512) left governmental issues in the hands of his viziers, obviously because of his old age and worsening health conditions. The Sultan's insufficiency automatically raised the question of succession, which eventually led to a civil war among the contesting princes Ahmed (Murad's father), Korkud, and Selim. Since Korkud

¹¹ TANSEL, 1966 and 1969.

¹² Barely referring to the Qizilbash movements in the province of Rum, Çıpa's interest in Sultan Murad and his deeds is limited to a few sentences. Cf. ÇİPA, 2007, p. 31-32.

¹³ Cf. YILDIRIM, 2008.

could not attain enough support from among the power circles, the real struggle occurred between Ahmed and Selim. Although Ahmed had secured the favour of his father and viziers at the beginning, Selim successfully garnered the Janissaries' support and eventually succeeded his father.

In 1510, the tacit contest between the princes turned into an open fight. Realizing his disadvantageous position at Trebizond, Selim left the city for Kefe, where his son Süleyman had been recently appointed as governor. However, Selim's intention was to obtain a governorship in Rumelia, which was strictly banned according to the customary law (*kānun-ı kadīm*). For this purpose, he moved from Kefe and landed on Romanian shores with a sizable army. Against the strict prohibition and constant warnings of the Porte, Selim marched towards Edirne, finally managing to wrench the governorship of Semendire.

While Selim was struggling with his father in Rumelia, Anatolia was facing a rebellion led by Shāhkulu, a Qizilbash leader acting in the name of Shāh Ismā'īl. During the late spring of the year 1511, Ahmed, who was the governor of Amasya at the time, was ordered to join the imperial army commissioned to suppress the Shāhkulu rebellion. This was a strategic maneuver on the part of Bayezid II and his grand vizier Ali Pasha, who was appointed as the commander-in-chief of this army. The intention was to enthrone Sultan Ahmed by taking advantage of the prestige that would be gained by a military success against Shāhkulu. On the other hand, Selim, who had already managed to get the governorship of Semendire, did not leave Edirne, most probably suspecting his father's intention in favour of Ahmed.

Nevertheless, things did not go according to Bayezid II's plan. The provident and untimely attack of the grand vizier cost him not only a disgraceful defeat but also his life. Both the failure against the Qizilbashes and the loss of Ali Pasha severely damaged Ahmed's advantageous position against Selim. Furthermore, Ahmed's weak leadership during the campaign seriously diminished the support among Janissaries for his dynastic claims, which had already been weak enough.¹⁴ Yet Selim's impatient move on his father in August (1511) provided a last chance for Ahmed. The military confrontation between Selim and his father in Çorlu, just miles from Istanbul, ended in Bayezid II's decisive

¹⁴ For a detailed account of Shāhkulu rebellion and its consequences, cf. ULUÇAY, 1954a, 1954b, 1955; TEKINDAĞ, 1959; YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 345-415.

victory. Selim had to flee to Kefe, seriously destroying the legitimate ground for his dynastic claims.

Once again, Bayezid and his viziers decided to call Sultan Ahmed to ascend to the throne. When Ahmed arrived at Üsküdar, however, a *coup d'état* by Janissaries reversed his fortune. Ahmed had no choice but to return to Anatolia where he could call up additional troops from among the locals. It must be because of his deep disappointment and anger that Ahmed made another mistake by besieging Konya and finally capturing it by force. By doing so, Ahmed fell in a position of rebellious prince. Taking the advantage, Selim's supporters in Istanbul used Ahmed's disobedient act as a pretext to force Bayezid II to consent to Selim's succession. Eventually Bayezid II had to give up his support for Ahmed and called Selim to Istanbul.¹⁵ Welcomed especially by the Janissaries, Selim ascended to the throne as the ninth Ottoman Sultan on April 24, 1512, while Ahmed was de facto ruling Anatolian principalities garrisoned in Konya.¹⁶

After firmly establishing his control over Istanbul and the Rumelian principalities, Selim marched upon Ahmed, crossing to Anatolia on July 29. On April 15, 1513, the final clash between the two brothers ended with Selim's decisive victory. Ahmed was captured and executed immediately. Within a short time, all male members of the Ottoman house, except Selim's son Süleyman and Ahmed's son Murad, were strangled. In the summer of the year 1513, Selim's sultanate (rule) was thus absolutely established.¹⁷

One may argue that Selim paradoxically owes the Ottoman throne to his formidable enemy, namely the Qizilbash. When the struggle for the throne broke out, Qizilbash affairs became the primary issue deeply influencing the balance of powers within the governmental apparatus. Indeed, it was by and large the attitude and acts of each prince against the Qizilbash problem that ultimately determined their allies within the state institutions.

Among the sons of Bayezid II, Selim pursued the most consistent as well as the most aggressive policy against the Qizilbash. Since the early days of his governorship in Trebizond, Selim declared himself a staunch

¹⁵ Cf. ULUÇAY, 1954b, p. 117-120; TANSEL, 1966, p. 284-295; YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 449-461.

¹⁶ For further details of events, cf. ULUÇAY, 1954a, 1954b, 1955; YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 416-499.

¹⁷ For a detailed account of developments, cf. YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 494-498.

enemy of the Qizilbash, and remained the same until his death in 1520. Meanwhile, Ahmed seems to have failed to develop a coherent policy regarding the Qizilbash issue. The available evidence reflects his attitude as quite an ambiguous one. On the one hand, his principal military confidants, both people of the province of Rum and the tribes of the Taş-ili region were at the same time the principal audience of the Qizilbash message.¹⁸ Some of his acts, on the other hand, clearly demonstrate that Ahmed had no sympathy for the Qizilbash movement and ideals. What can be said with certainty is that he established a kind of problematic relationship with the Qizilbashes of Anatolia. His interest in the Qizilbash-affiliated groups seemingly derived from certain pragmatic reasons: namely to employ dissident Qizilbashes, whose military capability had already been proved, against Selim. In terms of ideology and socio-cultural perception, on the other hand, one can hardly observe, in the available documentation, an affinity of Ahmed to the Qizilbash movement.

One of the most concrete results of Ahmed's vague attitude toward the Qizilbashes came out with the augmentation of Qizilbash propaganda in the province of Rum. Contemporary archival reports permit us to surmise that Ahmed's "soft" policy created in the region a somewhat tolerant atmosphere for Qizilbash activities not only in rural areas but also among the urban high cultural echelons. Hüseyin Hüsameddin provides several examples for the fact that a number of statesmen and *ulemā* at the court of Ahmed felt uncomfortable with this situation. Upon realizing that their warnings would have no result in Ahmed's palace, most of them joined the entourage of Selim, who had already declared himself as the champion of the anti-Qizilbash fight.¹⁹ In con-

¹⁸ We have clear evidence showing that some of Ahmed's trustee tribesmen were in contact with Shāh Ismā'īl. For an analysis of Ahmed's allies and their connection with the Qizilbash movement, cf. *ibid.*, p. 461-469.

¹⁹ Cf. HÜSEYİN HÜSAMEDDİN, 1927, p. 247-248, p. 254, p. 257-258. According to Hüseyin Hüsameddin, Ahmed's interest in the Qizilbash movement went far beyond pragmatic concerns. He argues that Ahmed obviously supported Persian (*'Acem*) scholars and literati against their Turkish colleagues; thus he favored Persian culture at the cost of Turkish culture. To Hüseyin Hüsameddin, these Persian-cultured men propagated the "love of the house of Muhammed" (*Hubb-i Āl-i Aba*), which was a sign of Shī'ism and supported Shāh Ismā'īl in Amasya and the surrounding region. Therefore, Ahmed directly supported the spread of Shī'ism in the province of Rum. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 242-249. However, Hüseyin Hüsameddin's arguments include serious errors. In many aspects, he simply reflects the mentality of *Selīm-nāme* authors, adding new mistakes to the *Selīm-nāme* literature in some other aspects. First of all, his nationalist approach clearly distorts the

trast to Ahmed's vague attitude, his son Murad seems to have made up his mind rather clearly.

