

THE IMPERIAL *BĠAT* CEREMONIES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THEIR
FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION UNTIL THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY

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Thesis Abstract

Sinem Erdoğan, “The Imperial *Bî‘at* Ceremonies in the Ottoman Empire: Their Formation and Transformation until the Eighteenth Century”

This study examines the formation and transformation of the Ottoman *bî‘at* ceremonies (ceremony of oath of allegiance) within the context of Ottoman political culture roughly between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The thesis focuses on two particular forms of *bî‘at* ceremony, one that was held during the accessions of the sultans and the other during the celebrations of the two religious festivals in the Ottoman court (*mu‘âyede*). By using the descriptions of the *bî‘at* ceremonies that were narrated in the contemporary chronicles, law books on court etiquette (*teşrifât kanunnâmeleri*) and the collections of customary practices and rules on the Ottoman court ceremonial, this study intends to unearth different phases of the ceremonial formation to understand what *bî‘at* meant in the Ottoman political culture, whether this meaning changed in time parallel to the changes happened in the structure of the ceremony.

The thesis aims to propose a novel and nuanced understanding of the *bî‘at* ceremonies for the period in concern. On one hand, it shows the politically-oriented nature of *bî‘at* ceremonies as they were equally affected by the alterations that happened in the Ottoman methods of rule, hierarchies within the court. On the other hand, it points out the diversities of the form and function of the *bî‘at* ceremony during the *mu‘âyede* and the royal accessions.

Tez Özeti

Sinem Erdoğan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda *Bi’at* Törenleri: Törenlerin Onsekizinci Yüzyıla Kadarki Gelişimi ve Dönüşümü”

Bu çalışma geç onbeş, erken onsekizinci yüzyıllar arasında Osmanlı *bi’at* törenlerinin oluşumu ve dönüşümünü Osmanlı politik kültürü temelinde değerlendirmektedir.

Bu tez *bi’at* törenlerinin iki temel formu üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bunlardan biri sultanların cülusları esnasında yapılan, diğeri ise iki dini bayramda Osmanlı sarayında yapılan kutlamalar dahilinde gerçekleşen *bi’at* törenidir. Tez, döneme ait kronikleri, teşrifat kanunnamelerini ve teşrifat kaidelerinin derlendiği kaynaklardaki *biat* anlatılarını kullanılarak törensel oluşumun farklı safhalarını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu, *bi’at*’ın Osmanlı politik kültüründeki anlamını, bu anlamın zaman içinde törenin yapısal değişimlerine paralel olarak değişip değişmediğini anlamayı sağlayacaktır.

Bu tez ele alınan zaman dilimi dahilinde *bi’at* törenlerine yeni ve çok katmanlı bir bakış açısı getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tez, bir yandan *bi’at* törenlerinin Osmanlı yönetim şeklinde ve hakimiyet anlayışında meydana gelen değişimlerden eşit derecede etkilendiğini; yani politik kültürle içiçe bir yapıda olduğunu gösterirken, diğeri yandan ise *bi’at* törenlerinin farklı pratiklerinin yapısal ve fonksiyonel farklılıklarını ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

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To my father Feridun and my mother Ferhan

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

The basis for the spelling of Ottoman Turkish words in the text is Sir James' *Redhouse's Turkish and English Lexicon* (Istanbul, 1890). Terms and titles with direct English equivalents have been translated; whenever possible the anglicized version of Ottoman Turkish words is used (ie. sultan, pasha).

Translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Ottoman protocol books (*defter-i teşrifât*) that date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries generally describe the Ottoman *bî'at* ceremony (ceremony of the oath of allegiance) thus: During the royal accessions as well as the *mu'âyede* celebrations that were held in the court during the two religious holidays, whenever they were informed by the chief protocol officer on the exact time and day of the ceremony, the highest dignitaries of the state would start to arrive at the imperial palace. In the imperial palace the sultan would first go to the Privy Hall where the service holders of the inner palace (*Enderûn*) would display their oath of allegiance to him. At that time, the imperial throne would be placed in front of the third gate of the palace (*Bâb-ı Sa'âdet*) and the ceremony would start with the entrance of the sultan to the second courtyard. Whenever the sultan would appear from the gate, he would be acclaimed (*alkış*) by the ushers in charge of acclamation (*alkışçı çavuş*) with some formulaic phrases such as '*aleyke 'avnullah* and/or *ma'aşallah*.

At the start of the ceremony, first the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* would swear his oath of allegiance to the sultan, then the tutor of the sultan, the descendants of the khans of Crimea (*hanzâdeler*) and a number of other office holders would come to express their allegiance. At a certain time in the ceremony the steward of the doorkeepers (*kapıcılar kethüdâsı*) and the chief usher (*çavuşbaşı*) would go to notify the grand vizier and then the grand mufti that they could participate in the ceremony. When entering the ceremonial space, first the grand vizier and the viziers, thereafter the grand mufti and the ulema would respectively come to display their allegiance to the

sultan. During the ceremony, the sultan would stand up to display his respect and esteem for the highest dignitaries of the state such as the grand vizier, the chief military judges, the chief director of finances (*defterdâr*), the *nakîbü'l ešrâf* and the grand mufti. This public ceremony would continue until the last officer in charge, who was generally the chief protocol officer, would swear his allegiance to the sultan. When the public ceremony was summoned, the sultan would go back to the Privy Hall. There, the imperial throne would be placed at the right side of the Hall's gate this time for the ceremony of the outer palace personnel (*Birûn*).¹

This description with some minor changes is frequently repeated in the secondary literature on the Ottoman royal ceremonies and court culture.² When reading it, one gets the impression that the Ottoman *bî'at* ceremony had a static nature as if it was performed exactly in the same manner throughout the centuries of Ottoman history. But did this format really remain the same over the centuries? If not, when and how did the *bî'at* ceremony acquire this durable pattern? This basic question constitutes the departure point of this study.

¹ For some examples of this kind of description in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century Ottoman sources see Mehmed bin Ahmed (Teşrifâtî-zâde), *Defter-i Teşrifât*, İÜK Türkçe Yazmalar, no. 9810; Süleymaniye Ktb, Esad Efendi, no. 2150, transcribed by Fatma Nişancı, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, (M.A. Thesis, no: TE 1585, Istanbul University, 1973) and Salim Ayyar, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, (M.A. Thesis, no: TE 1583, Istanbul University, 1973), fols. 2a-5a, in Nişancı, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, pp. 1-4; Es'ad Efendi, (Teşrifâtî-zâde), *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, (Istanbul, 1287 [1870-71]); facsimile reprinted as *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, ed. Cahid Baltacı (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1979), pp. 48-52. Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, *Târih-i Ata* (Istanbul: Basiret Matbaası, 1292 [1875/76]), pp. 234, 235; Ali Seydi Bey, *Teşrifât ve Teşkilât-ı Kadîmemiz*, published as *Teşrifât ve Teşkilâtı*, ed. Niyazi Ahmet Banoğlu (Istanbul: Tercüman, 1970), pp. 30, 31; Abdülaziz Bey, *Âdat ve Merâsim-i Kadîme, Tabirât ve Mu'amelât-ı Kavmiye-i Osmâniye*, printed as *Osmânlı Âdet, Merâsim ve Tâbirleri*, 2 vols, published by Kazım Arısan, Duygu Arısan Günay (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995). For an earlier description from a late seventeenth century source also see Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhîsü'l Beyân fî Kavânin-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Sevim İlgürel, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998), pp. 77-82.

² İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), pp. 187, 188 and 201-211; Özdemir Nutku, "Bayram," *DİA*, vol. 5, pp. 257-265; A.H. De-Groot, "Marasim (in the Ottoman Empire)," *Eİ2*, vol. 6, pp. 529-532; Abdülkadir Özcan, "Cülus," *DİA*, vol. 8, pp. 108-114; Douglas S. Brookes, "Of Swords and Tombs: Symbolism in the Ottoman Accession Ritual," *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 17 (Fall, 1993), pp. 1-22.

More specifically, this thesis examines the structural formation and transformation of the Ottoman *bi'at* ceremony before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It aims to plot the changes in the structure of the ceremony over time, and explores what these changes might have signified within the context of Ottoman political culture. To put it in other words, it intends to find out the relation between the structural and functional formulation of the ceremony and the developments in Ottoman political culture. Related to all these, it asks what was the function and symbolical meaning of the *bi'at* ceremony that was held in the Ottoman court?

Before moving on to a detailed discussion of my methodology and sources, I find it necessary to provide a background on the symbolical meaning and function of *bi'at* and its practices under the Islamic states from the medieval times to the Ottoman Empire.

Bi'at Ceremony from Medieval Times to the Ottomans

In its broadest sense, *bi'at* means the recognition of one's authority by one or more persons. As far as the etymology of the term is concerned, the Arabic term *bey'at* derived from the verb *bey'* which means to sell, *bey'* embodying like sale, an exchange of undertakings.³ Even though *bey'at* as an expression is not used in the Quran, derivatives of *bey'* such as *mübaya'a* are used that mean obeying the rules and practices set by the prophet and making a compact with him.⁴ In ancient Arab custom the physical gesture of *bi'at* took the form of a hand clasp that symbolized a contract or agreement between two people. This was similar to the practice which

³ E. Tyan, "Bay'a," *EI2*, vol. 1, pp. 1113; Cengiz Kallek, "Bi'at," *DIA*, vol. 6, p. 121.

⁴ Kallek, "Bi'at," pp. 121-124.

was called *manumissio* of the feudal European lords and serfs in which the serfs swore an oath of allegiance by putting their hands in the hand of their lord.⁵

During the life time of the Prophet Muhammad, newly converted Muslims joined the newly emerging Islamic community by swearing oath of allegiance to him.⁶ Another function of taking *bî'at* was to ensure the adherence of the Muslims to the basic principles of the Quran such as not leaving the path of Islam and staying away from stealing and adultery etc. In 621, in a place called Akabe, the prophet is said to have taken an oath of allegiance of the newly converted women and men collectively. In 622, on the eve of the migration from the city of Mecca to Medina, this time the Muslims swore their allegiance to Muhammad once again probably to display their loyalty and obedience during this critical phase.⁷

Bî'at during the time of the first four caliphs (*Hulefâ-yi Râşidîn*) became a recognition of the newly elected caliph's political authority. Yet, *bî'at* in this phase was still a voluntary offering of oath of allegiance to the new political/religious leader. Later on, Sunni doctrine specified *bî'at* as one of the prerogatives of electing a Caliph.⁸ Though *bî'at* preserved its original function and pivotal role in ascribing legitimacy to the Sunni political rulers, the voluntary offering of *bî'at* under the

⁵ This information is related in Tyan, "Bay'a," and Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, p. 28. Karateke quotes it from March Bloch's *La Societa Feodale I, La Formation des liens de dependence*, pp. 224, 225. Also see Vatin and Veistein, *Le Sèrail ébranlé*, pp. 259, 260.

⁶ The sources of these are the hadiths and commentaries on Quran (*tefsir*) that were compiled in much later periods. See Tyan, "Bay'a," and Kallek, "Bî'at ."

⁷ Kallek, "Bî'at ," p. 123; Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, p. 29.

⁸ Tyan, "Bay'a," p. 1113.

Umayyads (650-749) and Abbasids (750- 1258) was transferred to the recognition of an already established authority; thus *bi'at* became obligatory.⁹

Even though the Quran does not make direct reference to the necessity of taking *bi'at* for the rulers, it mentions a series of covenants/oaths between man and God, starting with the primal covenant of Adam, which according to Mottahadeh “stands as an archetype and the ultimate guarantee for all solemn and weighty undertakings between one man and another.”¹⁰ As Mottahadeh puts it, this was a fundamental principle in Islamic belief that was practically used by the political powers. In 929 for instance, when the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir faced a rebellion of his troops, he used this argument against his rebellious soldiers to convince them not to depose him:

...most of your benefits (singular: *ni'mah*) are from me but it would not be my way to reproach you with any favor that I have conferred, and that I regard at the time-and still regard-as small compared with your merits; rather it suits me to fertilize and increase them... [and] I long bring you to the utmost limit of your aspirations... I claim from you that oath of allegiance (*bai'ah*) which you have affirmed time after time. Whoever has sworn allegiance to me has sworn allegiance to God, so that whosoever violates that oath violates the covenant with God (*'ahd Allah*). I also claim gratitude for benefits and favors you enjoy, benefits and gifts from me that I hope you will acknowledge and consider binding.¹¹

It is obvious that the Quranic references to the oaths and covenants do not explain the central role of different types of oaths¹² in the Islamic tradition alone. Why oaths held such an important place in Islamic culture from the beginning was not only

⁹ Tyan, “Bay'a,” p. 1113; Roy Mottahadeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 50, 51; Kallek, “Bi'at,” p. 123; Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, p. 29.

