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PAUL WITTEK'S «DE LA DÉFAITE D'ANKARA À LA
PRISE DE CONSTANTINOPLE»¹

Colin Imber

In 1938 Paul Wittek delivered a series of lectures at the Sorbonne whose purpose was to explain why the Ottomans suffered defeat at the battle of Ankara in 1402 and how, after defeat and a decade of civil war, the Empire was able to recover its unity and strength and to resume its conquests in the Christian world, culminating, in the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The thesis which Wittek propounded developed naturally from his Sorbonne lectures of 1936, published as «Deux chapitres de l'histoire des Turcs de Roum»² and appears in a variant guise in his London lectures of 1937, published as «The rise of the Ottoman Empire»³. Of these three publications, «De la défaite d'Ankara à la prise Constantinople» has perhaps been the most influential. Almost fifty years after its publication, no one has challenged its fundamental assumptions, whereas it is common to find its ideas, and even phrases, uncritically repeated. Its seemingly mesmeric effect appears to derive from the fact that it provides a coherent - or fairly coherent - explanation for the events of an obscure and complex period, and to challenge its thesis requires a knowledge of diverse and fragmentary source material in a number of difficult languages.

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1 Published in *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, vol. 12 (1938). Reprinted in Paul Wittek (ed. V.L. Ménage), *La Formation de l'Empire ottoman*, Variorum Reprints, London (1983).

2 *Byzantion*, vol. 11 (1936). Reprinted in Paul Wittek (ed. V.L. Ménage), *La Formation de l'Empire Ottoman*.

3 *Royal Asiatic Society Monographs*, vol. 23, repr. 1963.

Wittek's thesis is as follows. As a consequence of its foundation by a *gāzī* leader on the borderlands between Islam and Christianity, the Ottoman Empire was a *gāzī* state whose «perpetual task» was Holy War against the Christians. The conquest of infidels was its *raison d'être*. The motive for Ottoman conquests in Muslim Anatolia was simply to provide the necessary manpower for further advances against Christendom and to draw on the civilised resources of the Muslim hinterland to provide the *'ulemā* who were to become the administrators of the «peaceful and tolerant» Muslim government which followed the «ardent and warlike» *gāzī* raids. As far as possible the Ottomans used peaceful means to annex Muslim territory. Bāyezīd I, however, abandoned this programme and dreamed instead of «reviving the Roman Empire», and uniting Islam and Christianity under his rule. He directed most of his campaigns against the Muslim states of Anatolia, waging these with his Janissaries - troops of renegade Christians - and with contingents sent by Greek and Serbian vassals. These wars scandalised his Muslim subjects, as they represented an abandonment of *gāzī* ideals. Furthermore, after his marriage with the Serbian princess Olivera and his close contact with the Serbian court, his own court became «latinised». Just as the «latinisation» of the Balkan dynasties had lost them support of their subjects, so too the «latinisation» of Bāyezīd's court lost him the support of his. The result of this was that on the battlefield at Ankara his Muslim troops deserted, with only the Janissaries and Serbian auxiliaries remaining loyal.

Of Bāyezīd's sons, Süleymān should have been the natural successor to the title of Sultan, since he was the oldest, retained the services of Bāyezīd's vizier 'Alī Çandarlı and ruled in Rumelia, the only province that remained intact after Timur's invasion. However, instead of pursuing the Rumelian tradition of Holy War, Süleymān unnecessarily ceded territory to Byzantium, permitted Venice to enlarge her possessions in Albania, and sent a brother and a sister to Constantinople as hostages. Like Bāyezīd, he married a Christian, the daughter of Theodora of Mistra and, as an «effeminate prince, a lover of the pleasures of baths and wine», he continued the dissolute traditions of Bāyezīd's court. The abandonment

of *gazā* and the adoption of «latinised» ways lost him the support of all his subjects, Muslim and Christian. These united in support of his brother, Mūsā. The desertion of his army to Mūsā and his ignominious end show how much his subjects hated Süleymān.

Mūsā came to power with the support of «the people», Christian as well as Muslim, and established a revolutionary régime, based on the ideology of his *kādī asker*, Bedreddin: «a sort of charitable communism ... in which confessional differences disappeared». Mūsā also «understood what Rumelia needed» and reopened the Holy War by attacking Christian territories including Constantinople, and extending the *gazā* as far as Carinthia. He had, however, come to power with the support of the common people and the misfortunes of his youth had made him a «sombre fanatic.» These factors combined to make him detest lords, great feudatories and opulent theologians», and unleash a reign of terror among the «aristocrats and high functionaries of his state», who fled to neighbouring states, to the «great *gāzī* chiefs who felt equally menaced», and especially to Mehmed. In his confrontation with Mūsā, Mehmed gained the support of the «Emperor, Stefan of Serbia and the great *gāzī* of the western frontiers: all the princes, alarmed by the social danger which Mūsā represented, offered him assistance of their own accord». With his superior forces, Mehmed defeated his brother.