The following pages will attempt to show that Murad's interest in the Qizilbash movement had immediate links with the heated contest among the Ottoman princes, and thus was overwhelmingly dominated by political interests. His primary aim in initiating into this movement was to channel Qizilbash military power into the civil war, of course in favor of his father. One may discern three different phases of Sultan Murad's Qizilbash career within the Ottoman civil war. Until Ahmed was expelled from Istanbul by the rebelling Janissaries in the fall of the year 1511, he showed no sympathy towards the Qizilbash movement; on the contrary, he had some leading Qizilbashes imprisoned. Nevertheless, his attitude towards them changed drastically when Ahmed was forced to return to Anatolia while Selim was invited to Istanbul. This marks the beginning of Murad's Qizilbash career. In the beginning, he seems to have acted as an agent of his father, and thus recruited Qizilbash fighters for Ahmed's cause. However, Ahmed soon renounced his alliance with the Qizilbash forces. Yet Murad did not follow his father but continued to act in concert with Qizilbash insurgents, hoping to form a secure front against Selim's imperial army. This disagreement between Murad and his father seems to have surfaced immediately after Selim's ascendance to the Ottoman throne on April 24, 1512. When he realized that the local Qizilbash leaders' loyalty was to Shāh Ismā'īl but not to him, it was too late for Murad to return. Hence, in the last phase of his career, Murad had no option but to tie his fortune to the auspice of Shāh Ismā'īl.

historical framework. He attempts to depict the struggle between Selim and Ahmed as a struggle of Turkish culture and tradition against Persian culture and tradition. In this picture, Selim was the champion of the Turkish tradition against Ahmed's patronage of Persian culture. This sort of classification obviously contradicts the historical realities. Furthermore, Hüseyin Hüsameddin identifies sunnism with Turkish culture – and with Selim's party – and shī'ism with Persian culture, which was, to him, supported by Ahmed. This is a clear misrepresentation stemming from the retrospective approach of Hüseyin Hüsameddin. It is known that the Shī'ī domination in Persia was chiefly an enterprise of Shāh Ismā'īl and his Qizilbash disciple-comrades. Thus the Persian literati in Ahmed's palace in Amasya, if existed as Hüseyin Hüsameddin argues, could barely have been shī'ite. Following Hüseyin Hüsameddin's account, Çağatay Uluçay develops the same attitude, depicting Prince Ahmed as a patron of Qizilbash missionaries in the province of Rum. To him, the prominent *sufīs*, that is adherents of the Safavid order, enjoyed a great prestige in Ahmed's court. Cf. ULUÇAY, 1954a, p. 56-57. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı even goes further depicting Prince Ahmed and his son Murad as leaders of the Qizilbash insurrection. Cf. UZUNÇARŞILI, 1995, p. 256.

Sultan Murad was the eldest of Ahmed's four sons.²⁰ The author of *Amasya Tarihi* writes that Sultan Ahmed arranged a celebration for the circumcision of his sons Murad and Alaeddin in 896 (1490-1491).²¹ We can assume therefore that at that time Murad was at an age between 6 and 10. He was governing the sub-province (*sanjak*) of Çorum when his father left Amasya in charge of suppressing the Shāhkulu rebellion. In the spring of the year 1511, Ahmed called him from Çorum to act as his proxy in Amasya.²² From then on, Sultan Murad de facto ruled the province of Rum until he went to Iran in the late spring or early summer of the year 1512.

Contemporary sources provide little information on Sultan Murad's earlier attitude against the rising Qizilbash agitation. Yet one may deduce from a short expression in one of the contemporary archival reports that he was not a friend of the Qizilbash. The letter of a certain Yusuf, one of the prominent spies of Selim in Anatolia, relates Murad's collaboration with the Qizilbashes of the region. Yusuf reports that Sultan Murad released İsa Halife-oğlu, who was imprisoned by Murad himself when Sultan Ahmed left the region.²³ It is clear from the same report that İsa

²⁰ The others were Alaeddin, Süleyman, and Osman. Cf. HÜSEYİN HÜSAMEDDİN, 1927, p. 251.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 262; ULUÇAY, 1954b, p. 127.

²³ In the Topkapı Palace Archives (hereafter TPA), Istanbul, there are a number of intelligence reports sent by Yusuf to Sultan Selim. It is clear enough from these letters that Yusuf was one of the most prominent spies working for Selim in the court of Ahmed. Yusuf explains his own situation in a letter addressed to *Padişah-ı âlempenâh*, obviously Sultan Selim. In the beginning Yusuf explains that he had always been among the loyal servants of the Sultan; although he had been looking forward to joining Selim's suit, he could not yet find an opportunity to leave Ahmed's entourage. Yusuf says that at that time he was offered by Ahmed to inspect the situation of Qizilbash affairs in the province of Rum and the deeds of Sultan Murad; but he had not accepted this mission since he thought it might be a test of his loyalty, for he felt Sultan Ahmed was suspicious about his fidelity. As can be seen from the rest of his letter, Yusuf finally found an opportunity to leave Sultan Ahmed's camp: he joined a small army of 2,000 men dispatched to the province of Rum under the command of Sultan Süleyman, the younger son of Sultan Ahmed. Yusuf also states that he had already sent another letter with a certain Hüseyin, explaining his situation. The same Hüseyin returned with some orders of the Sultan (Selim), which were pursued prudently by Yusuf. Yusuf finishes his letter by explaining that although he was under the surveillance of Sultan Süleyman and his men, he was looking for an opportunity to escape. Upon finding a suitable way, he would immediately leave Ahmed's side and come to kiss Selim's feet. Unfortunately, the document is undated and Yusuf does not clarify the location of Sultan Ahmed, from where they set out for the province of Rum.

Halife-oğlu was one of the most prominent Qizilbash khalifas in the province of Rum. As will be discussed shortly, Murad did not only release him but formed a Qizilbash army relying on the latter's prestige in the region.²⁴

Although Yusuf's letter is not dated, Murad's cooperation with prominent Qizilbash khalifas must have taken place after the fall of the year 1511. It appears then that Murad imprisoned the most influential Qizilbash khalifa of the region in the spring of 1511, when his father had just departed from Amasya. One should keep in mind that at that time Ahmed was invited to join the imperial army, which was commissioned to suppress the Shāhkulu rebellion. More importantly, he was intended to succeed Bayezid II. As we surmise from Yusuf's letter, Murad's Qizilbash policy was suddenly reversed after the fall of the year 1511, when Ahmed was expelled from Istanbul.

As summarized above, on April 24, 1512, Selim took control of Istanbul. Thence, the central powers of the empire (i.e. the Janissaries, the imperial bureaucracy and the *ulemā*) quickly shifted to his side, leaving Ahmed in the position of a rebellious prince. Contemporary intelligence reports, mostly written by Selim's spies in Anatolia, reveal that following the enthronement of Selim I, most of the military in Ahmed's entourage – especially those enjoying high ranks in the Ottoman governmental system – started to seek ways of switching to Selim's side.²⁵ Against the

But his description of events suggests that it must have been written shortly after Selim's ascendance to the throne. It is clear from his report that Yusuf completed his mission at Ahmed's side and was looking for an opportunity to leave. Yusuf says Ahmed dispatched a force of 2,000 men to the province of Rum. But he does not clarify the reason. Their mission should not have been suppressing the Qizilbash insurgences in the region for its size is obviously less than enough. Taking into account these two points it seems reasonable to assume the date of this document is April-May 1512, when Sultan Ahmed was in Karaman. Cf. TPA E 5877.