¹⁰ Mottahadeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 43.

¹¹ Quoted in Mottahadeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 40.

¹² Mottahadeh examines different types of oaths such as oath of allegiance, oath of benefit, oaths of treaty and etc. See Mottahadeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, pp. 40-96.

because of the fact that both Quran and prophetic traditions offered precedents for this practice but also because it suited well the culture of Near Eastern societies.¹³

As it has been mentioned before, after the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, the elected caliphs undertook the political leadership and religious guidance of the Muslim community. The notion of the caliph as a representative of mundane and divine authority, was derived from the Quran verse (al-Baraqa: 30) which ascribed to God the statements of his angels that by creating Adam, He had set up a caliph in the world.¹⁴ A caliph was regarded as the direct and immediate representative of God, as a vicarage of God, and he was a king who presided over a divinely ordained order. The caliphs and kings then were following Adam's primal and archetypical establishment of order in the world. In this line of thought, the foundation of political authority in the world by the prophets and later on by the caliphs and the kings, who were subordinate to the prophets, was the manifestation of the divine vicarage that was first bestowed upon Adam.¹⁵ This lineage was the main source of legitimacy for the rulers in the realm of Islam. Needless to say, this conception of the caliphate and kingship was partly related to the discourses of royal power in the Sassanian, Byzantine and other cultures in the ancient Near East, where Islam was borne and later on spread.¹⁶

¹³ Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, pp. 40-96. Also see Al-Azmeh, who argues that the Sassanian, and Hellenistic heritage that was existent in the Late Antique period was very influential in shaping the Islamic culture and the notion of kingship. See Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 62-114.

¹⁴ I have taken this information from Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 155.

¹⁵ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 73-79 and 155-161.

¹⁶ Al-Azmeh discusses the Islamic adaptation of royal symbols of insignia, and conceptions of power that were evident in the Near East for centuries. See *Muslim Kingship*, "Chapter Four: Early Muslim Polity," in *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 64-79.

Though the caliph represented the divine order in the world, at least in its jurisprudential foundations, the caliphs in Sunni Islam were not the object of a cult.¹⁷ Nevertheless, under the Islamic Empires the conception of the caliph was sacralized over time as symbol of divine authority.¹⁸ Kings also had a similar repertoire of attributions and duties as the caliphs. However, there was a hierarchical relationship between the two such as between the prophets and the caliphs. As Al-Azmeh puts it “Were the caliph and the king to coexist within the boundaries of the same polity, the king would stand to the caliph, in principle, as subjects stand to kings, a relationship of subordination which recapitulates the standing of a king as of a caliph before the God.”¹⁹ This brings the mind the *bi‘at* of various rulers of the emirates such as Samanids (819-899), Buyids (932-1062) and Saljuqs to the Abbasid caliphs, to get an official recognition from the caliph, which will be discussed below.

Although regal traditions such as processions, formal audiences, and royal prerogatives were initiated by the Umayyad governors, the formalization of court procedures was accomplished under the Abbasids by the first half of the tenth century.²⁰ The *bi‘at* ceremony under the Umayyads and Abbasids became a practice

¹⁷ Al-Azmeh argues that though their theology differ greatly, the Sunni notion of Islam and the Shi‘i and Sufi theories of the imamate have in common the shared metaphors, attributes of power, notion of divine ratification and idolatrous practices towards the person of the caliph. See Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 152- 219.

¹⁸ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 131-154; also see Mohammad Arkoun, “The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought: *la hukma illa lillah*,” in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton: C.E. Bosworth, 1989), pp. 31-54; also see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986). For the European perceptions of the kingship see Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).

¹⁹ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 163.

²⁰ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 68, 69 and 137; Murice Gaudefroy Demombynes, *Muslim Institutions*, trans. John P. Macgregor, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950), p. 109-111; Kallek, “*Bi‘at*,” p. 123; Paola Sanders, “*Marasim* (under the Caliphate and the Fatimids),” *EI2*, vol. 6, pp. 518-20.

-serving the public recognition of an already established rule. Mottahadeh argues that during this phase *bî'at* became an expression of the homage of one to the ruler²¹.

In its early practice neither the physical gesture of hand-clasp and hand-kiss nor the most known version of *bî'at*, namely the prostration of oneself before the ruler/caliph by kissing the ground were required as a condition of validity for *bî'at*.²² The gestures that accentuated the hierarchal differences between the oath-taker and oath-giver were adapted to *bî'at* later on. Probably with the influence of the Sassanian custom of kissing the sovereign's extremities, at least from the mid-ninth century onwards, the hands and/or feet of the Abbasid caliphs and their heir apparent were kissed.²³ The hand kiss was later replaced by kissing the ground. Hilâl Al-Sâbi'(d. 969/1056), who was the director of chancery in the Abbasid court of Buyid Baghdad, in his treatise on the court ceremonial of Baghdad relates that though in the old days it was not the practice for high dignitaries such as the judges, jurists, the crown princes, and the readers of the Quran to kiss the ground when they entered in the presence of the caliph, by his time they had also joined the others in kissing the ground.²⁴

Though a kiss as a gesture might include a variety of meanings,²⁵ during the performance of *bî'at* it symbolizes an unequal relationship between the two, so to say

²¹ Mottahadeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 51.

²² Tyan, "Bay'a," p. 1113; Sanders, "Marasim (under the Caliphate and the Fatimids)," p. 519; Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, p. 29.

²³ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 140.

²⁴ Hilâl Al-Sâbi' *Rusûm dar Al-Khilâfah (The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court)*, trans. Elie A. Salem, (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1977), p. 29.

²⁵ For different interpretations of the kiss see Willem Frijhoff, "The Kiss and the Sacred Profane: Reflections on a Cross-Cultural Confrontation," in *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, eds. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 210-236. For a study on the meaning of kissing in various royal rituals that were held in the Ottoman court such as the *bî'at* and receptions see Palmira Brummett, "A Kiss is Just a Kiss: Rituals of

the submission and deference of the oath-giver. The oath-giver's display of subordination with the physical act of prostration and/or kneeling down before the caliph/ruler and then kissing his hand and/or the ground defines and manifests the power relations between the men.²⁶ In any case be it kissing the ground, hand, foot and/or hem of the sleeve of the caliph/ruler, this act was always under the preserve of a few of the highest ranking officials. For this reason, the display of allegiance was also a projection of the socio-political standing of the oath-giver in his society.

The practical and political uses of *bi'at* were not limited to ascribing an immediate legitimacy to the political authority. Though this initial function of *bi'at* was preserved, there appeared several other occasions during which *bi'at* was performed. One of these was the oath of allegiance between a Sufi sheikh and his disciple. In Sufism, the act of *bi'at* represented the promise of the candidate disciple to master that he would be following his path and would obey his rules without any question. This binding act symbolized the entrance of the candidate disciple to the order.²⁷

Another occasion on which *bi'at* was performed was the investiture ceremony, which could take place between the caliph and his courtiers as well as between the caliph and the emirs. In the latter case, the rulers of the semi-independent dynasties of the Islamic realms came to the Abbasid court to swear their oath of allegiance to the caliph in order to acquire a legitimate status as the *emir 'ül 'ümera'*. The description of the Buyid emir Adud ad-Dawla's (r. 977-983) crowning

Submission Along the East-West Divide," in *Cultural Encounters Between the East and West 1453-1699*, eds. Matthew Birchwood and Matthew Dimmock, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), pp. 107-131.

²⁶ David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 104.

²⁷ See Osman Türer, "Bi'at (Tasavvuf)," *DİA*, vol. 6, pp. 124, 125.

and investiture ceremony in 977 in the caliph's palace, is full of repetitive displays of *bi'at* by kissing the ground, then the caliph's feet and lastly his seat.²⁸ Similarly, when the Saljuq ruler Tughril Beg in 1057/58 arrived at the caliphal palace to be appointed as the military protector of the caliphate, he kissed the ground and hand of the caliph several times as a symbol of his submission and respect.²⁹ In return for taking the oath of an emir or of a dignitary the caliphs were expected to bestow robes of honor (*hil'at*) and grants as well as titles to the oath-giver.

The granting robes of honor was actually a practice that first appeared in the last centuries of BCE in China between the sedentary Chinese and nomads west and north of the Great Wall of China and.³⁰ During the rule of Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), silk products began to be used as diplomatic means in dealing with the nomads such as forming alliances and conducting peace. Initially a material expression of the sedentary-nomadic relations, silk products became very popular and significant among the nomads of the steppe. Indeed, the robing and/or bestowing of valuable cloths suited well the steppe tradition of the tribe leader's prerogative to clothe his subjects. This Central Asian tradition was later on transmitted to Afghanistan, Pakistan, plains of India and Persia with the Kushan dynasty, which was originally

²⁸ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 144, 145; Dominique Sourdel, "Robes of Honor in Abbasid Baghdad During the Eight to Eleventh Centuries," in Steward Gordon, ed. *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 139, 140. The original quotation is from Hilâl al-Sâbi', who recounts various instances in which the Buyid princes swore their oath to the caliphs in different time intervals. For the description of this ceremony see Sâbi', *Rusûm dar Al-Khilâfah*, pp. 18-20.

²⁹ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 145; Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 57; also see A.K.S. Lambton, "Marasim (in Iran)," *EI2*, vol. 6, pp. 523.

³⁰ See Xinru Liu, "Silk, Robes and Relations Between Early Chinese Dynasties and Nomads Beyond the Great Wall," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Steward Gordon, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 23-34.

founded by a nomadic leader namely Yuezhi of Central Asian origins.³¹ As the successor of the Kushans, the Sassanids inherited this tradition and because of their contact with Byzantine Empire it moved to the west in the centuries after the foundation of Constantinople.³²

Well before Islam appeared, honorific investiture had become an integral part of the political and social relationships between different people and regions.

Steward Gordon in his introduction to the collection of essays *Robes and Honor* links *hil'at*'s central place in Islamic state practices to the influence of the pre-existing Byzantine and Sassanid practices in the region where Islam appeared and expanded.³³ Just like *bi'at*, *hil'at* symbolized the confirmation and establishment of personal and public ties or bonds between the superiors and subordinates. As Paula Sanders puts it, robes of honor marked relative hierarchies at all levels.³⁴ It is not a coincidence then, to see the bestowals of the robes of honor right after the *bi'at* ceremonies, signifying the same set of values and conceptions as the *bi'at*. For this reason, it would be safe to assume that *hil'at* was the materialized form and expression of *bi'at*.

Just like many other ceremonial practices in the realm of Islam, honorific robing dates back to the time of the Abbasid caliphate. The first Abbasid caliph, al-Saffah (r. 749-754) is recorded to have sent a robe of honor to his emissary Abu

³¹ Visual evidence from Kushans suggests an active use of royal robing. See Steward Gordon, "A World of Investiture," in Idem., *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Steward Gordon, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 7-9.

³² Except Venice and papal court, robes were not used in the Western European courts. For more see *Robes and Honor*.

³³ Gordon, "A World of Investiture," pp. 12, 13.

³⁴ Paula Sanders, "Robes of Honor in Fatimid Egypt," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Steward Gordon, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 233.

Salama, who had directed the movement that had culminated in the Abbasid takeover of the caliphate.³⁵ From the ninth century onwards, the sources describe the caliphs granting robes of honor, crowns, bracelets and swords to the people they wished. The people who were bestowed robes of honor could be officials as in the case of Abu Salama, or emirs such as Adud a-Dawla and Tughril Beg, who were granted with costumes loaded with precious stones in return for their display of allegiance to the caliph during their investiture ceremony.³⁶ Similarly, in 1180 the Ayyubid ruler Saladin received a delegate from the caliph who had come to deliver his appointment certificate and robes of honor.³⁷ Besides, the Abbasid caliphs sometimes sent robes of honor to the rulers of the emirates to ensure their loyalty on the eve of political and/or military crises since the acceptance of robes of honor would mean the continuation of the existing compact between the two. For instance, it is mentioned in the contemporary chronicles that just before the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1257, the Abbasid caliph sent robes of honor to the Ayyubid ruler al-Nasir.³⁸ Hilâl al-Sâbi' also devotes a chapter to the bestowal of robes of honor in the Abbasid court.³⁹ There, he makes a detailed categorization of who is to be honored with what types of robes of honorific robes. According to him, the military commanders, viziers, the emirs and also companions of the caliph were privileged with this honor.