With the accession of Mehmed, the Ottoman Empire recovered its true direction. Mehmed's base had been the province of Amasya, which was neither large nor rich, and which had suffered particularly badly from Timur's invasion. However, it was a spiritual fount of the Ottoman Empire. It had been the principality of Danişmend *Gāzī* in the 11th century and had retained intact its «original character, and its Turkish and *gāzī* traditions». For Mehmed «to be confined for ten years in this mountainous country, whose Turkish life went on still largely in the form of nomadism, meant... to be immersed in national consciousness and tradition». Mehmed's «national consciousness» revealed itself in his choice as wife, not a of a Christian, but of a princess of the Turcoman Dulgadirid dynasty. Mehmed's son and successor, Murād, also spent his youth in Amasya and absorbed the same traditions. The interest during Murād's reign in the Oğuz legends is a manifestation of this spirit.

The result of Mehmed's accession was the resumption of the Holy War, which was to continue under his successor. The removal of the capital from Bursa, «the city of theologians», to Edirne, «the city of *gāzīs*», symbolises the ideological purpose of the state. A major factor in ensuring the stability of the realm was Murād II's institution of the *devşirme* in about 1430. By converting Christian subjects to Islam, this institution satisfied the «proselytising» tendencies of the *gāzīs* and, by creaming off the «warrior youth» from the «excess» Christian population, it neutralised the danger which the Ottoman Christians represented for state. This neutralisation made it possible to leave most Christians as they were, which in turn satisfied the tolerant «Muslim tendencies». The final resolution of the conflict between «*gāzī*» and «*Muslim*» tendencies came with the conquest of Constantinople, «the pre-destined capital of the Ottoman Empire». It did not, like Bursa in Anatolia, represent the «Muslim spirit» or, like Edirne in Rumelia, represent «the *gāzī* spirit» but, by its situation between the two continents, united both.



Wittek's hypothesis makes a number of political assumptions. The most important of these is the idea that the existence a state depends upon the active implementation of an ideology-in the Ottoman case, the Holy War. The origins of a state determine this ideology. The Holy War ideal derived from the origins of the Ottoman Empire as a *gāzī* principality on the Byzantine border. A state's ideology is also its destiny. To abandon it is to bring inevitable disaster. When Bāyezīd abandoned the Holy War, he suffered a catastrophic defeat. Wittek even asserted in «The Rise of the Ottoman Empire» and again in «Das Fürstentum Mentésche»⁴ that Timur's invasion of 1402 was simply «a demonstration to the public opinion of Islam that ... he desired nothing more than to recall to the Ottomans their real task - that is, the Ghazī ideal which they were beginning to renounce». So Timur was simply an Instrument of Historical Destiny. The Ottoman state recovered when, under Meh-

4 *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. Abteilung Istanbul. Istanbulcr Mitteilungen. Heft 2, Berlin, 1934, repr. 1967.*

med I and his successors, it recovered its true ideological direction. Wittek's hypothesis also assumes the existence of national heartlands - in the Ottoman case, the Amasya region -, from which a nation can draw moral and ideological sustenance. Conversely, it assumes that foreign influences - in the Ottoman case, «latinisation» - subvert ideological purpose. Wittek linked his ideas about the determinant ideologies of the Ottoman state to the theory of national heartlands. A major theme in his work is the dichotomy between the «*gāzī* tendency» which provided the state's dynamism and *raison d'être*, and the «Muslim tendency» which provided its stable administration. The first was a product of, and drew its sustenance from the frontiers with Christendom in Rumelia; the second was the product of the Muslim hinterland in Anatolia.

Wittek's ideological determinism and belief in historical destiny, his emphasis on national and ideological heartlands and insistence on cultural and, to some extent, racial purity as a prerequisite for successful statehood, derive from the traditions of right-wing German nationalism. «De la défaite d'Ankara à la prise de Constantinople» is an application of this nationalist political theory to a particular period of Ottoman history. The Ottoman Empire, however, was not a national, but a dynastic state, and the main purpose of its ideologies was to legitimise dynastic rule. The Sultans' subjects were culturally and racially diverse, and the state was receptive to foreign influences. It satisfied none of the criteria for statehood which nationalist theory requires. To make it do so, Wittek had to resort to a radical misinterpretation of his source material.