²⁴ "... There was a man in Çorum called İsa Halife-oğlu who had been imprisoned by Sultan Murad when Sultan Ahmed left the region. [Now Murad] released [him- İsa Halife-oğlu]. He is one of the leaders [of Qizilbashes], the other being Davud Halife-oğlu, and all the sufis [Qizilbash] around İskilip either have gone or are going to their camp..." (cf. TPA E 7292; translations are mine unless otherwise stated).

²⁵ The letter of Mir-'alem Mustafa, who was a spy for Selim in Anatolia, clearly reflects the pessimistic atmosphere in Ahmed's court. Although the letter is not dated, the course of events related in the document makes it clear that it must have been written after Selim's succession and before his crossing to Anatolia, thus around May 1512. Mustafa says that most of the *sipāhīs* in Ahmed's army were staying there simply because of the fear that Ahmed might harm their families; they were awaiting an opportunity to join Selim's army. He further relates that a high officer in Ahmed's army was in secret communication with him, requesting his intervention to gain the forgiveness of Sultan Selim

resolute support of the Janissaries for Sultan Selim, as well as the increasing support of *sipāhis* and *akıncıs*, Ahmed's most reliable military supporters appeared as the tribal forces from central and southern Anatolia, who were at the same time somehow linked to the Qizilbash movement. Indeed we have evidence showing Ahmed's coalition with Turkoman tribes such as Turgutoğlu, Varsak, etc., already before losing his advantageous position. Following Selim's accession, however, he seems to have extended his cooperation even further to the Qizilbash insurgents against the Ottoman regime.

The radical change in Murad's Qizilbash policy therefore must have been directly related to Ahmed's search for military support against Selim. Indeed, contemporary Ottoman historians provide short but revealing accounts regarding the reasons why Murad adhered to the Qizilbash movements. A contemporary narrative source explains this relationship within a similar context of reasoning, though in a quite conspiratorial way.²⁶ It is argued in *Selim-nāme* that Murad's joining the Qizilbash community was a political tactic tailored at the court of Ahmed. Disturbed by his brother's accession, Ahmed sought to attain the support of Anatolian forces, both within and without the Ottoman military. His plan was first to establish a government in Anatolia and then march on Selim. On the other hand, the Shāhkulu revolt, alongside other developments, had clearly shown that the Qizilbashes of Anatolia had considerable military power. Ahmed sought to gain the support of this militia.²⁷

(cf. TPA E 2667). On the other hand, in his report on the deeds of Murad and the Qizilbashes of Rum, Yusuf, another spy for Selim, underlines that upon the corroboration of the prince with the Qizilbashes, his *paşas* were seeking ways to flee from Murad's suite (cf. TPA E 7292).

²⁶ *Selim-nāme*. Its author became the subject of dispute among scholars. According to Şehabettin Tekindağ, the author was Kemal Paşa-zāde. Although the content of this *Selim-nāme* and *Defter IX* of Kemal Paşa-zāde shows close similarity, the former includes some valuable details which are totally absent in the latter. Based on this fact, Tekindağ inclines toward accepting the idea that Kemal Paşa-zāde authored two separate works on the reign of Selim I (cf. TEKINDAĞ, 1970, p. 208-209). Ahmet Uğur notices that although the name of the author is not mentioned, the work is identical with the *Selim-nāme* by Sa'dī, preserved in Topkapı Sarayı, Revan, 1277. Uğur says that certain minor differences between the two works make it unlikely that Kemal Paşa-zāde could be the author of this work (Sa'dī b. Abdülmüte'āl wrote his *Selim-nāme* during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent and his work has been translated in the framework of a doctoral dissertation; cf. SPEISER, 1946). Nevertheless, as Ahmet Uğur calls attention, the content of Sa'dī's work is derived from *Defter VIII* and *Defter IX* by Kemal Paşa-zāde (cf. UĞUR, 1985, p. 15). For the sake of caution, throughout the present study the work will be cited simply as "*Selimmāme*".

²⁷ *Selim-nāme* says: "Again his confidants suggested to him that it would be a clever

Celalzāde Mustafa follows a similar line of narration. To him, upon realizing that the soldiers and *sipāhīs* of Anatolia were compulsorily inclined to obey their *pādishāh* (Selim must be referred to here by the word *pādishāh*), Ahmed's confidants advised him to gain the support of the Qizilbashes, who were numerous. According to the plan, one of his sons was to convert to the Qizilbash sect and to wear the *tāj* of the Shāh so that he would gather an army from among them. For this purpose Ahmed had his son Murad profess adherence to the Qizilbash sect, wearing their red head gear and abandoning the rituals of Islam.²⁸ Celalzāde emphasizes that the Qizilbashes had already prepared their weapons and other necessary tools of war before this incident. On learning of Murad's conversion, the Safavid disciples of the region felt so pleased that in a couple of days more than 20,000 Qizilbash fighters gathered about him.²⁹

We have strong archival evidence showing that Murad's collaboration with the leading Qizilbash khalifas was indeed dominated by pragmatic concerns, which might well be regarded as a corollary of his father's policy of recruiting additional troops against Selim. A contemporary intelligence report housed in TPA sheds light on the issue. It is said here that during a drinking gathering (*sohbet-i hamr*), some of his trustees advised Murad to free İsa Halife-oğlu so that he could gather thousands of fighters without any expense. Murad pursued the idea. He freed İsa Halife-oğlu and made him one of his close men. Then they dispatched

move if he allowed the impression to be spread abroad that one of his sons revolted against him. He could then gather around himself the discontent and unruly elements, and thus two groups could be acting against Sultan Selim at the same time. Ahmed agreed to this and informed his son Murad, who was his deputy in Amasya, to pretend that he was in revolt; and when Murad did so, within a few days several thousand of Kızılbaş rallied to his side." Cited and quoted in UĞUR, 1985, p. 209.

²⁸ Fisher deduces from Italian sources that not only had Ahmed had his son Murad profess adherence to the Qizilbashes but he also married one of his daughters to Shāh Ismā'īl (cf. FISHER, 1948, p. 110). Nonetheless, Ottoman sources do not confirm this assertion.