Bi'at and also its material expression, *hil'at*, however, were not reserved to the caliphs only. The semi-independent dynasties that emerged under the Abbasids,

³⁵ Dominique, "Robes of Honor in Abbasid...", p. 137.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 139, 140.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 143.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Sâbi', *Rusûm dar Al-Khilâfah*, pp. 65-70.

the Fatimids and also the dynasties that were established after the abolition of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 with the Mongolian sack of the city, adopted *bi'at* as well as other ceremonial practices. Under the Samanids for example, the state officials took oath of allegiance not only to their rulers but also to the heirs apparent as the caliphs did. The Buyid and Saljuq also continued this practice of having their officials take oath of allegiance for their heirs.⁴⁰

The adaptation of the Abbasid practices also holds for the distribution of *hil'at* in the Islamic courts. For instance, just as they received robes of honor from the Abbasid caliph, the Saljuq rulers distributed valuable robes of honor to their subordinate emirs.⁴¹ Another example can be the Mamluk court. During their last decades robing had become a central feature of court politics. And it was practiced on various occasions such as investiture of the officials, confirmation of the elite status, rewarding services, and commemoration of the sovereign in the ceremonials.⁴² A further example can be the Mongolian Empire, where robing was not only related to the marking of the hierarchies but also to the steppe traditions of feeding and clothing the subjects.⁴³

Examples of this kind can be multiplied but perhaps the essential point to be grasped is that *bi'at* was the projection of an unequal power relation between the giver and the takers. Whether performed in the court of the caliph or an emir, it was

⁴⁰ Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, pp. 51, 52 and Lambton, "Marasim (in Iran)," pp. 523, 524.

⁴¹ Lambton, "Marasim (in Iran)," p. 524.

⁴² Carl F. Petry, "Robing Ceremonies in the Late Mamluk Egypt: Hallowed Traditions, Shifting Protocols," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Gordon Steward, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 353-78; also see Karl Stowasser, "Manners and Customs at the Mamluk Court," *Muquarnas II* (1984), pp. 13-20 and Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 145.

⁴³ Thomas T. Allsen, "Robing in the Mongolian Empire," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Gordon Steward, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 305-14.

always about the establishment and perpetuation of the hierarchies within a given polity. On the other hand what the ceremony actually signified and meant would always be shaped by each political culture that appropriated it.

As far as the Ottoman state's ceremonial formation is concerned, it is evident that like other political entities, the Ottomans heavily borrowed from the pre-existing cultural, administrative, institutional and ceremonial practices during their period of state formation. The classical Perso-Islamic, Turco-Mongol as well as Byzantine heritage were instrumental for the Ottomans in shaping and defining their own versions of kingship, court life and imperial culture.⁴⁴ Perhaps the most influential of all these traditions were the Byzantine and Abbasid. One can draw many similarities between these cultures in terms of the notion of sovereignty and rulership, and the organization of the courts. The court in all three was a place in which the imperial ceremonies were particularly directed towards the ratification of the hierarchical structures between the rulers and the governing officials.⁴⁵ Besides, order and extreme silence were some of the most significant features of these courts that heightened the majesty of the sovereign in the eyes of the court elite and state officials. This means that the main audience of the imperial ceremonies in all three courts was particularly the court elite and the dignitaries of the state.

As Avril Cameron argues, from the tenth century onwards the Byzantine royal ceremonies had become much more confined since the public imperial

⁴⁴ Gülru Necipoğlu, "Conclusion: The Topkapı and Other Palatine Traditions," in *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 242-258.

⁴⁵ See Sâbi', *Rusûm dar Al-Khilâfah*; Cameron, "The Construction of Court Ritual." Also see Necipoğlu, who also mentions the similarities between their ceremonial cultures, *Idem.*, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 69.

occasions began to give way to the private ceremonies held in the imperial place.⁴⁶

The physical confinement of the sovereign was also evident in the Fatimid as well as Abbasid courts. As Gülru Necipoğlu puts it, this signals “the existence of a shared language of imperial ceremonial in the post-Roman Mediterranean world, regardless of religious identities.”⁴⁷ As far as the Abbasid imperial ceremonial is concerned, it seems that particularly from the tenth century onwards royal ceremonies became more prescribed and elaborate and the seclusion of the caliph was ever more heightened. Hilâl al-Sâbi’s compilation of court ceremonies and rituals suggests that in the eleventh century royal ceremonies had become highly elaborate in the Abbasid court, and that the occasions on which the caliph appeared before the public were increasingly restricted.⁴⁸ Aziz al-Azmeh also likens the Ottoman and Abbasid notions of the caliphate as such:

Like the Ottoman sultan in Topkapı Palace, the Abbasid caliph was ‘an invisible signifier of pure potency’ in contrast both to the early caliphate and most other regimes of Muslim sovereignty in which the connection between sovereign and the feudal or crypto-feudal aristocracies was closer...⁴⁹

For the Ottoman court tradition and court culture both the Byzantine imperial traditions and the Islamic-Abbasid heritage were very influential. As in the case of other states, the process of the creation of Ottoman court culture and prescription of its ceremonial was gradual and went hand in hand with institutional development. Nevertheless, this was a never-ending process because as the political culture changed in time so did the royal ceremonies. Indeed, in some cases even if the

⁴⁶ See Cameron, “The Construction of Court Ritual,” pp. 131-136.

⁴⁷ Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 251.

⁴⁸ Sâbi’, *Rusûm dar Al-Khilâfah*, pp. 29-58.

⁴⁹ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 143.

general format of the royal ceremonies remained the same, their intended messages inevitably changed over time.

The Secondary Literature on Ottoman Royal Ceremonies

As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz puts it, royal ceremonials were instrumental tools for the political authorities since each political entity required symbolic expressions, ceremonies and stories “to mark the center as center” in order to create their majesty which in turn would bring legitimacy to the sovereign’s existence and claims in eyes of the people.⁵⁰ Aziz al-Azmeh in his seminal study on the conception and perception of political authority in medieval Muslim polities makes a similar comment on the role of royal ceremonies in the self-fashioning of sovereigns:

Specific manners and colors of dress, particular rhythms of activity, visual prerogatives, the exclusive possession of emblematic objects, titles, specific charismatic manifestations, and the combination of all these with a particular etiquette and the specific spatial and temporal disposition of the bodies, manners, gaze ... all were deployed in the enunciation of royal power or power fashioned after the model of kingship, and were integral to its constitution. They serve to dramatize the locus of power, to diffuse the enunciation of kingship among a populace that may have no access to formal and emblematic enunciations spoken and written in courtly circles...⁵¹

Regardless of time and space, royal ceremonies have been important means of power manifestation. Since they played a significant role in the self-definition and self-projection of a political ruler or regime, they offer rich material for understanding the nature and characteristics of past polities.

Although there is a rich secondary literature on the European royal ceremonial, studies on the Ottoman case still remain sparse. The European literature

⁵⁰ Clifford Geertz, “Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power,” in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 124.

⁵¹ Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 131.

is in general characterized either by the socio-anthropological interpretation⁵² of ceremonial and ritual acts, or by diachronic analysis of these kind of symbolical forms⁵³ to understand the socio-political dynamics of past societies and the self expression of political regime/s. In many studies two approaches are also combined.⁵⁴ These approaches however, have rarely been used in the field of Ottoman studies.

In general, the studies on Ottoman royal ceremonies are more descriptive format than analytical and often they provide only a general outline of the Ottoman royal ceremonies without putting them in a socio-political setting. These studies mainly rest on the information that is derived from the archival sources and contemporary Ottoman chronicles. Examples from different periods are put together to create one single narrative of a particular ceremony. While recently some influential works that are going to be mentioned below have challenged this approach, the conventional approach still dominates the studies in the field.

⁵²For some examples see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); Idem, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Clifford Geertz, ed., *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). For a sociological interpretation of the French court and court culture in ancient regime see the seminal work of Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Dublin: The University College Dublin Press, [first published in 1969] 2006). Also see Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, c1988)

⁵³ See David Cannodine, and Simon Price, eds. *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Sacred in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Steward Gordon, ed. *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); John Adamson, ed. *The Princely Courts of Europe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999); M. Janos Bak, ed. *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

⁵⁴ For some influential studies that display a combination of two approaches see Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985, c1984); Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Alice Jarrand, *Architecture as Performance in Seventeenth Century Europe: Court Ritual in Modena, Rome, and Paris* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

The first two studies that dealt with the Ottoman court structure and ceremonial were İbrahim Hakkı Uzunçarşılı's *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*⁵⁵ and *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı*⁵⁶ first published in 1945 and 1948 respectively. These studies are still standard reference sources based on the subject. Uzunçarşılı provides a general frame and a wealth of information for the court ceremonies, courtly institutions, and the duties of palace personnel through an extensive reading of archival material and contemporary histories. However Uzunçarşılı's works do not offer a diachronic analysis of the Ottoman royal ceremonies and court culture. Indeed, the continuities and ruptures in the ceremonial practices are not even given particular attention, leading to an ahistorical understanding of the Ottoman ceremonial culture.

Metin And is another scholar who has considerably influenced the studies on the Ottoman ceremonies, festivals and also popular culture. Probably the most relevant study to be mentioned is his *Kırk Gün Kırk Gece (40 days, 40 nights)* which was first published in 1959 and then expanded and republished two more times in 1982 and 2000.⁵⁷ In this series the author pursues a totalistic approach when evaluating the royal ceremonies. Probably one of the most significant contributions of his study is the extensive use of pictorial evidence together with the textual. On the negative side, in And's study, examples from different time intervals are also put together to provide a complete narration of the Ottoman ceremonies and festivals.

⁵⁵ Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*.

⁵⁶ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilatı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988).

⁵⁷ Metin And, *Kırk Gün, Kırk Gece: Eski Donanma ve Şenliklerde Seyirlik Oyunları* (İstanbul : Taç Yayınları, 1959) ; Idem., *Osmanlı Şenliklerinde Türk Sanatları* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1982); Idem., *40 Gün 40 Gece: Osmanlı Düğünleri, Şenlikleri, Geçit Alayları* (İstanbul: Toprak Bank, 2000).

moreover little attention is paid to the specific contexts of the ceremonies. In addition to this, sometimes the book does not give reference to the primary sources from which the information is taken from. Because of these features of the book, it is difficult to grasp the peculiar differences between the different ceremonies.

The ground breaking work on Ottoman court ceremonial has been Gülru Necipoğlu's *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*,⁵⁸ Published in 1991, this study was the first systematic work on the construction history of Topkapı Palace and its ceremonial codification. It analyzes the meaning of ceremonial and the interplay between ritual and architecture by drawing on a rich array of archival materials as well as contemporary Ottoman and European narratives. While the book's focus is on the architecture, it also offers novel insights into the symbolic language of ceremonial and relation with the projection of imperial power.

Zeynep Tarım Ertuğ's *Onaltıncı Yüzyılda Cülus ve Cenaze Törenleri*, which was published in 1999, was the first study to focus specifically on the accession and funeral ceremonies of Ottoman sultans during the sixteenth century. By using the contemporary histories, Ertuğ reconstructed each sultan's accession and funeral ceremonies. While *bî'at* ceremony is mentioned in the book as a part of the accession ceremonies, its connection with contemporary politics is not mentioned at all. The book is a useful source to learn about the events that happened before and during the accession and funeral ceremonies of the sixteenth century sultans, but at the same time it has some shortcomings. First of all, each accession and funeral ceremony is

⁵⁸ Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

treated as a separate event. This means that the continuities or ruptures between different ceremonies are not considered within the context of state formation, and bureaucratic and institutional development. In addition to that, although the author uses an extensive number of primary sources, she uses them to create a single and unified narrative on the ceremonies and does not address the discrepancies between different texts and conscious or unconscious omissions of the authors.