His central fallacy was to assume that there was a distinction between the «*qāzī* tendency» and the «Muslim tendency». The concept of Holy War derives from the *sharī'ah*, which makes it a perpetual obligation on the Muslim community and, as a canonical duty, it clearly did not run counter to the «Muslim tendencies» of the state. There is certainly a difference between the abstract and legalistic definition of the Holy War in the *sharī'ah*, and the personal and heroic accounts of it in, for example, the late 15th-century chronicles and *gāzī* epics like *Melik Dānişmend*⁵. The first

5 I. Mélikoff, *La geste de Mélik Dānişmend*, Paris, 1960.

version appealed to the learned and the second to the unlearned but, in the Ottoman context, both served the single purpose of justifying Ottoman rule. Neşri, for example, justified Ottoman conquests by describing them in canonical terms as «Holy Wars with sincere intent»⁶, whereas his contemporary, Oruç Beg, achieves the same end by linking the Ottoman dynasty to the stock of Ebū Muslim⁷, the hero of a popular *gāzī* epic. In either case, the Sultans appear as Holy Warriors. Ahmedī, whom Wittek cites in «The Rise of the Ottoman Empire» as a spokesman for the «*gāzī* tendency» and as proof of the ideological purpose of the Ottoman state is, in fact, no more than an orthodox Muslim. The - to Wittek - key passage in his *İskendernāme* portrays the *gāzī* not in the personal and heroic terms of the epics and early Ottoman chronicles, but as one who «sweeps the earth clear of the filth of polytheism», polytheism (*şirk*) being an abstract concept which derives from orthodox Muslim doctrine. Ahmedī, in fact deplored the popular practice and understanding of Holy War because its motive was plunder : «When you wage *gazā*, do not make booty your aim/The Creator of Mankind wishes worship to be sincere»⁸. The idea of Holy War as an act of worship (*ibādah*) which, to be valide, requires sincerity of intent, derives wholly from the *shari'ah*. So much for «*gāzī*» and «Muslim» tendencies.

Wittek evidently regarded *gazā* as the sole ideology of the Ottoman state. It was not, nor could it be. It was sufficient to justify wars against Christians and Ottoman rule in formerly Christian lands, but it did not justify the annexation of Muslim states in Anatolia. To do this the Ottomans had recourse to a number of legitimising devices which Wittek either accepted literally, misinterpreted or ignored altogether. A device which 15th-century chroniclers adopted was to depict these conquests as peaceful acquisitions, as in the stories about the annexations of Hamid and

6 Neşri (ed. F.R. Unat and M.A. Köymen), *Kitāb-i Cihānnümā*, Ankara (1949), vol. 1, p. 52.

7 Oruç b. 'Adil (ed. F. Babinger), *Tevārih-i Āl-i 'Osmān*, Hannover (1925), p. 4.

8 Tunca Kortantamer, *Leben und Weltbild des altosmanischen Dichters Ahmedī*, Freiburg (1973), p. 236.

Germiyān, which Wittek cites. These and similar stories may, of course, be literally true, but their purpose was more likely to conceal the truth about ideologically inconvenient warfare. The legitimising device which Wittek misunderstood was the creation of the Oğuz genealogy for the Ottoman dynasty. In both «De la défaite d'Ankara» and «The rise of the Ottoman Empire» he saw this as reflecting a romantic interest in the legendary Turkish past, signalling a burgeoning national consciousness under Mehmed I and Murād II. It evidently had a more practical purpose. By showing that the Ottomans were senior in the line of descent from Oğuz Hān, it proved that their claims to sovereignty were superior to those of neighbouring Turkish monarchs in Anatolia and Azerbaijan. An illustration of this purpose is Şükrullāh's anecdote of how the Karakoyunlu monarch, Cihānsāh, admitted that his own descent from Deniz Hān was as inferioro to Murād's descent from Gök Hān «as the sea is inferior to the sky»⁹. Wittek quoted this story in «The rise of the Ottoman Empire», but missed its point. Like the *gāzī* ideology, the myth of Oğuz descent had the merit of appealing to both the learned and the unlearned. The tradition of Oğuz epics was evidently widespread and popular in the Turkish speaking world, but it was a tradition which had also found a place in learned historiography, when Rashīd al-Dīn included a chapter on «The descendants of Oğuz Hān» in his «Universal History». The version of the senior descent through Gün Hān and Kayı which appears in some Ottoman genealogies derives from Rashīd al-Dīn¹⁰ via Yazıcıoğlu¹¹, and is a learned genealogy from a Persian source and not simply a Turkish «national» tradition. A legitimising device which Wittek ignored was the claim that the Ottomans attacked the Anatolian «kings» because these took advantage of Ottoman pre-occupation with Holy War to attack Ottoman territory.

9 Turkish translation of this passage in Ç.N. Atsız, *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, İstanbul (1949), p. 51. It is omitted in Şükrullāh (ed. Th. Seif), «Der Abschnitt über die Osmanen in Şükrullāh's persischer Universalgeschichte», *Mitteilungen zur osmanischen Geschichte*, vol. 2 (1923), pp. 63-128.