²⁹ "Sultan Ahmed, then being in Anatolia, realized that the fortune of the kingship was sliding towards his adversary and the soldiers in Rumelia became totally obedient to Selim. As a solution, his advisors brought forward the idea that in this district (Vilāyet-i Rūm) there are countless Qizilbashes; if they had one of his [Ahmed's] sons to join in the Qizilbash movement and to wear the head gear (*tāj*) of the Shāh they could recruit quite a number of soldiers without expense so that they could oppose Selim's powerful army. Upon Sultan Ahmed's approval, they had his oldest son Sultan Murad profess Qizilbash belief, to put on the red head gear, and to abandon the rituals of Islam. When they heard this, the Qizilbashes of the region became so excited that they started to gather around him. In a couple of days the armed Qizilbash who were summoned numbered more than twenty thousand" (cf. CELĀL-ZĀDE MUSTAFA, *Selim-nāme*, p. 166).

messengers to khalifas in every corner of the province of Rum, ordering them to organize *sufis* (Qizilbashes) under their supervision. In this way they gathered thousands of armed Qizilbashes each day.³⁰ Murad's garnering of Qizilbash support, however, was not without price. In order to secure the allegiance of Safavid followers, he had to be initiated into the Qizilbash movement. Celalzāde Mustafa, a contemporary observer, and the archival evidence confirm that he did so. Murad's initiation was symbolized by wearing the *tāj* (red headgear) sent by Shāh Ismā'īl.³¹

The point should be made that while highlighting political concerns as stimulus of Murad's deeds, our sources remain silent on the religious nature of his Qizilbash affiliation. As indicated earlier, the Ottoman sources in general pursue the principle of shielding dynastic members from the Qizilbash ideals.³² Our archival sources, as well as contempo-

³⁰ The related part of the report reads: "Another news is that Sultan Murad released İsa Halife-oğlu from prison in Çorum and each day gathered one thousand Qizilbash around him, who were ready for his commands without any payment. He [Murad] really did as they spoke during a drinking party: he released him [İsa Halife-oğlu] and made one of his trustees; then he sent messengers to the Qizilbash leaders [khalifa] in the region explaining the situation and asking them to congregate in his camp. Then they [Qizilbashes] revealed their usual sectarian behavior [openly] and started to curse the companions of the Prophet, to rob and kill people..." (cf. TPA E 6522). Yusuf's above-mentioned intelligence report relates events in similar terms. Yusuf too underlines that after freeing İsa Halife-oğlu, Murad moved together with him and with other prominent khalifas of the region. Murad dispatched couriers to nearby regions and gathered Qizilbashes around him (cf. TPA E 7292).

³¹ The above-mentioned anonymous intelligence report, for instance, clearly states that "Sultan Murad wore the Qizilbash *tāj* and recruited soldiers from among the Qizilbashes of the region." (TPA E 6522).

³² The archival documents used in this study were produced in the course of the events, while the ultimate victor of the struggle had not yet been determined. Thus, their account stands closer to historical reality. In the meantime, one should keep in mind that the extant documents are reports by Selim's supporters; thus they bear a noteworthy pre-Selim attitude in reporting contemporary events. Without doubt, the picture would be rather perfect if we could resort to intelligence reports of Ahmed's supporters, which must have been produced but are unfortunately not available to us. As supporters of Selim's party in the civil war, our reporters paid special attention to amplifying the banditry of Murad's Qizilbash forces (or rather his Qizilbash allies). By doing so, they obviously aimed to erode the legitimate ground of Ahmed's dynastic claims. Besides their biased attitude, however, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of the narrative accounts they provide with. However, the narrative sources must be treated more carefully. Differing from archival documents, these narratives were written after the civil war. Furthermore, they were written by chief bureaucrats, whose main concern was to enforce the legitimate ground of Selim's rule. As a natural result, these works were oriented to "sanctify" Selim's struggle on the one hand, and to prove the falseness of Ahmed's claim on the other. One should remember that, after defeating Ahmed, Selim executed all male members of the dynastic line except his own son Süleyman. As indicated earlier, *Selim-nāmes* were written primarily

rary narratives, seem to follow this principle. The two groups of sources both clearly emphasize political motives in assessing Murad's involvement in the Qizilbash movement. Nevertheless, they are quite careful in camouflaging the religious implications of Murad's action.

SULTAN MURAD ON HIS OWN

As discussed above, Murad's interest in the Qizilbash movement was initially approved, if not encouraged, by his father. Nevertheless, regarding how to deal with the Qizilbash forces, Ahmed and Murad soon fell into conflict. Upon realizing the fact that a connection with the Qizilbash movement was damaging his popularity in the eyes of the Sunni population, Sultan Ahmed not only broke his tacit alliance with the Qizilbash forces but also turned against them. As will be delineated, he did not even hesitate to engage in an open clash with the insurgents. Ahmed also called Murad back to join his suite. On the other hand, Murad strongly believed in the necessity of the Qizilbash support in order to win the dynastic struggle. Murad's disagreement with his father seems closely related to Selim's official ascension to the throne, which gave him a virtual control over the central powers, as well as Rumelian timariots and *akıncı* troops. Contrary to his father, Murad must have realized that the Anatolian military resources of the empire would not suffice to defeat Selim.

Hence, by April 1512 at the latest, we can see two separate political and military formations against Selim's suzerainty. On one side, Sultan Ahmed continued his opposition relying mainly on his close circles from Amasya and tribal forces from central and southern Anatolia. On the other side, Sultan Murad counted totally on Shāh Ismā'īl's support, expecting victory with the help of Qizilbash forces. As will be discussed below, Murad also tried to persuade his father to accept an alliance with

to justify Selim's deeds in the course of the civil war. Hence, they recognizably attempt to frame activities of Murad (as principal supporter of Ahmed) as rebels or as betraying the established Ottoman order and traditional values. On the other hand, one should keep in mind that the writers of these narrative histories were high ranking bureaucrats who had served under Selim I and his son Süleyman I. Hence the suggestion that they had access to the earlier spy reports and developed their stories on them should be considered seriously. If this was the case, though we have no evidence for such a connection, the ultimate source of the contemporary events appears as the abovementioned spy reports. Anyhow, these narrative sources provide us with valuable information, which is absent in archival documents.

Shāh Ismā‘īl. However, the latter refused this offer even in his most hopeless situation.³³

During Ahmed’s absence in the province of Rum, the Qizilbash agitation gained impetus, climaxing in the spring of the year 1512. The Qizilbash movement in the region was organized under two leaderships: on the one hand, Sultan Murad and some important Qizilbash khalifas such as İsa Halife-oğlu and Kara İskender led the Qizilbash forces in the Çorum-Amasya-İskilip region. On the other hand, Nur Ali Halife, commissioned directly by Shāh Ismā‘īl, organized the Qizilbashes of Tokat and Sivas. Although the two wings held a meeting in Niksar, near Tokat, they did not merge but again diverged, pursuing different trajectories.

Shortly after releasing İsa Halife-oğlu, Murad seems to have been compelled to follow a Qizilbash agenda. Apart from wearing the Qizilbash *tāj*, contemporary spy reports related him as having a central role in organizing the Qizilbash uprisings in the Çorum-Amasya-İskilip region.³⁴ The above-mentioned anonymous report argues that Murad was converted to the Qizilbash sect by the inducement of Kara İskender. After becoming Qizilbash, Murad gathered more than 10,000 armed men. The same report makes the point that they were indeed gathering under the command of İsa Halife-oğlu rather than Murad himself; and their number was increasing day by day.³⁵

Yusuf’s report, which was most probably composed in late April or early May of 1512, relates events in a quite similar way. According to him, Murad sent messengers to surrounding cities and recruited fighters.

³³ According to Ottoman narrative sources, the Qizilbashes gathered around Murad committed so many injustices and outrages against the people of the region that Ahmed feared to lose his popular support. Hence, he renounced Qizilbashes and ordered Murad to rid himself of them. However, at that point Murad was no longer a sincere follower of his father. Rather he consulted with a certain Kara İskender, one of the leading Qizilbash khalifas in the region. Kara İskender expressed the view that the people would follow those leaders who held power, which Sultan Ahmed no longer had. Therefore, it was only to Shāh Ismā‘īl that the people could turn for refuge (CELÂL-ZÂDE MUSTAFA, *op. cit.*, p. 210). Celalzâde’s account seems similar but contains valuable details. In his version, when Murad asked them to help his father, the leaders of the Qizilbash army said that they offered their allegiance since he (Murad) had put on the *tāj-i Shāhī* and chosen the Qizilbash path; likewise, they could move only with the permission of Shāh Ismā‘īl. The Qizilbash leaders suggested Murad to start with going to the Shāh and receive his authorization; if the Shāh should approve, then they would provide support to him and his father. Accordingly, they set off for Iran (*ibid.*, p. 167). As indicated above (fn 32), however, these accounts must be treated critically.