Nicolas Vatin and Gilles Veinstein's book *Lé Sérail ébranlé: Essai sur les morts, dépositions et avènements des sultans ottomans XIV-XIX siècle* includes a long section on the Ottoman accession ceremonies and rituals.⁵⁹ By dwelling on an extensive number of chronicles, protocol books and also archival materials, the authors point out different features of the Ottoman accession ceremonies in the long durée, roughly from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. The structural changes of the accession ceremonies are mentioned in each sub-category. The general format of the ceremony, its structural changes in time, the participants of the ceremony, and gestures that were displayed are pointed out in the book. Besides, the politically-embedded nature of *bî'at* is emphasized by the authors. This particular feature of the book evidently proposes a novel perspective to the static descriptions of *bî'at*. Yet, since the formation and/or alteration of the Ottoman court ceremonies are not the main preoccupation of the book, these changes are not analyzed in detail. The book as a whole is thematically organized rather than chronological. For this reason one cannot easily grasp the continuities and changes in the long run.

⁵⁹ I am much indebted to my friend and colleague Ayşe Esra Şirin for kindly translating for me the relevant sections of the book. See Nicolas Vatin, et Gilles Veinstein, *Lé Sérail ébranlé: Essai sur les morts, dépositions et avènements des sultans ottomans XIV-XIX siècle* (France: Fayard, 2003), pp. 259- 345.

Hakan Karateke's book *Padişahım Çok Yaşa: Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüzyılında Merasimler* in 2004,⁶⁰ deals specifically with the Ottoman ceremonial changes in the nineteenth century, but also offers a broader theoretical framework for studying Ottoman royal ceremonies at large. The primary objective of the book is to delineate the symbolical meaning and function of royal ceremonial as an instrument in the self-definition and projection of the Ottoman regime. At the same time it offers an analysis parallel with the developments in the nineteenth century Ottoman political culture.

Rhoads Murphey in his *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household 1400-1800* that was published in 2008, evaluates the sultanate as an institution around which a whole body of royal culture and rituals had been developed.⁶¹ Murphey examines the court rituals, public and courtly ceremonies as tools of image making directed at elites and commoners. Under different topics such as the succession to the throne, creations of the imperial household, the Ottoman public and court festivals, the author focuses on examples from different time-intervals to reach a general understanding. The evaluation of the royal rituals and ceremonies within the context of the institutional development of the sultanate offers new insights into the subject. Nevertheless, the author's preoccupation on personality and individual preferences of the sultans in shaping and altering the image of the sultanate overlooks the effects of the Ottoman state's bureaucratic and institutional development in this process. The evaluation of the

⁶⁰ Hakan Karateke in his book *Padişahım Çok Yaşa!: Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüz Yılında Merasimler* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004).

⁶¹ Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400-1800* (London; New York: Continuum, 2008).

topics without regard to chronology has advantages in grasping the whole picture, but has obscured the continuities and ruptures in the royal practices.

A last study to be mentioned is a recent unpublished study by Nevin Zeynep Yelçe entitled “The Making of Sultan Süleyman: A study of Image-Making and Reputation Management.”⁶² By following the total history model of Peter Burke,⁶³ Yelçe focuses on the uses of rhetoric, ceremonial and symbolic devices in the making of the public image of Süleyman early in his reign. Though the reign of Süleyman is probably one of the most studied periods of the Ottoman history, this study proposes a fresh outlook to the subject by considering the political and practical uses of ceremonials and rituals along with rhetoric and art works in the creation of a new image for the sovereign. The study examines this process of image-making within the context of Ottoman political culture in the early sixteenth century. For this reason, it stands close to studies of this sort in the European context, something still very rare in the field of Ottoman history.

The Objectives, Method and Sources of This Study

My approach in evaluating the Ottoman court ceremonies has been largely inspired by such scholars as Gülru Necipoğlu, Hakan Karateke and also by some of the scholars that work on the European court cultures and royal ceremonials such as Peter Burke. In the broadest sense my study examines the formation and transformation of the Ottoman *bi‘at* ceremonies within the context of an evolving Ottoman political culture between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries.

⁶² Zeynep Nevin Yelçe, “The Making of Sultan Süleyman: A study of Process/es of Image-Making and Reputation Management,” (Ph.d diss. Sabancı University, 2009).

⁶³ See Burke, “Introducing Louis XIV,” in *The Fabrication of...*, pp. 1-13.

For this reason it can be firmly said that it is a “centre-centered”⁶⁴ study that focuses exclusively on the evolution and re-configuration of a royal ceremony.

While the primary objective of the thesis is to observe the dynamics of Ottoman court politics through the structural development of the *bî'at* ceremonies, at the same time the thesis revisits some of the mostly debated topics of Ottoman history as Ottoman classicism, the Ottoman decline paradigm and Ottoman absolutism. The formation of the ceremony from the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth centuries coincided with the process of state formation which is credited with bringing about the emergence of the so-called “classical” institutions, forms, practices of the Ottoman state. The transformation of the ceremony however, took place in a period which had until recently defined as the period of “decline” in the Ottoman historiography. On the question of the Ottoman decline the influential works of the scholars such as Şerif Mardin, Donald Quataert, Cemal Kafadar, Rifa'at Ali Abou-el-Haj, Baki Tezcan and many others have challenged the conventional approach of defining the period as decline.⁶⁵ It is in the light of the recent developments in the field that I am going to organize my discussions. Even though many aspects of these debates have been touched, from the perspective of the Ottoman ceremonial culture they have never been evaluated before. By pointing out

⁶⁴ Here I borrow the term from Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ See Şerif Mardin, “Freedom in an Ottoman Perspective,” in *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s*, ed. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1988); Donald Quatert, “Janissaries, Artisan and the Question of Ottoman Decline, 1730-1826,” in 17 Congreso Internacional de Ciencias Historicas, Madrid-1990, vol. I: Seccion Cronologica, eds. Eloy Benito Ruano and Manuel Espadas Burgos (Madrid: Comité International des Sciences Historiques, 1992), pp. 264-68; Cemal Kafadar, “Janissaries and the Other Riffaff,”; Rifa'at Ali Abou-el-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of the Ottoman Politics* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1984); Idem., *Formation of The Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*. Baki Tezcan in the introductory part of his newly published book makes a review of the revisionist approaches especially to the Ottoman decline paradigm and limits of Ottoman absolutism. See *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 2-13.

the peculiar dynamics of the *bî'at* ceremonies, this study aims to question and problematize the applicability of these terms to the *bî'at* ceremonies and also their relevance.

With an analysis of the symbolical meanings of some particular features of *biat* ceremonies, the thesis also intends to understand the power relations within the Ottoman court; between the monarch and his dignitaries, as well as the dignitaries themselves. The frame that *bî'at* ceremonies will provide, I believe will help me to understand what the sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan symbolically meant within the Ottoman political culture and whether this meaning changed in time or not. While doing this, the concept of Ottoman absolutism is going to be problematized in the thesis.

As in other Islamic courts, *bî'at* ceremony was held on various different occasions in the Ottoman court such as the accession of a new sovereign to the throne, investiture of the court elite, religious festivals, the public ceremonies that were held during the royal marriages and circumcision of the princes (*sur-i hümayûn*). In this study I will be focusing on two particular forms of *bî'at* that were held in the Ottoman court, namely the accession *bî'at* and *mu'âyede*. The public ceremonies that were held during the royal marriages and circumcisions are not included in this study because the audience of these occasions was different from the other two including not only the attendants but also viewers such as the city-dwellers and foreigners.

It should be stated that there is a significant numerical difference in terms the occurrence of these two ceremonies. *Mu'âyede* ceremonies were held during the two religious holidays which means they were held two times a year yet, the accessions

were temporal events and might have not been held for decades. Nevertheless due to a number of reasons still I find it relevant to focus on these two forms of *bî'at* for my research. The main reason is that under normal circumstances⁶⁶ both ceremonies were held in the same setting that is the second courtyard of the Topkapı Palace, with the participation of the same group of people. This similarity provides me with a firm basis on which to make a comparison between the two to reach a multi-faceted understanding of the Ottoman ceremonial development in general and the different functions and meanings of *bî'at* in the Ottoman court in particular.

Another reason for focusing on these forms of *bî'at* is that, as has been mentioned before according to the eighteenth and nineteenth century protocol books and compilations of rules and etiquette, the format of these two ceremonies was almost identical. The encyclopedia entries as well as various studies that make reference to the *bî'at* ceremonies which were held during the accession and *mu'âyede* repeat this information. This notion of uniformity is going to be questioned in the thesis.

The accession *bî'at* and *mu'âyede bî'at* are evaluated in different sections in the thesis. To begin with the accession *bî'at*, its basic function was ascribe legitimacy to the rule of the sovereign. Contrary to widespread assumptions, the ceremony during which the sultan was girded with the sword in Eyüp did not represent the actual occasion of the accession. Rather, it was the performance of *bî'at* through

⁶⁶ There are always exceptions to the norms. The accession *bî'at* and *mu'âyede bî'at* were sometimes held in different settings such as Edirne Palace, and/or army encampments. For instance in the late seventeenth century the accession ceremonies of Ahmed II and Mustafa II, in 1691 and 1695 respectively, was held in Edirne Palace. Similarly during the reign of Mehmed IV, while the sultan was in campaign in Hacıoğlupazarı, at the sight of the army encampment, a *mu'âyede* ceremony was held in front of the imperial tent. For this *mu'âyede* ceremony see Sarı Mehmed Paşa (Defterdâr), *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan, (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), p. 43; for the accession ceremony of Ahmed II and Mustafa II see Chapter Three.

which the princes were truly acceding to the throne.⁶⁷ The girding ceremony took place after the performance of the *bî'at* in the imperial palace with the participation of a limited number of elites and palace personnel. For this reason the girding ceremony was a public manifestation of the start of a new reign. Recent studies on the topic have shown that that until the late sixteenth century the contemporary Ottoman sources do not make any reference to a customary visit to Eyüp upon the accessions of the sultans.⁶⁸ When they do make references to royal visits to Eyüp upon accessions, they still do not mention the girding of the sultan with the sword. Rather, as Kafadar and Karateke argue, highly possibly these visits were functioning in the same manner as the visits of the Ottoman sultans to Eyüp that was made before the campaigns for anticipation of a spiritual help.⁶⁹ Beginning with the seventeenth century however, the girding ceremony became a part of the accession ceremonies.

In this respect it can be proposed that rather than the girding ceremony, it was the accession *bî'at* which can be considered to be the equivalent of the coronation ceremonies in the European context. Yet, the religious aspects of the ceremony such as the anointing or being crowned by the religious authorities did not exist in the *bî'at* ceremonies.⁷⁰ In many medieval and early modern societies the death of the political leader evoked tension and strife among the populace and governing class as well. Sergio Bertelli in his book *King's Body* gives various examples from different geographies and time periods on the dangers of urban violence and disorder that

⁶⁷ Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, pp. 48-52.

⁶⁸ See Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, pp. 46-75; Cemal Kafadar, "Eyüp'te Kılıc Kuşanma Törenleri." In *Eyüp: Dün-Bugün*, ed. Tülay Artan, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1994), pp. 50-61.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Bak, ed. *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern...*; also see Kantorowics, *The King's Two Bodies*, pp. 317-329.

followed the death of a monarch.⁷¹ Accession ceremonies in this respect served the ritual function of easing the tension and spelling an end to an actual or potential interregnum.

In the Ottoman case, ambiguity arose when the reigning sultan died or was deposed. The unwritten or written agreements, decrees and diplomas that had formerly been issued by a previous ruler were assumed to be invalid.⁷² As Cemal Kafadar puts it, “because all such contracts had to be renewed with each ruler, the moment was opportune for the Janissaries to go wild upon the death of a ruler before the accession of a new one.”⁷³ Bertelli discusses that the notion of renewal was also present in the political cultures of the European countries in the medieval and early modern era. The royal entrance of kings starting with the entrance into the capital right after the coronation, as Bertelli argues, was accompanied by the renewals of the privileges that had been granted by the king’s predecessors.⁷⁴

In the Ottoman conception however, the implications of renewal were evidently far greater than just renewing the privileges of certain places and/or groups. The accession *bi’at* ceremony that concretized this renewal was by the same token a tool to ascribe legitimacy to the rule of the new sovereign. Without its performance with the participation of the ruling elite and dignitaries of the state, a prince could not be accepted as the new sultan. It can also be proposed that it was probably the only

⁷¹ Bertelli also gives examples on the deaths of the Popes which caused strife and tension as well. See Bertelli, *The King’s Body*, pp. 39-51.