10 As Wittek in fact noted in *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, n. 7, without, however, seeing any particular significance.

11 M.Th. Houtsma (ed.), *Histoire des Seldjucides d'Asie Mineure d'après Ibn Bibi*, Leiden (1902), 217-218.

Şükrollāh expressed this view in canonical terms, when he made the 'ulemā tell Murād I that, before embarking on *gazā* against Serbia and Hungary, he should make war on the neighbouring Muslim «kings» who planned to attack Bursa in his absence. *Gazā*, according to Şükrollāh's 'ulemā, was a communal obligation, whereas the prevention of injury to Muslims was an individual obligation on the monarch. Wittek also overlooked the Ottoman claim that they were the legal heirs to the Seljuks, and that the other monarchs on former Seljuk lands were therefore «usurpers»¹².

Wittek's apparent failure to recognise the canonical sources for the *gazā* ideology, and his failure to identify the corresponding ideologies to justify conquests in Anatolia, do not in themselves invalidate his view that Bāyezīd abandoned the ideal of Holy War. It is not, however, a view that has any textual justification. The chronicles of 'Āşıkpaşazāde and Oruç Beg, for example, which are sources for the stories of Bāyezīd's corruption, nowhere accuse him of abandoning the Holy War. The earlier chronicle of Şükrollāh refers to him in conventional panegyric terms as «Sultan of the the *gāzīs*» and as a monarch who «gave up vices contrary to the *sharī'ah* and the customs of rulers», without mentioning an abandonment of *gazā* or moral corruption. Bāyezīd's contemporary reputation seems to have been as a *gāzī* Sultan. The evidence for this - ironically in view of Wittek's assertion that Timur invaded Anatolia to recall the Ottomans to the abandoned task of *gazā* - is Nizām al-Dīn Shāmī's panegyric history of Timur's victories, the *Zafarnāmeḥ*. Here the author makes his hero hesitate to attack Bāyezīd precisely on the grounds that this Sultan is a *gāzī*. He gives Timur a speech where he says : «I do not naturally wish ... to lead an army against that realm, because they continually confront the Franks and wage *gazā*»¹³. Instead, Nizām al-Dīn makes Timur attack Bāyezīd because the latter is harbouring the Karakoyunlu, Kara Yūsuf, who is a «highway-robber» and «plunderer of pilgrim caravans».

So Bāyezīd did not abandon the ideals of Holy War. Nor is there any serious evidence that he became «corrupted», least of all «la-

12 Neşrī, *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 52 et al.

13 Nizām al-dīn Shāmī (ed. F. Tauer) *Zafarnāmeḥ*, Prague (1938), vol. 1, 248.

tinised». The corruption anecdotes first appear in a group of late 15th-century chronicles which accuse Bāyezīd of un-Islamic habits, which they in turn attribute to the influence of his Serbian wife, Olivera. In the words of the chronicle of 'Āşıkpaşazāde (c 1484), «(Bāyezīd) Hān learned the ways of feasting from the Serbian girl. Wine and kebab parties were held ... «Since this group of chronicles shares a common source for events down to 1422¹⁴, it is likely that the story of Olivera's corrupting influence derives from this lost, anonymous source, and it is not impossible that this source itself dated from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, twenty odd years after Bāyezīd's defeat at the battle of Ankara. However, the story follows too obvious a moralistic pattern to make acceptable evidence of Bāyezīd's corruption or of his unpopularity during his lifetime. Since, in Ottoman tradition, the Sultans were pious *gāzīs*, they enjoyed the favour of God. Since Bāyezīd suffered defeat at Ankara, he must have forfeited this favour. Therefore, he must have sinned, and a standard sin in the Muslim repertory is wine-drinking, which is also the hall-mark of infidelity. It would have been impolitic for the chroniclers to attribute sin directly to the volition of an Ottoman Sultan and they had therefore to find outside influences. A Serbian wife, as an infidel in Bāyezīd's entourage, was an obvious target. These chronicles, however, also identify a second corrupting influence on Bāyezīd apart from the «Serbian girl». 'Āşıkpaşazāde's narrative continues: «... wine and kebab parties were held. With the help of 'Alī Çandarlı ... In short, the reason for the Ottoman dynasty's committing sins was 'Alī Paşa, because many crooked Persian *dānişmends* came to him»¹⁵. 'Alī Çandarlı was another obvious target for treating as a source of corruption, but for different reasons. 'Āşıkpaşazāde and the others evidently compiled their chronicles in the decades following the execution in 1453 of Hālil Paşa, the last of the Çandarlı viziers, and their story of 'Alī Paşa's evil influence on Bāyezīd compares with 'Āşıkpaşazāde's attack on Hālil Paşa as an «associate of infidels». These denigrating references to the Çandarlıs seem to

14 See V.L. Ménage, «The beginnings of Ottoman historiography» and H. İnalcık, «The rise of Ottoman historiography» in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, London, 1962.