³⁴ Again this assertion of Selim’s spies must be treated with suspicion.

³⁵ Cf. TPA E 6522. This document also states that after pillaging many villages and killing many people, these rebels gathered in the plain of Geldigelen to the south of Amasya.

Within five or six days, more than 10,000 men gathered in Geldigelen. Yusuf's report also reveals that some prominent dignitaries of the region too received the Qizilbash *tāj* and joined Murad's entourage. An interesting detail recorded in this report must be mentioned here. Yusuf relates that Murad sent a *tāj* to the qadi of Amasya ordering him to wear it. Upon receiving the *tāj*, the qadi said "*this is a royal order (emr-i pādīshāhī) so let me put it on*" and he wore the *tāj*.³⁶ By emphasizing this event, Yusuf underlines the fact that Murad constituted a serious threat to Selim's rule.

As understood from these two reports, Sultan Murad was in Amasya while Qizilbashes were gathering in Geldigelen. The anonymous report also says that another 20,000 armed men gathered in Amasya. They entered the city by expelling religious scholars (*hocalar*) and commanders (*paşalar*). After killing a great many people, these Qizilbashes with Sultan Murad moved to Geldigelen.³⁷

Murad assigned Kara İskender as governor of İskilip. The inhabitants of the city were then terrorized; some of them fled to mountains and others took shelter in the fortress of the city. Both documents underline that the Qizilbash activities created great horror and distress among the people of the region, who sent messengers to Sultan Ahmed for help. Upon hearing about the situation, Sultan Ahmed dispatched an army of 10,000 soldiers under the command of Davud Pasha and Kızıl Ahmed-oğlu.³⁸ In the meantime, Qizilbash bands moved towards Sivas. They also sent a messenger to the Shāh.³⁹ Both documents state that their intention was to march on Alaüddevle, the Dulkadir ruler.⁴⁰

³⁶ Cf. TPA E 7292.

³⁷ "...More than twenty thousand Qizilbashes gathered in Amasya; they killed a number of people among the religious scholars and the adherents of the Halvetī sufi brotherhood. They took Sultan Murad to Geldigelen. There too they engaged in great banditry. They captured the city repelling the scholars and generals..." (Cf. TPA E 6522). Again, the banditry of Murad's forces is intentionally highlighted by the spy. Both the anonymous report and Yusuf's letter record that on their way to Geldigelen, Murad and his Qizilbash contingents encountered the qadi of Çorum. According to the anonymous report, he was killed while Yusuf says he was robbed and one of his hands was cut off by Qizilbashes (cf. TPA E 6522 and TPA E 7292).

³⁸ The anonymous reporter says Ahmed's army was on the way at that time.

³⁹ "...And he gave İskilip to Kara İskender. The inhabitants are frightened, some taking refuge in the castle, others fleeing into the mountains. They sent messengers to Sultan Ahmed demanding help. The latter, then, dispatched an army under the command of Davud Paşa-oğlu and Kızıl Ahmed-oğlu, which is now on its way. This is the news that Nebi Halife related. And the Qizilbash troops have arrived at Sivas, setting on fire the towns along their way, and sent a messenger to the Shāh..." (cf. TPA E 6522).

⁴⁰ Cf. TPA E 6522 and TPA E 7292.

According to these intelligence reports, Murad's activities in the province of Rum seem to have been pillage-oriented. This representation, however, contradicts the initial framework set by the very same sources. The deepest reason forcing Murad to coalesce with the Qizilbashs of Rum was the need to recruit additional fighters against Selim. His primary goal was to defeat Selim's party. So, it does not make sense to devastate towns and terrorize people for someone whose primary goal was to become their ruler. Therefore, we must be skeptical of the exaggerated account of these reports.

If to turn back to the narrative account of events, Ahmed's army encountered a branch of Qizilbash forces commanded by Kara İskender. This was the first middle-scale army sent by Ahmed against the Qizilbashs. Although *Selim-nāme* says that Kara İskender was slain during this battle, it is evidently not true since we see him appear in the following events.⁴¹ In the meantime, it is highly possible that the Qizilbashs were defeated. On hearing this, Murad did not go to join his father but moved instead towards Tokat, which was captured by Nur Ali Halife. Contemporary spy reports confirm *Selim-nāme*'s account. It is recorded that although Sultan Ahmed sent several orders to Prince Murad to come and join his forces,⁴² Murad did not comply with this order, stating: "*I have works to do here.*"⁴³ Though not dated, the content of this letter makes it clear that it must have been written in May or June 1512.⁴⁴ Putting the two accounts together, it appears that after assigning Kara İskender to the governorship of İskilip, Murad set off for Sivas sometime in May 1512. Remembering that Tokat lies on the road from İskilip to Sivas, *Selim-nāme*'s account seems to be quite compatible with the archival evidence. Kara İskender must have moved behind Murad for he would soon appear near Sivas. One may surmise from the above-mentioned archival and narrative sources that following Selim's ascendance,

⁴¹ *Selim-nāme* also records that shortly before this event, Shāh Ismā'īl had dispatched troops under the command of Nur Ali Halife, who placed Tokat under siege (cf. CELĀL-ZĀDE MUSTAFA, *op. cit.*, p. 210).

⁴² At that time Ahmed was in Konya fortifying his forces against Selim's upcoming march into Anatolia.

⁴³ It is recorded in the report of Mir-ālem Mustafa, one of Selim's spies in Anatolia, that "*If you ask about Sultan Murad, he refused several orders of his father [Ahmed] to come and join his suite, arguing 'I have works to do here.'...*" (cf. TPA E 2667).

⁴⁴ Mir-ālem Mustafa's explanations clearly reveals that at that time Selim had already ascended to the throne but had not yet crossed to Anatolia. He advises Selim not to delay crossing to Anatolia, since otherwise Ahmed would ruin Bursa (cf. *ibid.*).

the disagreement between Ahmed and Murad regarding their opposition strategy became irreversible.

According to *Selim-nāme*, Murad and Nur Ali Halife met in Kazova, near Tokat, and they together went to the Shāh.⁴⁵ It is also recorded, though vaguely, in a letter written to Selim by a certain Hacı Kemal, that Sultan Murad met with Nur Ali Halife and inclined towards the East, i.e. the country of the Shāh.⁴⁶ Again *Selim-nāme*'s account goes hand in hand with the archival evidence except for its last assertion. As will be evaluated below, Murad moved towards Iran through the region of Sivas while Nur Ali Halife stayed in the province of Rum for some further months. As Uluçay notes, while in the vicinity of Sivas, Murad wrote a letter to Ahmed suggesting his father to take refuge in the country of the Shāh.⁴⁷ The course of events suggests that Murad arrived in Iran in the late spring of the year 1512, most probably in May.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Cf. CELĀL-ZĀDE MUSTAFA, *op. cit.*, p. 210. It is explained in the following paragraph that at this time Selim was waiting for the arrival of his son, Süleyman, from Kefe. When Süleyman arrived, Selim left him in Istanbul as his deputy, and immediately set out for Ankara. Selim crossed to Anatolia on July 29, 1512.