⁷² For the renewal concept in the Ottomans see Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, pp. 99-102; Metin Kunt, “Sultan, Dynasty and State in the Ottoman Empire: Political Institutions in the Sixteenth century,” *The Medieval History Journal / Special Issue on Tributary Empires*, vol. 6, no. 2, (2003), p. 221; Cemal Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Riffraff in Ottoman İstanbul Rebels without a Cause?” in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World*, ed. Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), pp. 130-134.

⁷³ Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Riffraff,” p. 132.

⁷⁴ Bertelli, *The King’s Body*.

prerequisite for the legitimacy of Ottoman sultans' sovereignty. All these indicate the significant role this ceremony in the Ottoman political culture. Needless to say it provides a rich material to understand the dynamics of the Ottoman politics.

The *mu'âyede bi'at* on the other hand, was held under a different occasion and had a different function. In Muslim societies the notion of public festivals as in the case of European carnivals did not exist.⁷⁵ The two religious holidays, *îd al-adha* (sacrificial festival) and *îd al-fitr* (festival of breaking the fast) and the imperial celebrations of royal marriages and circumcision of the princes (*sûr-ı hümayun*) were some of the few significant events for mass celebration in early modern Muslim societies.⁷⁶ On these occasions, ceremonies were also held in the Ottoman court with the participation of only the highest ranking officials of the state and the imperial household members for greeting. On the occasions of two religious holidays, the court elite as well as high ranking office holders of the state were coming together in the Ottoman court to exchange their greetings. This ceremony was called *mu'âyede*.

This study rests on a wide variety of published and unpublished Ottoman chronicles, written between the late fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries. For the accession *bi'at* ceremonies the main sources are the contemporary Ottoman chronicles. The Ottoman chroniclers' detailed descriptions of the accession *bi'at*

⁷⁵ Here I am making a generalization. Pre-existing local elements in some particular urban centers may well have continued even after the introduction of Islamic cultural norms to those areas. One example can be, for instance, Fustat under the Fatimid rule in the twelfth century. As Paola Sanders has discussed there was a vibrant and cosmopolitan urban culture in this city that not only Sunni but also Jewish and Christian festivities as well as communal events such as the rise of Nile was celebrated in mass. See Paola Sanders, "From Court Ceremony to Urban Language: Ceremonial in Fatimid Cairo and Fustat," in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton: C.E. Bosworth, 1989), pp. 311-321. For the symbolic meaning of carnival and its relations with the body in medieval European context see Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 93-124.

⁷⁶ For a discussion on carnivalesque elements in the an imperial circumcision festival see Derin Terzioğlu, "The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), pp. 84-100.

ceremony are analyzed in their own setting to grasp the actual nature and structural features of the ceremony and its alteration during the period in concern. Visual materials such as the miniature paintings that illustrate the accession *bî'at* ceremony are also used, when available, to have a broader perspective. Nevertheless, it should be stated that when compared with the written materials on the subject, there is a scarcity of the visual representations of *bî'at*. This unfortunately prevents us from reaching a full-fledged picture of the *bî'at*.

For the *mu'âyede* ceremony this study mainly draws on the Ottoman book of law on court protocol (*teşrîfât kanunnâmeleri*), as the primary sources. The descriptions of the contemporary chronicles on *mu'âyede* ceremonies are also used when available. Unlike the accession *bî'at*, the chronicles offer less information on the *mu'âyede* ceremony. Indeed, whenever a *mu'âyede* ceremony is mentioned in the chronicles, generally it appears that it is related under different headings. This kind of organization makes it very difficult for the researcher to decipher whether a chronicle includes description of a *mu'âyede* ceremony or not.

Chapter Summary

This study consists of five chapters, including an Introduction and Conclusion.

Chapter Two dwells on the period between the accession ceremonies of Bayezid I in 1481 and Mehmed III in 1595. This chapter aims to demonstrate that the formation of the accession *bî'at* ceremony in the Ottoman court was a gradual process that went hand in hand with the structural development of the Ottoman court and its institutions. Contrary to general assumptions, the chapter proposes that the *bî'at*

ceremony attained its peculiar characteristics only at the end of the sixteenth century. Moreover, even these were subjected to some slight alterations probably as a response to the changes in the Ottoman political culture in the coming decades.

Chapter Three examines the transformation of the ceremony from the beginning of the seventeenth century to its end. Starting with the accession of Ahmed I in 1603, this chapter focuses on the accessions of the seventeenth century sultans to find out how and in what aspects some of the structural features of the *bî'at* ceremony changed. The accession ceremony of sultan Mustafa II in 1695 is taken as the ending point for the accession ceremonies because from his reign onwards we have the archival records that had been kept by the son of the first chief protocol officer (*teşrifâtçıbaşı*).⁷⁷ So, the appearance of the archival materials on the subject determines my research's ending point for the accession ceremony.⁷⁸ A related concern in this chapter is to relate these changes to a number of other changes in Ottoman political culture such as the changes in the Ottoman succession system, shifts in the power balance within the court elite, and reconfigured concept of the sultanate. By the end of the century what emerged was a more formalized ceremony.

⁷⁷ The chief protocol officer would become the main figure of the Ottoman court ceremonies from the late seventeenth century onwards. Although there was a protocol office in the Ottoman court since 1535-36, the officers were a part of the scribes of the imperial council (*dîvân hâceleri*) whose main duty was to keep the record of the expenses of the court during certain occasions such as the robes of honors (*hil'at*), and gifts to be distributed to the household members and the elite. At the same time, they were in charge of recording the customary gifts that was ought to be presented to the sultan (*pişkeş*) by the high dignitaries during certain occasions such as accessions, and imperial celebrations. Nîmetî Ahmed Efendi (d. 1709/1710), however, who held the office between 1683/84-1710 exceeded the limits of the scribal service and started to supervise the imperial ceremonies. This date can be taken as the beginning date for the career of the chief protocol officer and the emergence of the detailed archival records on the Ottoman court ceremonies. Thereafter, although all of these records do not survive today, the chief protocol officers kept this sort of records for all of the state ceremonies. For more see Filiz Çalışkan, "*Osmanlı Devletinde Teşrifatçılık ve Teşrifat Kalemi*," (Master's Thesis, Istanbul University, 1989).

⁷⁸ Hakan Karateke in his book extensively utilizes these records not only in the context of the *bî'at* ceremonies but also for the other royal ceremonies that was held in the Ottoman court in the nineteenth century. See Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*.

Chapter Four focuses on *bî'at* that was held during the *mu'âyede* ceremony. This chapter explores how and in what ways *bî'at* during *mu'âyede* was restructured from the late fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The investigation in this chapter starts with the earliest known references on the *bî'at* ceremonies during *mu'âyede*, which has come to us in the form of a law book, that is the *kanunnâme* of Sultan Mehmed II. Through a discussion of the *kanunnâme*'s relevant section on the *mu'âyede* ceremony, this chapter aims to find out where this description stands to better understand the process of the structural formulation for the *mu'âyede*. In the second part of the chapter on the other hand, the development of the ceremony is analyzed by focusing on a select number of descriptions that were written between the early sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

CHAPTER II
THE GRADUAL FORMULATION OF THE *Bİ'AT* CEREMONY
DURING THE ACCESSION: 1481-1595

Introduction

According to a long standing view, the period extending from the 1450s to 1550s is labeled as “the classical period” of the Ottoman Empire. However the use of the term classical in this context is problematical because throughout this period Ottoman state practice and ideology were far from being static and underwent many important changes.

Although the reign of Süleyman (r. 1520-1566) is generally accepted to be the pinnacle of “the classical age” of the empire, recent studies show that even his reign can be divided in two periods in terms of the ideological and institutional developments.⁷⁹ Accordingly it was by the very late years of his reign, by the 1550s, that syncretism in various sectors and multiplicity of norms started to wane and a novel concept of sovereignty and imperial image was created that differed noticeably from the earlier decades. But the effects of these reformulations were felt during the reign of Selim II (r. 1566-1574), and more apparently during the reign of Murad III (r. 1574-1594). For this reason, it may be misleading to refer to the late years of Süleyman’s reign as classical.

⁷⁹ Most influential studies on the subject are Gülru Necipoğlu and Cornell Fleischer’s works on the ideological transformations of the Ottoman state by late years of Süleyman that was reflected to the various sectors such as the law, court arts, history writing, and architecture. See Gülru Necipoğlu, “A Kanun for the State, a Canon for the Arts,” in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992); pp. 195–216; Idem., *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Cornell Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah: the making of the imperial image in the reign of Suleyman,” in *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Time*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1994), pp. 159-174; Idem., “Mahdi and Millennium: Messianic Dimensions in the Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology,” in *The Great Ottoman- Turkish Civilization*. vol. 1, editor in-chief Kemal Çiçek, co-editors, Ercüment Kuran et al., (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), pp. 42-54.

Rather than the mid-sixteenth century, it was the last quarter of the sixteenth century during which various aspects of the Ottoman court ceremonial emerged with their recognizable patterns. By saying recognizable patterns I mean that the court ceremonies and its protocol attained their basic, core principles so that the matters such as how and where a royal ceremony would take place, what kind of gestures would be performed during a particular ceremony became apparent. This is to say that the term recognizable does not entail the ultimate or the most elaborated version of the Ottoman court ceremonial.

As the outward expression and self projection of sovereignty, court ceremonial in general, and the *bî'at* ceremonies in particular were directly affected by these changes. This ceremony, which was performed at the start of each new reign as a tool to legitimize the authority and grant the right to rule to the sovereign, evolved together with Ottoman political culture; and by the end of the sixteenth century it acquired a peculiar meaning as well as form that would be subject to change in the coming decades. This reflects the intertwined structure of the *bî'at* ceremonies during accessions and Ottoman political culture that constitutes the main focus of this study.

This chapter aims to evaluate *bî'at* ceremonies in this long transitional period between the years 1481-1595. The main focus in this chapter will be on two inter-related questions; how did *bî'at* ceremony evolve in the Ottoman court, both structurally and functionally, during this period and what kind of developments in the political structure of the Ottoman state were responsible for these changes? In this sense this chapter is an attempt to both uncover the structural features of the *bî'at ceremonies* and to understand what these features signify within the broader context of Ottoman political culture.

The period is divided into three sub-periods according to the changes in the *bi'at* ceremony. The first period covers the accessions of Bayezid II and Selim I (r.1512-1520), which was actually an initial stage for the development of *bi'at* ceremonies. Since this time interval constitutes a very early phase for any development related to Ottoman imperial culture, here we do not observe an actual ceremony but rather its traces. During the accessions of these two sultans, a kind of greeting ceremony which carried some particular features that would be later seen in *bi'at* ceremonies was held.

The second period corresponds to the reigns of Süleyman I and Selim II. In this phase *bi'at* ceremony acquired a relatively elaborate and rule-bound nature; however its constitutional features still remained unstable since the political structure underwent serious alterations during the reigns of these sultans which inevitably affected *bi'at* ceremonies.

Finally, the third period encompasses the reigns of Murad III and Mehmed III (r.1595-1603). During this third phase just like the Ottoman state structure and court culture the *bi'at* ceremony acquired a recognizable form, and for the first time it was performed with the participation of all factions of the court. At the same time by the late sixteenth century the *bi'at* ceremony obtained a novel meaning that differed significantly from its earlier phases.

The First References to Ottoman *Bi'at* Ceremonies

The first references in the Ottoman chronicles on the *bi'at* ceremonies that were held in the Ottoman court date to the late fifteenth century, to the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512). It was in the context of his takeover of the throne that for the first time the Ottoman chronicles mention a kind of accession ceremony with some peculiar

features of *bî'at*, to be held upon the entrance of the new sultan to the capital city. Of course one cannot claim that the early Ottomans were unaware of this significant ritual act which, as has been discussed before, had a long history in the Islamic political practice. Nevertheless, due to the sparsity of the sources for the early Ottoman past we do not have evidence of its performance.⁸⁰ Still however there are some references to the accession ceremonies in earlier periods and it may be useful here to briefly consider them as well.