15 'Āşıkpaşazāde in Ç.N. Atsız (ed.), *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, pp. 138-139.

belong to a tradition of anti-Çandarlı propaganda which dated from after 1453 and aimed to undermine the influence of this powerful family. Wittek, however, ignored the references to 'Alī Çandarlı, and understood 'Aşıkpaşazāde's description of Hālil Paşa as being the literal truth.

The assertion that Bāyezīd became «latinised» has absolutely no textual justification whatever. Wittek based it on the tenuous claim that the Serbian court had become «latinised» through its contacts with Hungary, and that Bāyezīd had in turn been «latinised» through his contacts with the Serbian dynasty. He also claimed, on the basis of a quotation from Doukas, that princes throughout the Balkans had succumbed to «latin» influences, and that this had made their subjects accept the Turks as a lesser evil than the Latins, until, that is, Bāyezīd himself became «latinised». Both claims are unlikely. The notion of the Serbs as transmitters of «latin» influence was clearly a product of Wittek's fantasy. The notion that the Balkan dynasties all became «latinised» seems to derive from the unpopular attempts of several Byzantine Emperors to obtain Catholic military aid at the price of accepting Catholic ecclesiastical authority. This policy, however, was peculiar to Byzantium and not general to the Orthodox dynasties of the Balkans; and the Greek objection to it was not, as Wittek seems to have assumed, to the debilitating moral influence of the Latins but to the imposition of the authority of the Roman Church.

In view of his belief in the corrupting influence of the Latins, it is odd, despite the availability to him of the reference, that Wittek did not mention the fact that one of Bāyezīd's wives was actually a Catholic. In a letter dated 20 February, 1394, Nerio Acciajuoli, the Duke of Athens, informed his brother, Donato, that Bāyezīd had «taken as wife the daughter of the Lady of La Sola», «La Sola» referring to the Frankish County of Salona adjoining the Duchy of Athens. The immediate interest of the letter, however, is that it makes it clear that Bāyezīd married the girl not out of a predilection for Latins, but for territorial gain. After the marriage, according to Nerio, Bāyezīd «took almost all her County»¹⁶. It was political

16 Quoted by C. Jireček in review of N. Jorga, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 18 (1909), pp. 578-586.

advantage and not, as Wittek seemed to assume, cultural or racial preference that determined the Sultans' choice of wives. Bāyezīd married the daughter of «the Lady of La Sola» for territorial gain; he married Olivera as part of an agreement whereby the Lazarević dynasty accepted Ottoman suzerainty¹⁷. His son, Mehmed, married a Turcoman princess of Dulgadir not, as Wittek asserted, as an act of Turkish national consciousness, but obviously as part of a political arrangement, probably an imposition of Ottoman suzerainty. Her father's territories bordered on Mehmed's lands in the east, and after the marriage, according to the anonymous source on which Neşrī based his account of the civil war, he provided troops for Mehmed's army¹⁸. Marriage was simply an instrument of dynastic policy. Since the *shari'ah* permits Muslim men to marry non-Muslim women, Ottoman Sultans and princes were at liberty to marry Christians to further dynastic aims, and marriage alliances with Balkan dynasties were commonplace between the reign of Orhan and Murād II. The restrictions of Islamic law did prevent Ottoman princesses from marrying Christians, but their availability as wives for Anatolian *emirs* gave them a role in dynastic politics. Bāyezīd's sister, for example, married 'Alāeddīn of Karaman¹⁹.

Bāyezīd, in short, did not abandon *gazā*, he did not become «latinised» and his marriage to Olivera was a simple political convenience. Nor did Timur invade Anatolia to recall the Ottomans to their real task of Holy War.

17 Cf. the description of the marriage in the *Life* of Stefan Lazarević by Constantine the Philosopher (c. 1430): «Then he (Bāyezīd) demanded from the Serbian queen (Milica, widow of Lazar and mother of Stefan Lazarević) her daughter Olivera as wife, and promised in return to recognise her son (Stefan) as a son, and never to make war on his land, but to protect it... And thereafter, Serbia was subject to (Bāyezīd) and each year Stefan and his brother Vuk had to serve him (Bāyezīd) with his nobles and others». Text in Maximilian Braun (ed.), *Lebensbeschreibung des Despoten Stefan Lazarević von Konstantin dem Philosophen*, The Hague (1956), p. 9. The marriage probably took place shortly after 1392.

18 Neşrī, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 502.

19 See J. Schildtberger (trans. J.B. Telfer), *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schildtberger, 1396-1427*, London (1879), ch. 4.