⁴⁶ Hacı Kemal reports that he learned about this event from a letter from the governor of Sivas: "...At the present time, we received a letter from the governor of Sivas saying that Sultan Murad with Nur Ali Halife and the messenger of the Qizilbash [Shāh Ismā'īl] had already set out for the East [Iran]..." At the end of his letter Hacı Kemal, possibly a spy for Selim, urges Selim to cross Anatolia as soon as possible. Therefore, it must have been written before July 29, 1512. The letter is partly published in ULUÇAY, 1954b, p. 130. Uluçay gives the catalog number of this document in TPA as E 2667. Nevertheless, E 2667 is the letter of Mir-ālem Mustafa, which is cited above. Furthermore, throughout his three articles Uluçay refers to a number of different documents under the same catalog number E 2667 (ULUÇAY, 1954a, 1954b, 1955). It is highly probable that when he was studying in the TPA a cluster of documents were catalogued under E 2667. Some time later, however, these documents must have been recorded under different numbers except Mir-ālem Mustafa's letter.

⁴⁷ ULUÇAY, 1954b, p. 131.

⁴⁸ *Ahsanu't-tevārih* by Hasan-i Rumlu, a Safavid narrative written in the second half of the 16th century, states that Murad – along with 10,000 Qizilbashes – met Nur Ali Khalifa in Kaz Çayı after the latter had captured Tokat and read the *hutbe*, the Friday prayer religious sermon, in the name of the Shāh. They together turned back to Tokat. But this time the townspeople resisted the Qizilbash forces. Then the Qizilbashes set the city on fire and went to Niksar. Hasan-i Rumlu says that in Niksar Murad left Nur Ali and went to the realm of the Shāh (cf. HASAN-I RUMLU, *A Chronicle of the Early Safawīs*, p. 63). Murad must have followed the way through Sivas. But before arriving in Sivas, in Artukābād a serious disagreement arose among the Qizilbashes in his camp. Yahya Pehlivan and Dev Ali suggested going to the Shāh while Kara İskender advocated going to Dulkadiroğlu Alaüddevlü Beg. The two groups clashed with each other. It was rumored that after this fight, Yahya Pehlivan and Dev Ali died (cf. ULUÇAY, 1954b, p. 130). The rest of the Qizilbashes moved eastward. In his report dated May 17, 1512, Sultan Musa, the son of Prince Mahmud, one of Bayezid II's already deceased sons, and the governor

In the last phase of his career, Sultan Murad acted as a man of Shāh Ismā‘īl rather than Sultan Ahmed’s ally. The available evidence reveals that Shāh Ismā‘īl also had his own agenda regarding Ottoman Anatolia. Certainly he intended to intervene in the Ottoman dynastic struggle for his own benefit. Nevertheless, due to the Uzbek trouble in the eastern front of his empire, he would never have a chance to make enough investment on the Ottoman front, which was then ideally suited for Safavid interference. Yet he always kept an eye on Anatolia, resorting to every possible means to mobilize his disciples there.⁴⁹ In his western policy, Shāh Ismā‘īl seems to have tailored a significant role for Sultan Murad. The latter also willingly accepted this role for he believed that the only way to contest Selim would be through acquiring Ismā‘īl’s support. Consequently, during the later phase of his career Sultan Murad almost completely lost the initiative, becoming more or less a “puppet” in the hands of Shāh Ismā‘īl.

Shāh Ismā‘īl’s incapacity to interfere in the Ottoman civil war effectively was reported to Selim by Şādi Beg, an Ottoman governor in the eastern provinces, and Mamay, the Mamluk governor of Malatya-Divriği.⁵⁰ In his letter,⁵¹ Şādi Beg reports that Shāh Ismā‘īl, after dispatching some of his troops to Khorasan,⁵² sent Dev Ali⁵³ and Sultan Murad

of Kastamonu, reported this event to Selim as follows: “[at the time] *Murad Beg and the brigands he gathered arrived in Artukābād.* [There a fierce dispute ensued among the Qizilbashes.] *Kara İskender, a friend of Murad, was in favor of marching on Alaüddeve, while Pehlivan Yahya and Dev Ali, two other prominent Qizilbash khalifas, advocated going directly to the Shāh. At the end, a fierce fight broke out between the two sides. Kara İskender managed to eliminate his rivals by decapitating Pehlivan Yahya and Dev Ali. Shortly afterwards, the Qizilbashes were attacked by Murad Han, the son-in-law of Alaüddeve Beg, leaving many heads behind.*” (cf. *ibid.*, p. 132). Again, Uluçay gives the catalog number of this document as E 2667, which is not accurate at least in the present stage of the TPA catalogue). After killing Pehlivan Yahya and Dev Ali, Kara İskender subdued the other Qizilbash group as well. Sultan Murad must have set off for Iran after this occasion.

⁴⁹ In one of his letters housed in TPA, Shāh Ismā‘īl instructs Turgutoğlu Musa, who was at the same time one of the confidants of Sultan Ahmed, how to behave. Cf. TPA E 5460. For a discussion of this letter, cf. YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 465-469.

⁵⁰ ULUÇAY, 1954b, p. 123; BACQUÉ-GRAMMONT, 1987, p. 39.

⁵¹ Although the date of the letter is not specified, the context of the events suggests that it was most probably written between December 1512 and January 1513. Cf. BACQUÉ-GRAMMONT, 1987, p. 31.

⁵² In November 1512, a Safavid army under the command of *vākil* Amīr Najm, who was killed in the battlefield, was defeated by Uzbeks in Gac-Davān. Ismā‘īl then sent supplementary troops to secure his eastern borders. For further reading, cf. HASAN-I RUMLU, *op. cit.*, p. 60-62; BACQUÉ-GRAMMONT, 1987, p. 30.

⁵³ This is evidently not the same Dev Ali who quarreled with Kara İskender and was

towards Ottoman territories in order to capture the country of Rum. In the meantime, the Shāh himself turned towards Isfahan to spend the winter. Nevertheless, on hearing of the defeat of his troops in Khorasan (by the Uzbeks), he proceeded towards this front.⁵⁴ As understood from this letter, concomitant to Selim's accession, Shāh Ismā'īl embarked on an offensive on the western front under the command of Dev Ali. Nevertheless, he was somewhat diffident in his offensive since he had to keep his main forces in the eastern borders.⁵⁵

The letter of Mamay narrates the events in the same way adding some important details. According to him, Shāh Ismā'īl's decision to send troops toward Anatolia was mostly due to Sultan Murad's advice. Murad convinced the Shāh that the eastern parts of Rum (Anatolia) were ready to switch to their side. Another detail recorded in Mamay's letter, absent in other sources, is that when Dev Ali and Murad arrived in Saïd Çuhuru with 1,000 men, they learnt that Selim had crossed to Anatolia with an imperial army. Then they decided not to go to Rum, and wrote a letter describing the situation to the Shāh, who ordered them to stay where they were.⁵⁶ Consequently, the

killed in Artukābād. He must instead be the famous general of Shāh Ismā'īl who was governing the north-western provinces at the time.