None of the earliest chronicles such as the accounts of Âşıkpaşa-zâde (d. 1481), Neşri (d.1520?), Oruç Beg, Kemâl Paşa-zâde (d. 1534), *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* and Hoca Sa'eddin (d.1599) make reference to the performance of *bî'at* during the accessions of the sultans before Bayezid II. Yet, some mention a kind of greeting ceremony for the newly acceding sultans upon their entrance to the capital city. One such text for instance is the *Ahval-i Sultan Mehmed*,⁸¹ an early fifteenth century text that recounts the civil war that was fought between the sons of Bayezid I (r.1389-1402) between 1403-1413 but which has come down to us in two texts date from the late fifteenth century namely, the *Oxford Anonymous*, which is mistakenly called *Rûhi Tarihi*, and the other one exists inside the chronicle of Neşri. The section

⁸⁰ For the development of the Ottoman historiography see V.L. Menagé, "The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography," in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and P.M.Holt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 168-179; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman state* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c1986), pp. 235-307; Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography in Play* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 30-49; Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *Bayezid'in Oğulları: 1402-1413 Osmanlı İç Savaşında İmparatorluk İnşası ve Temsili*, trans. Ayda Arel, (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2009), pp. 25-53; for the developments of the seventeenth century Ottoman historiography see Rhoads Murphey, "Ottoman Historical Writing in the Seventeenth Century: A Survey of the General Development of the Genre After the Reign of Sultan Ahmed I (1603-1617)," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 13 (1993-94), pp. 277-311.

⁸¹ This anonymous text comprises our main knowledge on this period from the perspective of the winner that is Mehmed I. Dimitris Kastritsis discusses in great detail in his book that the original text does not reach to us. See, Kastritsis, *Bayezid'in Oğulları*, pp. 25-46.

of *Ahval* that relates the civil war between 1402-1413, as Dimitris Kastritsis argues, was highly possibly a contemporary text of the events it relates. As he puts it, the author when compiling the *Oxford Anonymous*⁸² probably made use of this text for his narration of the civil war and inserted his own narration for the previous and coming events in his general history of the Ottoman house starting with the reign of Osman to 1484 that is first years of Bayezid II's reign. Thus, in the light of the textual analysis Kastritsis argues that, the parts of this text other than the narration of the civil war were probably added by this anonymous author and can be not regarded as authentic. We have a reference to a kind of an accession ceremony on Bayezid I's takeover of the throne in 1389 in the *Oxford Anonymous*. According to the text when Bayezid took over his father's throne, all begs, notables, and humbles approached him and kissed his robe.⁸³ Without any doubt this description is very close to the *bi'at* ceremony, however the fact that this manuscript was compiled in the late fifteenth century brings mind the possibility of the anachronism when relating Bayezid's accession as such. This substantiates the claim that this text's description of the accession ceremony of Bayezid I reflects us the actual nature of the ceremony during the late fifteenth century not in the late fourteenth.⁸⁴

⁸² As has been mentioned before, this text was long mistakenly called as *Rûhi Tarihi* because it was published by Yaşar Yücel and Halil Cengiz Erdoğan under this name. Yet, the recent research that Kastritsis discredits this information and refers the text as the *Oxford Anonymous*. Here I will be following Kastritsis' categorization. Also see Yaşar Yücel and Halil Cengiz Erdoğan, eds. "Ruhi Tarihi- Oxford Nüshası," *Belgeler* 14 (1989-1992), pp. 359-472 and the facsimile of the remaining 166 folios.

⁸³ Quoted in Vatin et Veinstein, *Le Sérail Ebranlé*, p. 271. For the original quotation see Yücel and Erdoğan, eds. "Ruhi Tarihi-Oxford Nüshası", p. 392.

⁸⁴ Vatin et Veinstein also note the incredibility of this information and argue that this information represents the author's contemporary perception of the accession ceremony rather than the late fourteenth century. See Vatin et Veinstein, *Le Sérail Ebranlé*, p. 271.

Another instance that we have a reference to an accession ceremony is for Çelebi Mehmed (r.1402-1421) upon his entrance to the Ottoman capital city Bursa. This ceremony, as Kastritsis argues, was very symbolical because after the decisive battle of Ankara, Bursa was occupied by İsa Çelebi, who was the brother of Çelebi Mehmed. Mehmed's defeat of his brother İsa in Ulubat battle, that took place in sometime between March 9, 1403 and May 18, 1403, meant that the control of the Ottoman seat of governance passed to Mehmed.⁸⁵ According to Kastritsis, to hold an accession ceremony in Bursa was a conscious move of Mehmed and possibly of his advisors because this was a way of public manifestating his political intentions. Besides, Mehmed might have wanted to show that the rule of his brother was over through this symbolical act that would bring him political legitimacy.⁸⁶

According to the two extant versions of the *Ahval* that is the *Oxford Anonymous* and a narrative inserted into the chronicle of Neşri. When Mehmed entered the city, the residents of Bursa welcomed him with respect and in an auspicious moment they brought him to the throne of his father (*bir mübârek vaktde sultânı atası tahtına geçirdiler*). And, in the coming days the accession was publicly celebrated.⁸⁷ Though all these indicate that a greeting ceremony and some public celebrations were made upon the entrance of Mehmed to Bursa, evidently one cannot claim that these carry the features of a formal *bî'at* ceremony.

⁸⁵ Kastritsis, *Bayezid'in Oğulları*, p. 89.

⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 106, 107.

⁸⁷ See Mehmed Neşri, (hereafter Neşri) *Kitâb-ı Cihânnüma*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), p. 198; Kastritsis, *Bayezid'in Oğulları*, p. 106.

The Byzantine historian Doukas in his *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, also mentions the performance of some kind of an accession ceremony for the Ottoman sultans upon their takeover of the throne. At the start of the reign of Murad II (r. 1421-1451), he notes that after the mourning for his deceased father, Murad was proclaimed as the ruler, and immediately the celebrations were held during which Murad distributed favors and benefactions to his dignitaries.⁸⁸ On the accession of Mehmed II (r. 1444-1446, 1451-1481) on the other hand, he provides a much detailed description. Accordingly, as Mehmed was approaching Edirne, the city dwellers welcomed him and the notables kissed his hand. On the next day, as Doukas relates, the new sultan sat on the throne and the dignitaries of the state such as the viziers and governors kissed his hand as it was the custom.⁸⁹ Though Doukas was not an eye-witness to this event, it is evident that his description stands very close to the descriptions of the *bi'at* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Yet he might have combined his knowledge on the Ottoman customs with his own understanding based on a general knowledge on Byzantine court ceremonial. Besides, since none of the earliest Ottoman chronicles mention this sort of an accession ceremony for Mehmed II, still I find it more suitable to start my discussion with the reign of Bayezid II.

As far as the most common expressions used in the earliest Ottoman chronicles which signify the start of a new reign is that the new sultan took over the throne (*tahta gedi*) or/ and sat on the throne (*tahta otirdi*).⁹⁰ Then, without

⁸⁸ Doukas, *Decline and fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias, (Detroit : Wayne State University Press, 1975), p. 131.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁹⁰ There is a surprising consistency in these early histories in their use of the terms “take over the throne” (*tahta gedi*) or “sit on the throne” (*tahta otirdi*) to explain the accessions of sultans. This consistency would be replaced by a multiplicity of terms in the later histories. For some examples of

mentioning any kind of a formal ceremony the sources recount the political or military matters. Despite the fact that probably some kind of a *bî'at* ceremony was held in the early periods of Ottoman history incorporating the greeting of the new sultan by the dignitaries and a public celebration, the chronicles in general do not include this sort of information. As has been mentioned before, it is Bayezid's accession in 1481 that for the first time we learn about from the chronicles a ceremony with some peculiar features of the *bî'at* ceremony that was held on the very first day of the rule. Although the form and meaning of this ceremony was very different from its later versions, still this date should be taken as the starting point of this study.

A Greeting Ceremony for the New Sovereign: The Accessions of Bayezid II and Selim I

The last years of Mehmed II's reign witnessed an increased effort to formalize and regulate the Ottoman court ceremonial. Possibly influenced by the Byzantine, Turco-Mongolian and Islamic imperial traditions what Mehmed II initiated was a long process of empire building of which state ceremonial was only one but a crucial aspect.⁹¹ In this process the construction of the New Palace was very instrumental in

the use of these terms for the accessions of the sultans that preceded Bayezid II see Aşıkpaşa-zâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, ed. Kemal Yavuz and Yekta Saraç (Istanbul: Gökkuşbuğu, 2007), pp. 335, 368, 412; Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihânnüma*, pp.141, 241, 257; Oruç Beğ, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi, (Osmanlı Tarihi 1288-1502)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), p. 31, 46, 53; *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, F. Giese Neşri, ed. Nihat Azamat (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1992), pp. 30, 60, 77, 118; Sa'deddin (Hoca), *Tâcü't-Tevârih*, ed. and trans. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1979), v.1, p. 193, v. 2, pp. 122, 124, 256.

⁹¹ Leslie Peirce draws attention to the influences of Byzantine and Islamic court traditions to the creation of an Ottoman imperial tradition. See Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 174. For an extensive survey on the codification of court tradition through the construction of the New Palace, see especially "Chapter One: Construction of the New Palace and the Codification of Its Ceremonial" in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, pp. 3-22.

the creation of the Ottoman court. As Gülru Necipoğlu has pointed out in her monumental work the architectural units of the Palace were consciously planned and were given specific ceremonial functions in accordance with a new concept of rulership.⁹² As an ultimate symbol of imperial grandeur and dignity, the palace would preserve this central position throughout the centuries.

The law code of Mehmed II, which is supposed to have been issued during the last years of his reign,⁹³ was one of the most prominent steps to regularize and codify the court culture and the hierarchies within its elite. Although some scholars have questioned the authenticity of the *kanunnâme* and ascribed it to a later date, at least some specific entries of the text seem to be contemporaneous to the developments of that time such as the construction of a Chamber of Petitions (*Arz Odası*), and the differentiation of the sultan from the court elites.⁹⁴

It is evident that during the reign of Mehmed II the hierarchies within the Ottoman court and the role of the sultan in this hierarchical state structure were prescribed for the first time. The sultan acquired a new status among the imperial

⁹² See Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*.

⁹³ There is a debate on the authenticity of Mehmed II's law code. Recent scholarship criticizes various aspects of the law code and ascribes it to a later date. Although this will be thoroughly addressed in the Chapter Four, at this point it should be stated that what is going to be followed in this study is neither to discredit the text nor totally accept it as authentic, rather to keep in mind the possibility that certain parts of the text may fairly be authentic whereas certain parts may be added at a later date. Each single entry for that reason should be evaluated and discussed separately. For the latest discussion on the authenticity of the text see Baki Tezcan, "Kanunname of Mehmed II," in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, editor in-chief Kemal Çiçek; co-editors, Ercüment Kuran et al., vol. 3 (Ankara:Yeni Türkiye, 2000), pp. 657-688; also see *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c1986), pp.199-200; Richard Repp, "Some Observations on the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), p.19; Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 20. The original text has been published by a number of authors the most recent one is by Ahmet Akgündüz *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri*, vol. 1, (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2004); also see Abdülkadir Özcan, "Fâtih'in Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi ve Nizâm-ı Alem için Kardeş Katli Meselesi," *TD* 33 (1980-81), pp. 7-56.

⁹⁴ See Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri*, vol. 1, pp. 326-328.

elite and probably the most significant change was the introduction of imperial seclusion through which the sultan was differentiated from all other groups within the state structure.⁹⁵ Although all these changes were initiated by the late fifteenth century, until a second phase of innovations and formulations that came with the reign of Süleyman I neither the imperial idiom nor its ceremonial aspects were explicit.⁹⁶ Thus one cannot assume that well-structured and elaborate ceremonies already existed in the late fifteenth century.