Wittek's treatment of the civil war after 1402 is no happier than his explanation of Bāyezīd's defeat. His assertion that Süleymān must have been «latinised» because he drank alot is as groundless as his same assertion about Bāyezīd. Futhermore, it was political good sense and not, as Wittek assumed, effeminacy and lack of *gāzī* spirit that led Süleymān to pursue peace in Rumelia and to make concessions to Byzantium, even if, as Pietro Zeno reported, it is true that he would have made greater concessions without the restraining influence of Evrenos and 'Alī Çandarlı²⁰. In the first place, when Süleymān signed the Gallipolli Treat in February, 1403, Timur was still in Anatolia and there was still the chance that he would cross the Straits and attack Rumelia. Secondly, even without Timur, a conflict with his brothers in Anatolia was inevitable. If he did not make peace with his Balkan neighbours, they would inevitably ally against him with one or other of these, and if he were to fight in Anatolia, he obviously needed peace in Rumelia. Wittek also failed to note that Süleymān, for all his weakness for alcohol, was, until Mūsā's final attack, by far the most successful contestant in the civil war. He crossed to Anatolia early in 1404 and held the land between the Sea of Marmara and Ankara until 1409, during which time he also conducted campaigns against Cüneyd of Aydın and Mehmed of Karaman. When he returned to Rumelia to confront Mūsā in 1409, he defeated him in two successive battles, and in August, 1410, a Ragusan agent reported that Mūsā's strength was declining, while Süleymān's was «increasing mightily»²¹. Furthermore, Venetian documents from this period show that Venice treated Süleymān with the utmost caution and made their gains in Albania and southern Greece less as a result of his weakness than as a result of his pre-occupations in the east. His defeat when in an apparently very strong position appears to have come when Mūsā launched a surprise attack when he was drunk.

20 For text of the Gallipolli Treaty and of Pietro Zeno's report on the proceedings, see George T. Dennis, «The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403», *Orientalia-Christiana Periodica*, Fascicle 1 (1967), pp. 72-88.

21 Quoted in St. Stanojević, «Die Biographie Stefan Lazarević's von Konstantin dem Philosophen als Geschichtsquelle», *Archiv für Slavische Philologie*, 18 (1896), 409-472. The events of the Ottoman civil war are complex

Wittek's account of Mūsā's reign is totally illogical. He first portrayed Mūsā as coming to power with the support of Christians and establishing a «revolutionary» régime which treated Muslims and Christians as equal. This régime then «decided immediately to resume the Holy War» because «this is what Rumelia needed». Having once embarked on *gazā*, Wittek made Mūsā lose the support of, among others, «the great *gāzī* chiefs». So Mūsā, in this version, established equality between Muslims and Christians while, at the same time, engaging in *gazā* which aims to subject Christianity to Islam and managing, despite this, to alienate its chief protagonists.

The illogicality arose from Wittek's insistence that Mūsā was both a revolutionary and a *gāzī*, when he was neither. Wittek provided three proofs, all of which appear to be true in themselves, that Mūsā was a revolutionary. Firstly, he came to power at the head of a Christian army; secondly, he appointed as *kādī'asker* Şeyh Bedreddin, who was to lead the rebellion in 1416; and thirdly,

and, like everything else at this period, extremely obscure. There are three major narrative accounts: (1) for events in Rumelia, Constantine the Philosopher's *Life of Stefan Lazarević*, (2) for events in Anatolia, Neşri, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 366 - vol. 2 p. 516. Neşri's source for this section of his *History* was «The Oxford Anonymous History» (Bodleian Library, MS Marsh 313). This seems in turn to derive from a third source, seemingly written by a partisan of Mehmed, perhaps not long after the events described, (3) for events in Aydın, Doukas (tr. H.J. Magoulias), *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, Detroit, 1975, pp. 101-106. None of these dates the events described. However, several Greek Short Chronicles contain dated entries relevant to the events of the civil war. See Peter Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 3 vols., Vienna (1975-1979). See especially Vol. 1, Chronicle no. 96 and the chronological analysis in Vol. 2. Documents contain further evidence. For a masterly analysis of Constantine the Philosopher's *Life* in the light of contemporary documents, mostly Venetian and Ragusan and usually quoted verbatim, see St. Stanojević, *op. cit.* The full texts of some relevant Venetian documents are in C. Sathas, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'Histoire du Levant au Moyen-Âge*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1880) and vol. 2 (Paris, 1881). For a much larger collection of Venetian documents in summary see F. Thiriet, *Régestes des Délibérations du Sénat de Venise concernant la Roumanie*, vol. 2, Paris, The Hague (1959). The very limited Ottoman palaeographic evidence for the period is - superbly - analysed by Wittek himself in «Zu einigen frühosmanischen Urkunden» repr. in Paul Wittek (ed. V.L. Ménage), *La Formation de l'Empire Ottoman*.