⁵⁴ Cf. TPA E 6478/2. Şādi Beg's letter clearly puts Shāh Ismā'īl's inability to actively interfere in Ottoman affairs. In his letter to Selim, Şādi Beg reports that although the voice of the Shāh was seemingly loud, there was no need to fear, because his troops were divided into several fronts: some were in Khorasan, some in Baghdad, some in Diyarbekir, and some on the border of Rum under Dev Ali's command. None of these troops could leave their places and help the other since they were exposed to enemies on each front. The Shāh himself was wandering between fronts with his special forces. At the end of his report, Şādi Beg puts forward his own idea that if the news of the advent of Sultan Selim should be heard, then all the enemies would disperse. The whole text of this document with its facsimile copy is published by J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont (1987, p. 32-35). Also cf. BACQUÉ-GRAMMONT, 1971.

⁵⁵ Şādi Beg says that Shāh Ismā'īl warned Dev Ali that if he should hear about the advent of Sultan Selim then he was not to enter Anatolia but wait for him (Ismā'īl). Otherwise, Dev Ali and Murad were to go down to Anatolia and conquer lands in the name of the Shāh. Şādi Beg also reports that Shāh Ismā'īl had already allocated the provinces of Anatolia to his confidants, all of whom were included in the Qizilbash army under the command of Dev Ali. In this distribution, Sultan Murad was appointed as the *beylerbey* of Anatolia. Cf. TPA E 6478/2.

⁵⁶ The related part of this letter reads: "...for the moment the news from this side is as follows: your humble servitor [Mamay] had sent a couple of men [for intelligence purposes] to Shāh Ismā'īl's country; they now returned and reported the events as follows: 'We encountered Shāh Ismā'īl in Gök Kavak, from where he proceeded to Isfahān and then returned. Then, on the suggestion of Sultan Murad who convinced the Shāh that the eastern side of Rum was ready to switch to their side, he [Shāh Ismā'īl] sent troops under Dev Ali and Sultan Murad towards the Ottoman borders. Upon hearing of the Majesty's [Selim's] crossing to Anatolia, they stopped in Saïd Çuhuri, sending messengers to the

Qizilbashes of Erzincan and Bayburd⁵⁷ maintained their position and watched over Selim's movement. Meanwhile, they sent letters and messengers to the Qizilbashes living in the Ottoman side promising them to come in the next spring. The Qizilbash propagandists were spreading the news that the Shāh himself was in preparation to march over Anatolia as well as calling them to take necessary precautions for a great advent (*hurūc*).⁵⁸

Keeping his forces on the Ottoman border, Shāh Ismā'īl wrote a letter to Ahmed advising him to go to Rum and wait for his help, which would soon arrive. In the meantime, he assured Ahmed that his troops under the command of Dev Ali were ready to provide any support whenever he (Ahmed) needed.⁵⁹ As we learn from another contemporary report, Sultan Murad also sent a letter that reached Ahmed near Sivas, when the latter was in search of asylum under heavy pressure from Sultan Selim. Murad was advising his father to join the Qizilbash army waiting in Erzincan. In his letter, Murad also promised an army of 20,000 soldiers committed to march until Üsküdar. Ahmed, however, refused Ismā'īl's protection and tore Murad's letter apart on the spot.⁶⁰ Yet, Şādi Beg records that

Shāh to ask what to do. In return, the Shāh ordered them to wait there without any further move. [It was because of that] since Keçebaş [Uzbeks] defeated a Safavid army in the eastern front, Shāh Ismā'īl dispatched his main forces to Khorasan. There were only two thousand men left in his court." Cf. TPA E 8758. The whole text of the document is published in BACQUÉ-GRAMMONT, 1987, p. 40-41.

⁵⁷ At the time, these cities were included in Safavid territories.

⁵⁸ Şādi Beg says that they sent a messenger to the Çepni tribe living in the province of Trebizond as well. The Qizilbashes of this region even intended to capture Trebizond by way of banditry. He also describes the difficult situation of Torul fortress, near Trebizond. He says that although they stocked provisions some time ago, they could not provide any additional supplies as transportation to the city was cut off by Qizilbashes. The food in the fortress was about to finish. Ottoman soldiers could not go out of the fortress either. As a last note, Şādi Beg adds that some of Murad's confidants fled from his suite and reached Trebizond through Georgia. Cf. TPA E 6478/2. TPA E 6672 also indicates Qizilbash activities in Torul. According to this document, the son of the ex-governor of Torul and his father's tutor Yahya, who also had a *timār* in Torul, managed to convert most of the population into the Qizilbash movement.

⁵⁹ Cf. TPA E 6478/2.

⁶⁰ The original letter is obviously not available for examination. The above information is derived from another contemporary letter from Şükrollah, the son of famous İdrīs-i Bitlisi. Şükrollah's letter is addressed to Selim. In the beginning he says that at the moment he was in Ahmed's camp in Divriği, southeast of Sivas. So it is safe to assume that Şükrollah reports the event as an eyewitness. The relevant part of the letter reads, "...When he was near Sivas, he [Ahmed] received a letter from his son Sultan Murad saying that the Shāh had reserved twenty thousand troops for his [Murad's] and Dev Ali's command to invade Anatolia up until Üsküdar [in the Anatolian shore of the straits just opposite Istanbul]. [Murad's letter then continues addressing his father Ahmed] 'Come and join us in Erzincan!' Sultan Ahmed, in turn, tore apart the letter and did not incline to this side...". Cf. TPA E 7052.

when he went down to eastern Anatolia in the late summer, just weeks later, Ahmed sent a messenger to Dev Ali to demand military aid reminding him of Ismā'īl's promise. The answer of Dev Ali, however, was not affirmative. He said that it was the strict order of the Shāh that they were not to enter Rum⁶¹ while Selim was in Anatolia.⁶² At the same time, Dev Ali sent the messenger of Ahmed with his letter to the Shāh and requested the royal instructions.⁶³ Indeed, this promise, if it was ever made, would never have been fulfilled. Ahmed lost his life after a bloody battle with Selim in Yenişehir on April 15, 1513.⁶⁴

Even after the execution of Ahmed, Murad continued to challenge Selim with the support of the Shāh. Meanwhile, Shāh Ismā'īl's interest in Anatolia, especially those regions densely populated by his followers, by no means lessened. A Safavid chronicle affirms Ismā'īl's intention to employ Murad in order to strengthen his power in Anatolia. According to *Tārikh-i İlchī-yi Nizāmshāh*, Ismā'īl's plan was to use Murad to provoke a rebellion against Selim. For this purpose, Qizilbash troops under Dev Sultan and Muhammed Han Ustaclu escorted Murad to Sivas. Nonetheless, since no support for him materialized, this plan was abandoned. Before the end of the year 1513, Murad gave up the struggle against Selim and returned to Iran, where he was granted asylum by Shāh Ismā'īl.⁶⁵

Sultan Murad's last days are obscured in our sources. Basing on the fact that neither Ottoman nor Safavid sources mention him in the context of the Çaldıran campaign, one may assume that he died in Iran before August 1514.⁶⁶ Ottoman chronicles present two distinctive lines of narration regarding the end of Murad in the Safavid realm: some say that he was killed by the Shāh on his arrival, while some others argue that he died in Iran three or four years after his arrival. According to *Selim-nāme*,

⁶¹ In this content, "Rum" refers to the Ottoman lands.

⁶² Ismā'īl's caution must have been due to the fact that an important portion of his army was busy on the eastern front.

⁶³ Cf. TPA E 6478/2.