What the contemporary and near-contemporary chronicles⁹⁷ depict regarding the accession of Bayezid II is a kind of greeting ceremony that took place during his procession to the imperial palace. The chronicles recount that when Sultan Mehmed II died at the army camp in Gebze messengers were instantly sent to the crown prince Bayezid, who was at that time residing at Amasya.⁹⁸ Neşri who was present at the army camp related in his history that Nişancı (Karamânî) Mehmed Paşa (d.1481) sent another man to the other crown prince Cem (d.1491), who was residing in Konya, to inform him of his father's death.⁹⁹ According to Hoca Sa'adeddin, on the other hand,

⁹⁵ Through the study of contemporary primary sources Gülrü Necipoğlu argues that the imperial seclusion was made necessary by the recently created image of the sultan which put a high emphasis on the sacredness of the sultan. See Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, pp. 15-22.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-30 and 56-69.

⁹⁷ Bayezid II was the first Ottoman sultan to commission a compilation of Ottoman dynastic histories. Although there was a fairly developed *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* tradition (Chronicles of the Ottoman House) based on popular tales and anonymous compilations, his period marks the beginning of the official history writing. He commissioned two histories first in Persian by İdris-i Bidlisi (d.1520), who had been chancellor at Akkoyunlu court, *Hasht Bihist* (Eight Paradises) and then in Ottoman Turkish by Kemâl Paşa-zâde (d.1534) *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* which is a translation of Bidlisi's work with some additions. Kemâl Paşa-zâde's official history would lay the grounds for creation of the genre for the histories of the House of Osman. For more see Menagé, "The Beginnings of Ottoman Historiography," pp. 168-179; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 235-307; Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy*, pp. 30-49; for the developments of the seventeenth century Ottoman historiography see Murphey, "Ottoman Historical Writing," pp. 277-311.

⁹⁸ Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihânnüma*, p. 369; Sa'adeddin, *Tâcü't-tevârih*, vol. 3, pp. 185, 186.

⁹⁹ Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihânnüma*, p. 369

it was Ishak Paşa who sent one of his men to inform Cem however, this man was caught by Sinan Pasha who was the governor-general of Anatolia as well as the son-in-law of Bayezid, so that Cem was not able to learn of his father's death instantly.¹⁰⁰ Although these sources do not agree on this matter, they agree that prince Korkud, the son of Bayezid, was made the substitute (*vekil / halife*)¹⁰¹ for sultanate until the arrival of Bayezid.¹⁰² This information suggests that Bayezid was a more favored candidate to the throne.

Although the grand-vizier Nişancı Mehmed Paşa took measures to keep Mehmed II's death secret until the arrival of the crown prince, he was not able to do so.¹⁰³ The janissaries learned of his death, immediately entered the city and plundered houses and committed crimes until the arrival of the new sultan.¹⁰⁴ In fact this incidence seems to have held a significant place in the memory of Ottoman literati for centuries because in the seventeenth century some chroniclers were still making reference to this event. When relating the events that happened during the deposition and regicide of Sultan Osman II in 1622, in terms of the tumultuous

¹⁰⁰ Sa'deddin, *Tâcü't-Tevârih*, vol. 3, p. 186.

¹⁰¹ Sa'deddin, *Tâcü't-Tevârih*, vol. 3, p. 186; Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihânnüma*, p. 371.

¹⁰² Paralel to the narratives of Sa'deddin and Neşri, Tursun Bey relates in his history that until the arrival of Bayezid his son Korkud, who was at that time present in the capital city, was brought on the throne on deposit. See Tursun Bey, *Târih-i Ebü'l Feth*, p. 189: "Sultan Bayezid bin Mehemed Han merzbûm-ı Rum tarafından gelinceye dek Kostantiniyye'de hazır bulunan şehzâdesi Korkud Han bin Bayezid Han hazretini emâneten saltanâta arz ittiler."

¹⁰³ The instance of masterless troops rioting and looting the capital city as happened after the death of Mehmed II, would be something to be avoided in later accessions. For instance during the change of throne from Selim I to his son Süleyman I in 1520, *Anonim Tevârih-i 'Âl-i Osmân* relates that the viziers sent a letter to the prince which relates that before the imperial troops would learn (the death) and plunder (the city), (the sultan) should instantly reach to İstanbul ("kul tayifesi tuyup şehri talan itmeden ale't-tâcîl gelüp İstanbul'a yetişsin.") See *Anonim Tevârih-i 'Âl-i Osmân*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁴ Most significantly of these crimes was that the soldiers killed the Grand vizier Mehmed Paşa during this political turmoil. Their rebellious mood and actions are recounted in many chronicles such as see Neşri, *Kitâb-ı Cihânnüma*, pp. 369, 370; Sa'deddin, *Tâcü't-Tevârih*, vol. 3, p. 186; *Anonim Tevârih-i 'Âl-i Osmân*, p. 118; Oruç Beg, *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, p. 133.

atmosphere of the city, Tûghi and Solak-zâde draw an analogy between this event and what happened in 1481 right after the death of Mehmed II.¹⁰⁵

In theory the death of a sultan represented the abolishment of all contracts, appointments and privileges, written or unwritten, within the Ottoman domain.¹⁰⁶ In this sense the accession of a new sultan was a time of renewal or/and institutional recreation of the state.¹⁰⁷ Thus, until the official declaration of the new rule all previous obligations, rights as well as loyalties became inoperative, which indirectly meant that there was no state at all. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the power vacuum was partly derived from the Ottoman notion of sovereignty and partly from the lack of a universal royal succession law governing the inheritance of sultanic authority among the Ottomans.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the system was open to political contests until the most worthy prince emerged successful. This competition led to struggles

¹⁰⁵ See Solak-zâde, (Mehmed Hemdemi Çelebi), *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, ed. Vahid Çubuk. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1989), vol. 2, p. 490; Tûghi (Hüseyn bin Sefer bin Abdullâh) trans. by A. Danon, "Genç Osman Vakası'na Ait Monografiler," in *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, ed. İsmail Hami Danişmend. vol. 6. "Batı Dillerinde Osmanlı tarihleri," (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1972), p. 296.

¹⁰⁶ For the renewal concept see Bertelli, *The King's Body*, p. 36-38; for the Ottoman conception see Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, pp. 99-102; Metin Kunt, "Sultan, Dynasty and State in the Ottoman Empire: Political Institutions in the Sixteenth century," *The Medieval History journal / Special Issue on Tributary Empires*, vol. 6, No. 2, (2003), p. 221; Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff," pp. 130-132. Also see Nevin Zeynep Yelce's detailed discussion of the renewal concept and various examples of disorder that emerges right after the death of the ruler, Yelçe, "The Making of Sultan Süleyman," pp. 110-114.

¹⁰⁷ Metin Kunt argues that, although in theory a new reign meant renewal, in general the existing regulations, laws and appointments were not changed by the new sultan unless there was an urgent need for change. According to him especially in the sixteenth century this was related to the existence of a palpable sense of dynastic continuity. See Kunt, "Sultan, Dynasty and State," pp. 221, 222.

¹⁰⁸ For the Ottoman succession policies and its relation to the Ottoman political system see Halil İnalçık, "Osman İlıarda Saltanat Veraset Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telakkisiyle İlgisi," *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 14 (1959): 69-94; also see Colin Imber, "Ottoman Dynastic Myth," *Turcica* 19 (1987), pp. 7-27; İbrahim Artuk, "Osman İlıarda Verâset-i Saltanât ve Bununla İlgili Sikkeler," *TD* 32 (1979), pp. 255-280; Kunt, "Sultan, Dynasty and State," pp. 217-230.

between the princes that caused many political crises in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁰⁹

The tensions seemed to ease with the arrival of Bayezid II. Hoca Sa‘deddin and Kemâl Paşa-zâde in their histories relate that while Bayezid was proceeding along the city all the soldiers and city dwellers welcomed him with acclamation (*alkış*)¹¹⁰ and prayers (*du‘a ve sena*).¹¹¹ From the account of Tursun Bey it is also noticeable that the janissaries and imperial household members welcomed the new sultan. Differently from the other sources on the other hand, Tursun Bey relates that these people displayed their homage (*bî‘at*) and obedience (*itâ‘at*) to the sultan. The use of the word *bî‘at* here is quiet interesting because until the late sixteenth century this does not became the common expression for describing the ceremony of oath of allegiance in the Ottoman chronicles. Although the word *bî‘at* was not used here to refer a ceremony, its mention in a late fifteenth century source still deserves attention.¹¹²

Eventually the accession gifts of the soldiers were granted by the new sultan upon his entrance to the city.¹¹³ Despite the fact that there is no further detail in the chronicles on the accession ceremonies, it is noticeable from the accounts of Sa‘deddin’s and Kemâl Paşa-zâde that a kind of greeting ceremony was performed

¹⁰⁹ Kunt, “Sultan, Dynasty and State,” pp. 219, 220. For a survey of all cases of royal fratricide in the Ottoman court and its legal aspirations see Mehmed Akman, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Kardeş Katli* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997), pp. 43-108; Özcan, “Fâtih’in Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi.”

¹¹⁰ It was the indispensable feature of all accession ceremonies. For the meaning and uses of acclamation (*alkış*) in the ceremonies see Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*, p. 212; A.H. De-Groot, “Marasim (in the Ottoman Empire),” *EI2*, vol. 6, p. 530.

¹¹¹ Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân Defter 8*, ed. Ahmet Uğur (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), p. 4; Sa‘deddin, *Tâcü’t Tevârih*, vol. 3, p. 189.

¹¹² Tursun Bey, *Târih-i Ebü’l Feth*, ed. Mertol Tulum (İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1977), p. 193.

¹¹³ Sa‘deddin, *Tâcü’t Tevârih*, vol. 3, p. 190; Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân Defter 8*, p. 5.

during Bayezid's entrance to the city. Although Sa' deddin was not an eye-witness to these events, the lack of information in the contemporary and near-contemporary histories such as Neşri, Kemâl Paşa-zâde and *Anonim Tevârîh-i 'Âl-i Osmân* substantiate the claim that a formalized *bî'at* ceremony was not held during the time of the accession of Bayezid I.

In the first volume of the courtly commissioned illustrated history *Hünernâme* (Book of Skills)¹¹⁴ however, which was completed by Seyyid Lokman (d.1595),¹¹⁵ this accession ceremony is depicted as if it was performed in the second courtyard of the imperial palace in accordance with the customary rules and format of the ceremony in the coming decades (fig. 1). It appears that the commissioner/s and artists when preparing this history of the Ottoman sultans in the late sixteenth century projected their knowledge of the later practices to the earlier periods. This also served to stress the dynastic continuity and the longevity of the institutions and practices.

Like this anachronistic representation, the accession ceremonies of the earlier sultans starting with Osman I, are also depicted in the same fashion in this manuscript. The uniformity of visual representations is not limited to the *Hünernâme* only. In different illustrated histories, the *bî'at* ceremonies were often depicted in a uniform manner. One possible explanation for this uniformity can be the fact that a

¹¹⁴ *Hünernâme* project began during the reign of Süleyman I. Originally it was intended as a four volume work, yet in the end only two were able to be completed. The first volume covers the heroic deeds of nine sultans from Osman I to Selim I and various illustrations on these reigns including the visual representations of accession ceremonies. This volume was completed in 1584-85. The second volume is solely devoted to the reign of Süleyman, it was completed in 1587-88. Both volumes include marvelous illustrations. The illustrations of the first volume is published as *Hünernâme: Mînyatürleri ve Sanatçıları* (Istanbul: Doğan Kardeş Matbaacılık ve Sanayii A.Ş. Basımevi, 1969); also see Emine Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transition in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage, 1566-1617," (Ph.d. diss., Harvard University, 2005); pp. 126-27 and Appendix 3, pp. 401,402 and 397-99.

¹¹⁵ For his life and works see Çağman Filiz et al. *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2006); also see Esin Atıl, "The Art of the Book," in *Turkish Art*, ed. Esin Atıl (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980.) pp. 194-196.

visual pattern had been developed by the mid-sixteenth century by the court artists for the representation of the *bî'at* ceremonies. Although certain features of *bî'at* did not exist in the actual ceremony they depicted, the artists still implemented this uniformed visual code because it represented the supposed form of a *bî'at* ceremony in the mind of the Ottoman literati.¹¹⁶

As far as the general features of the *bî'at* ceremony is concerned, the granting of royal accession gifts to the soldiers and acclamation and prayers were the typical features of *bî'at* ceremonies. Although the evidence is not conclusive, their mention during Bayezid's accession signify that certain aspects of *bî'at* such as the acknowledgement of the new sovereign as the legitimate successor though acclamation and prayers and the granting of the accession donatives were evident already there. This mutual exchange was the most prominent aspect of the *bî'at* ceremonies that tied the state to its subjects.