he terrorised, the powerful lords of Rumelia. These facts proved to Wittek that Mūsā treated Christians as equal to Muslims and supported the common people against the nobility. This is an extravagant claim. It is undoubtedly true that Mūsā had at least some Christian troops in his army which fought against Süleymān, since his ally in 1409-10 was Mirča of Wallachia whose daughter he had married²². It is probable, therefore, that Mirča provided him with Vach troops as, according to Ragusan reports, he later did in 1415-16, when he sponsored Mustafa's claims against his brother, Mehmed I²³. Mirča and other neighbouring rulers had an obvious interest in actively supporting Ottoman pretenders as a method of weakening Ottoman power in Rumelia. Wittek took the view that the Christians of Ottoman Rumelia also joined Mūsā's army, and cited as sole proof the entry in a Bulgarian chronicle, saying that Mūsā's army was formed of «Vlachs, Serbs and Bulgarians». The chronicle does not, however, say that these were Ottoman subjects, and it is, furthermore, a highly unreliable source, even for events apparently contemporary with its anonymous author²⁴. There is no real evidence that Ottoman Christians rallied to Mūsā's standard.

As for Bedreddīn, the most obvious reason for his appointment as *kādī'asker* was that he was a renowned jurist. The idea that he was a religious and social egalitarian derives from Doukas' account of the doctrines of his fellow rebel in 1416, Börklüce Mustafa and not from any source by or about Bedreddīn himself. The official view was, in fact, that he was an orthodox Muslim, since the *fetvā* which sanctioned his execution - «His blood is legitimate, but his property is sacrosanct»²⁵ - corresponds with the canonical rule on

22 Neġrī, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, 476.

23 St. Stanojević, *loc. cit.*

24 For text of the chronicle, see J. Bogdan, «Ein Beitrag zur Bulgarischen und Serbischen Geschichtsschreibung», *Archiv für Slavische Philologie*, 13 (1891), 481-543. For an evaluation, see C. Jireček, «Zur Würdigung der neuentdeckten Bulgarischen Chronik», *Archiv für Slavische Philologie*, 14 (1892), 255-277.

25 Thus in all Ottoman chronicle accounts, and also in the *Life* of Bedreddīn by his grandson, Ḥalil b. Isrā'īl. See A. Gölpınarlı and İ. Sungurbey (eds.), *Sımarne Kadısoğhu Şeyh Bedreddin Menâkıbı*, Istanbul (1967), p. 130.

the treatment of «Rebels», meaning those who abjure the authority of the Muslim *imām*, but without abjuring the faith itself. To have preached that Christians were the equal of Muslims would have been tantamount to apostasy, in which case the *shari'ah* would have required both his execution and the confiscation of his property. So in 1416, the Ottoman authorities treated his crime as simple rebellion against the Sultan and not as the abandonment of orthodox Islam.

Several sources record Mūsā's desertion by some of his Rumelian lords, but only one of these gives a reason. This is Neşri's anonymous source²⁶ on the civil war, which tells how Mūsā earned their hatred by seizing their wealth and property. If this is correct, it does not so much prove that Mūsā supported the common people as that he was short of cash. This is likely, since civil war would inevitably disrupt the normal sources of revenue. Mūsā, in short, was not a revolutionary.

The Holy Wars which Wittek claimed for him are also imaginary. He certainly attacked the Byzantine cities of Constantinople and Thessaloniki, and also invaded Serbia, but for the reason, it seems, that both the Byzantine Emperor Manuel, and the Serbian Despot Stefan, had attempted to undermine his rule by supporting the cause of a rival Ottoman prince²⁷. The result of these vigorous punitive expeditions was that Manuel and Stefan allied with Mehmed. Mūsā's «Holy War» - apart from the «*gazā* which reached as far as Carinthia», which was a product of Wittek's imagination - was an attempt to defend by force his very precarious position in Rumelia. By allying himself with Mūsā's enemies, Manuel and Stefan, Mehmed was able finally to defeat his brother.

For Wittek, the reasons for Mehmed's victory and the subsequent recovery of the Empire were less mundane: they were due to Mehmed's and later Murād II's recovery of the Turkish and *gāzī* spirit, which they acquired through residence in Amasya.