⁶⁴ Cf. ULUÇAY, 1955, p. 197; YILDIRIM, 2008, p. 499. Hasan-i Rumlu mistakenly argues that following Selim's decisive victory over Ahmed, Murad took refuge with the Shāh. As shown above, Murad arrived at Shāh Ismā'īl's court almost one year before this event. Cf. HASAN-İ RUMLU, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Cited in SAVORY, 1965, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Hasan-i Rumlu mentions Murad among those who died in H 918 (1512-1513). However his account is somewhat ambiguous. His main entry is indeed the death of Bayazid II. He mentions Selim's accession to the throne and Murad's fled to Iran as well as his death there as consequent events. It is not clear, thus, whether this took place in the same year. Cf. HASAN-İ RUMLU, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

after meeting Nur Ali Halife in Kazova, Murad and his entourage headed towards Iran. On his arrival, however, Shāh Ismā‘īl, who was fearing that the troops were rendering obedience to Murād rather than himself, had him killed.⁶⁷ As discussed earlier, however, this assertion is not true. Yet the death of Murad might still have been at the hands of the Shāh in the following year. Indeed, archival evidence from the second half of the 16th century supports this assumption. In an entry in the Registers of Important Affairs (*Mühimme Defterleri*) dating from 1565, Murad was reported as executed by Shāh Ismā‘īl.⁶⁸ Safavid court historian Hasan-i Rumlu, on the other hand, argues that he died a natural death.⁶⁹ Nasrullah Falsafī, a modern Iranian scholar, writes that Shāh Ismā‘īl appointed him as governor of the province of Fars. However, Murad died on his way, in Isfahan, and were buried there.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

As discussed above, contemporary Ottoman narrative sources regard Murad’s conversion to Qizilbashism as a purely political maneuver to gain military support from among Qizilbash fighters. The archival evidence, however, has further implications. Our analysis showed that Murad’s involvement in the Qizilbash movement went far beyond fulfilling a solely tactical plan tailored by his father. Instead, since the early stages of his cooperation with leading Qizilbash khalifas, he seems to have developed his own strategy, which soon fell into conflict with that of his father. He seems to have believed in the necessity of Shāh Ismā‘īl’s support to achieve a victory against Selim.

⁶⁷ CELĀL-ZĀDE MUSTAFA, *op. cit.*, p. 210. Celalzāde follows the same argument on this issue. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 167.

⁶⁸ Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, *5 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri*, p. 39, entry 94. These registers are compilations of the copies of imperial orders issued by the Imperial Council (*Divān-ı Humāyūn*) in the name of the Sultan. This order is addressed to the governor of Van. It mentions a former report of the governor relating that when Murad Hān was executed by the Qizilbash (i.e., Shāh Ismā‘īl) one of his sons with some troops managed to escape to the Ottoman lands and engaged in banditry there. The governor is ordered to continue to watch their unlawful acts and keep the Sultan up to date.

⁶⁹ Cf. HASAN-İ RURLU, *op. cit.*, p. 64. For the death of Murad, cf. also İDRİS-İ BİTLİSİ, *Selim Şāh-nâme*, p. 115; HOCA SADETTİN EFENDİ, *Tacü’-t-Tevarih*, p. 165-166; GELİBOLULU MUSTAFA ALİ, *Kitabu’-t-Tarih-i Kühü’l-Ahbar*, p. 1068-1069; SOLAKZĀDE MEHMED HEMDEMİ ÇELEBİ, *Solakzāde Tarihi*, p. 13; MÜNECCIMBAŞI AHMED DEDE, *Sahaif-ül-Ahbar fī Vekayi-ül-a’sār*, p. 456. The latter four sources point out that Murad fled to Ismā‘īl and died in Persia after three or four years.

⁷⁰ FALSAFİ, 2011, p. 79. Falsafī, however, does not specify his source.

More enigmatic in Murad's career is his involvement in the religious aspects of the Qizilbash movement. For obvious reasons, contemporary Ottoman historians and even official documents are inclined to play down the religious aspects of Murad's Qizilbash affiliation. One would expect that it was among the concerns of the Ottoman writers, either historians or official reporters, to conceal the adherence of an Ottoman prince to the Qizilbash sect, a religio-mystical path which was officially proclaimed "heresy". In the meantime, Safavid accounts, though containing meager information on this issue, also focus on the political and military aspects, leaving us no clue as to the religio-ideological nature of Murad's Qizilbash affiliation. For the moment, we know definitely that he put the Qizilbash *tāj* on his head. No doubt, this act symbolized the pledge of loyalty to Shāh Ismā'īl, if not initiation into the Qizilbash religious path. However, the available sources do not permit us to clarify to what extent Murad involved himself in the Qizilbash religious ideals.

This article has scrutinized Sultan Murad's career chiefly within the framework of Ottoman domestic politics. Nevertheless, the point must be made as a concluding remark that during his last years Sultan Murad became an important instrument of international politics as well. Shāh Ismā'īl, who had a great number of disciples in and plans on Ottoman Anatolia (Rum), naturally sought to use Sultan Murad as an effective weapon to crack Ottoman rule. In that respect, one may deem Sultan Murad as an eastern counterpart of Cem Sultan. Indeed, Murad's political choices and the state of Ottoman domestic politics created a rather favorable situation for a Safavid attack on Rum. Thanks to the Uzbek assault on the eastern front of the Safavid Empire that saved the Ottomans from a serious blow from Shāh Ismā'īl, who could dispatch only a small-scale vanguard instead of mobilizing a full-scale invasion.

These skirmishes might well be regarded as heralds of an ultimate clash between Sultan Selim and Shāh Ismā'īl. The Qizilbash insurrections during the civil war, which attracted even Ottoman princes, proved the strength of Shāh Ismā'īl's propaganda in the Ottoman domains. Consequently, Sultan Selim developed the belief that cleansing the homeland from Qizilbash elements was a matter of life or death. As a matter of fact, after executing Ahmed, he immediately began preparations for an eastern campaign, as well as launching a ruthless wave of execution against Qizilbash subjects. Increasing tension between the two rulers climaxed in August 1514 on the plain of Çaldıran, where Sultan Murad was absent.

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Rıza YILDIRIM, *Un prince ottoman portant un tāj qizilbash: la carrière énigmatique de Sultan Murad et les affaires qizilbash dans la politique intérieure ottomane, 1510-1513*

Une fois au pouvoir, Shāh Ismā‘īl entreprit une lutte acharnée contre l’Empire ottoman. Dans le cadre officiel établi par les oulémas et les bureaucrates ottomans, les *qizilbash* étaient représentés comme des hérétiques sectaires menaçant le droit chemin de l’islam et l’unité des musulmans tandis que la dynastie ottomane se voyait attribuer le rôle de champion de la lutte anti-*qizilbash*, donc celui de patron des musulmans sunnites. L’article remet en question cette approche en examinant la carrière politique d’un prince ottoman important, Sultan Murad, dont l’affiliation au mouvement *qizilbash* est évidente. Il entend que la dynastie ottomane ne fut absolument pas épargnée par le mouvement *qizilbash*.

Rıza YILDIRIM, *An Ottoman Prince Wearing a Qizilbash Tāj: the Enigmatic Career of Sultan Murad and Qizilbash Affairs in Ottoman Domestic Politics, 1510-1513*

When he rose to power, Shāh Ismā‘īl inaugurated a fierce struggle against the Ottoman Empire. In the official framework established by the Ottoman ulemā and bureaucrats, Qizilbashes were pictured as sectarian heretics threatening the true way of Islam and the unity of Muslims while Ottoman dynasty was promoted as the champion of anti-Qizilbash fight, thus the patron of Sunni Muslims. This article challenges this approach through examining the political career of a prominent Ottoman prince, Sultan Murad, whose Qizilbash affiliation is evident. It argues that the Ottoman dynasty was by no means immune to the Qizilbash movement.