26 For a full discussion of Neşri's sources, see V.L. Ménage, *Neshri's History of the Ottomans*, London, 1964.

27 Probably Süleymān's son, Orhan. See Constantine the Philosopher (ed. M. Braun), *op. cit.*, 43-47.

However, the tribalism of the Amasya region, which Wittek perceived as a source of national inspiration was, in fact, an obstacle to Ottoman rule. Neğri's source records three Turcoman rebellions against Mehmed immediately after 1402²⁸, and Halil b. Isrā'il's *Life* of Bedreddin records another in the same district some time before 1416²⁹. The only evidence to support Wittek's idea that Amasya became a homeland of the «*qāzī* spirit» as a result of the Dānişmendid conquest of the 11th century, is the fact the Melik Dānişmend became the hero of a popular *gāzī* epic. This evidence is not strong, and certainly no «*gāzī* spirit» manifested itself in Mehmed. According to Doukas, at least, on his accession as sole Ottoman ruler in 1413, he immediately, like Süleymān before him, made peace with his Balkan neighbours. There is a possibility that he confirmed the terms of the Gallipolli Treaty³⁰. He led more campaigns in Anatolia than he did in the Balkans, annexing the western portion of Karaman, Saruhan, İsfendiyār's lands south of the Ilgaz mountains, and Canik including Samsun³¹. In Europe, it is true, he briefly besieged Thessaloniki in the mid-winter of 1416-17 and invaded Wallachia in 1418³², but the motive for these campaigns was purely dynastic. Both Manuel and Mirča had supported the claims of his brother Mustafa in 1415-16, and Mirča had also supported the rebel, Bedreddin. The siege of Thessaloniki ended with an agreement that Manuel would not release Mustafa during Meh-

28 Neğri, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 372-406.

29 A. Gölpınarlı and İ. Sungurbey (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 117.

30 This is suggested by Doukas 'account of Mehmed's agreement with Manuel. Doukas' phraseology, particularly where he makes Mehmed refer to Manuel as «My father the Emperor of the Romans», is reminiscent of the text of the Gallipolli Treaty. See Doukas, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

31 It is impossible to construct a precise chronology of Mehmed's conquests, or to be at all certain of their extent. For the conquest of western Karaman, see the Chronological List of 824 A.H. in Ç.N. Atsız, *Osmanlı Tarihine ait Takvimler*, Istanbul (1961), p. 29; 'Aşıkpaşazāde, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151. For conquest of Saruhan, see Ç.N. Atsız, *op. cit.*, p. 26; Doukas, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118. For the conquest of İsfendiyār's territory and Canik, see Ç.N. Atsız, *op. cit.*, 26; Şükrüllāh, *op. cit.*, p. 110; 'Aşıkpaşazāde, *op. cit.*, 152.

32 For contemporary notice of the siege of Thessaloniki, see Ragusan report quoted in St. Stanojević, *op. cit.* For invasion of Wallachia, see Ç.N. Atsız, *op. cit.*, p. 28; 'Aşıkpaşazāde, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

med's lifetime³³; the invasion of Wallachia reduced Mirča temporarily to vassalage and secured the crossing points on the Danube³⁴, evidently as a guarantee against Mirča's sponsoring any more claimants to the Ottoman throne. Mehmed's only territorial gains in Europe were Vlorë and Gjirokaster in Albania, which the Ottomans acquired in 1417 and 1418³⁵. These acquisitions, however, were no more substantial than Bāyezīd's had been. Until the Venetian naval victory in May, 1416, Mehmed's fleet also made attacks on Christian islands in the Aegean, especially on the Venetian colony of Negroponte. The raids of Bāyezīd's fleet, however, had been even more devastating³⁶. It is, in short, impossible to call Mehmed I a *gāzī* and to deny the same title to Bāyezīd I.

There is no reason to discuss Wittek's account of the inauguration of the *devşirme*, since it now seems that this institution was already in existence in the late 14th century³⁷.

In short, Wittek's interpretation of early Ottoman history owes as much to the preconceptions of German nationalist historiography as it does to the study of source materials. It is a false analysis, but one which has become an orthodoxy among Ottoman historians. Wittek's greatness as a scholar lay not in his interpretative history, but in his close studies of Ottoman texts and documents, of which «Notes sur le tuğra ottoman» and «Zu einigen frühosmanischen Urkunden»³⁸ are perhaps the finest examples. These, rather than «De la défaite d'Ankara à la prise de Constantinople», should be the exemplars for the present generation of Ottomanists.

33 Doukas, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

34 Şükrüllah, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

35 For venetian report of the Ottoman conquest of Vlorë see F. Thiriet, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, no. 1663. For conquest of Gjirokastër, Peter Schreiner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, Chronicles no. 60 and 64, also Vol. 2 p. 408, n. 42.

36 Venetian records provide an impression of the levels of activity of the Ottoman fleet. See entries in F. Thiriet, *op. cit.*, vols. 1 and 2.

37 S. Vryonis, «Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme», *Speculum* 31 (1956), pp. 433-443.

38 Both articles are reprinted in Paul Wittek (ed. V.L. Ménage), *La Formation de l'Empire ottoman*.