Like the accession of Bayezid II, the accession of his son Selim I took place in a tense atmosphere. The events that that took place on the eve of the accession of Selim I were indicative of the tensions that were afoot in a centralizing Ottoman state. The ongoing tensions and strife was not only between the successors but also between the central and peripheral power holders.

The conflicts between the crown princes' started during the life time of their father. We learn from the Ottoman chronicles¹¹⁷ that Bayezid's ineffective policies

¹¹⁶ Two significant exceptions to this uniformity were the visual representations of the ceremony of Selim I and Selim II. Both of the two ceremonies were depicted in other places than the Imperial Palace however the other elements in composition such as the position of the soldier kissing the feet of the sultan or the gestures of the other attendants were the same. For this uniformity and continuity of depiction in a single manuscript see the illustrations of *Hünernâme*, vol. 1, published as *Hünernâme: Minyatürleri ve Sanatçıları*.

¹¹⁷ There are many chronicles on the reign of Selim I. The bulk of these were commissioned by his son Süleyman I who was eager to clear his father's name and thus legitimize his own position as the successor. Obviously the perspective that most of these *Selim-nâme* s project is to defend the claims

against the Safavids and more significantly his preference of his eldest son Ahmed (d.1514) distressed Selim who was the youngest prince who initially had little supporters in the capital city.¹¹⁸ Bayezid's attempts to keep Selim at a safe distance from the capital led to the military confrontations of the two parties at Çorlu. The result was the defeat of Selim's forces; nevertheless, he eventually got governorship at Rumeli. Erdem Çipa argues that Bayezid's act to allow Selim to govern his Rumelian provinces cannot be interpreted as a sign of shifting favors yet; he asserts that this was a move towards keeping Selim at a safe distance when the situation was very tense.¹¹⁹ Regardless of what was the reason behind this act, it is for sure that this did not end the conflict since the events reached a peak with Bayezid's invitation of Ahmed to the capital slightly after the battle.¹²⁰ This was the final step in an open conflict; the janissaries expressed their resentment by attacking houses of some statesmen that in the end Ahmed's party had to retreat to Anatolia. According to Çipa this made a shift in the policies of Ahmed who "had no option than transforming Anatolia into his power base."¹²¹ For this reason he started to plunder certain villages in Anatolia and also started to take over some cities while declaring there his own rulership. Possibly with the pressure of the janissaries, who were

and rightness of Selim I who had deposed his father. For a critical approach on the struggle between Bayezid's sons and a detailed survey on the *Selim-nâme* literature see Hakkı Erdem Çipa, "The Centrality of Periphery: The Rise to Power of Selim I, 1487-1512," (Ph.d diss., Harvard University, 2007); also see Ahmet Uğur, *The Reign of Sultan Selim I in the Light of the Selimnâme Literature* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1995); Halil Inalcık, "Selim I," *EI2*, vol. 9, pp. 127-131.

¹¹⁸ Erdem Çipa draws attention to the support Selim I obtained from Rumelian commanders (*Rumili begleri*) that appear to be decisive to empower Selim I. See Çipa, "The Centrality of Periphery," pp. 166-216.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹²⁰ Erdem Çipa evaluates all phases of the conflict in great detail through a comparative use of an extensive body of Ottoman chronicles. See Çipa, "Chapter One: The Unfolding of a Succession Struggle," pp. 14-71.

¹²¹ Çipa, "The Centrality of Periphery," p.57.

supporters of Selim I in the capital, Bayezid invited Selim I to grant him the control of the imperial army against his brother Ahmed. This decision would lead to a totally different outcome.

The chronicles are in general agreement that Prince Selim arrived at Yenibağçe before he moved to the capital city.¹²² However, there are significant variations in the sources describing the course of events that led to Selim's proclamation as the new sultan. Some sources claim that Selim arrived at his father's court to demand the sultanate,¹²³ while others suggest that abdication was Bayezid's voluntary choice as the sultan acknowledged that Selim had gained the support of the soldiers and council members¹²⁴ and that he was old and weak and thus had to leave the throne to his son.¹²⁵ Another group argues that when his advisors tried to convince the sultan, Bayezid stood out against the abdication by saying he was still healthy and thus would not hand over his throne.¹²⁶

Willingly or unwillingly, after the meeting of Prince Selim and Sultan Bayezid that took place in the imperial palace, Bayezid I abdicated from the throne and soon the change of rule was officially proclaimed. It is noticeable from the chronicles that after the meeting Selim returned to his army camp at Yenibağçe,

¹²² Celâl-zâde Mustafa (Çelebi), (hereafter Celâl-zâde) *Selim-nâme*, ed. by Ahmed Uğur and Mustafa Çuhadar (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990), p.97; Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârih Defter 8* in Uğur, *The Reign of Sultan Selim I* p.63; İdris-i Bidlisi, *Selim Şahnâme*, ed. and trans., Hicabi Kırlandıç (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), p. 97; *Anonim Tevârih-i 'Âl-i Osmân*, p. 134; Aşık Çelebi, *Meşâirü'ş-şuâra*, vol. 3, p.1388.

¹²³ Sa'deddin, *Tâcü't Tevârih*, vol. 4, p. 94; Nişancı-zâde (Mehmed bin Ahmed), *Mirât-ı Ka'inât*, fol. 116b quoted in Çipa, "The Centrality of Periphery," p. 61.

¹²⁴ Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârih, Defter 8*, quoted in Uğur, *The Reign of Sultan Selim I*, p. 63; Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârih, Defter 9*, quoted in Uğur, *The Reign of Sultan Selim I*, p. 66; İdris-i Bidlisi, *Selim Şahnâme*, p. 99.

¹²⁵ Edai (Molla Mehmed), *Selim-nâme (Shahname-i Selim Hani)*, fol. 23b, quoted in Çipa, "The Centrality of Periphery," p. 110.

¹²⁶ See *Anonim Tevârih-i 'Âl-i Osmân*, p. 134: "Niteki ben sağın, beğligum kimseye virmezim"; Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme*, p. 98: "Madem ki dâyire-i sihhatdayım kimesneye saltanat virmezem."

where he received the news. Immediately some soldiers and council members went there to congratulate his accession.¹²⁷ This suggests that some a kind of greeting ceremony was held at Yenibağçe with the participation of the soldiers and dignitaries who possibly wanted to show their loyalty to the new sultan by paying homage to him. Furthermore Celâl-zâde (d.1567) states that the janissaries pitched up their tents in the field alongside the sultan's and there with the martial music they celebrated this event in exuberance (*pür-huruş eylediler*).¹²⁸ Despite the fact that the information is not conclusive on the details of the celebration, Kemâl Paşa-zâde and İdris-i Bidlisi's mention of the summoning of the imperial council (*dîvan*) in which the accession donates were granted¹²⁹ further strengthens the possibility that some kind of an accession ceremony took place at Yenibağçe.

Âşık Çelebi (d.1572) in his *Meşâirü's-şuâra* when writing on the life and works of the poet Revâni, who had entered the service of Selim I during his princely governorship in Trebizond, also mentions the accession ceremony of Selim I. According to what Âşık Çelebi had heard from an eye witness to the events, Mü'eyyed-zâde Abdi Çelebi, when the officials of the state and the janissaries came to Yenibağçe, the sultan sat on a chair that was put in front of the imperial tent (*merhûm otağ öninde iskemleye de oturup*) and there the dignitaries of the state swore their allegiance to the new sultan. After the agreement on the sovereign's rule (*akd-i saltanât*) and the order of swearing oaths of allegiance (*emr-i bi'at*) was

¹²⁷ Kemâl Paşa-zâde , *Selim-nâme* quoted in Uğur, *The Reign of Sultan Selim I*, p.198; Sa'deddin, *Tacü't Tevârih*, vol. 4, p. 94; İdris-i Bidlisi, *Selim Şahnâme*, p. 99; Anonim *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* , p. 135; Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme*, p. 98.

¹²⁸ Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme*.

¹²⁹ Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârih, Defter 9*, quoted in Uğur, *The Reign of Sultan Selim I*, p. 67; Celâl-zâde, *Selim-nâme*, p. 100.

summoned, the call to prayer was recited and later on martial music was performed.¹³⁰

Âşık Çelebi finished writing his work in 1568; roughly fifty years later than the accession of Selim which means that his description of Selim's accession ceremony is a relatively much later compilation when compared with the other sources that have been mentioned above. When evaluated carefully Âşık Çelebi's short description of the accession ceremony of Selim I, stands closer to the actual structure of the accession ceremonies in during his own life time than 1510s. Thus, it is highly probable that Âşık Çelebi's description of a *bî'at* ceremony for the accession of Selim I is anachronistic. Yet, still some features of this description such as the dignitaries' and soldiers' collective recognition of the new sovereignty in front of the imperial tent and also the greeting ceremonies, substantiates the claim that at Yenibağçe some kind of an accession ceremony took place. Nevertheless, his use of the term *akd-i saltanat* and *emr-i bî'at* deserves special attentions since they imply that *biat* symbolizes a compact and agreement between the sultan and oath-givers.¹³¹

One other striking instance about this ceremony is that in the first volume of the *Hünernâme*, the *bî'at* ceremony of Selim I is represented as taking place in a tent that was pitched in an open field (fig. 2).¹³² Although the iconographic features of the illustration are very similar to the other compositions of the *bî'at* ceremonies in the

¹³⁰ I would like to express my gratitude for Zeynep Altok for drawing my attention to Âşık Çelebi for his mention of Selim I's accession ceremony. See Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâirü'ş-şuâra*, 3 vols., ed. Filiz Kılıç (Istanbul : Istanbul Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, 2010), vol. 3, p.1388.

¹³¹ Two sixteenth century sources that use the term *bî'at* as a ceremony were that of Âşık Çelebi's and Selâniki Mustafa Efendi's. It is important to emphasize the fact that both accounts were compiled in the late sixteenth century (former in 1568, and the latter is in 1600?). So, my estimation is that use of the term *bî'at* when relating the accession ceremony of a sultan became the norm by the late sixteenth century among the chroniclers since beforehand it was not a part of the vocabulary of the chroniclers at all. As has been mentioned the exception to this was Tursun Bey, who used the term in the late fifteenth century. But his usage does not connote a ceremony rather the display of homage and obedience to the sultan.

¹³² For the illustration see *Hünernâme: Minyatürleri ve Sanatçıları* .

manuscript, the visual representation of Selim's *bi'at* in the exact location of the events can be seen as another indicator that a ceremony, whether we call it a *bi'at* ceremony or not, was held at Yenibağçe upon Selim's takeover of the throne. Moreover, roughly seventy years after the actual event the choice of the artists or/and the supervisor of the artists to represent Selim's *bi'at* ceremony not in the Imperial Palace but in a tent shows that the ceremony that was performed there was *bi'at* in the eyes of the late sixteenth century Ottoman literati.

All these reveal that that upon the accessions of Bayezid II and Selim I the structure of *bi'at* was not yet very clearly set. The ceremonies held during the accession of these two sultans were rather more in the form of a greeting ceremony, some features of which can be seen as the predecessors of *bi'at* ceremonies. However it seems that even in this phase of the development, the accession ceremonies were very much embedded in the succession system and factional strife. Although many aspects of the *bi'at* ceremonies during the accession would be recurrently defined in the coming decades, the strong relationship between court politics and *bi'at* would always remain.

The Formalization of the *Bi'at* Ceremonies: The Accessions of Süleyman I and Selim II

When Selim I died at the army camp in Çorlu in 1520, Süleyman was the only male heir to the throne. The succession struggles that marked the accession of his father and also his grand-father would not be repeated this time. Residing at that time in Manisa, Süleyman departed from his seat of government when the message of his father's death reached him. As we learn from the chronicles, like his father and grandfather, Süleyman was welcomed by a large crowd during his entry to the

city.¹³³ Then he marched to the imperial palace, where his public *bi'at* ceremony was to be held the next day.¹³⁴ Celâl-zâde recounts that after Süleyman entered the capital city the Grand Vizier Pîrî Paşa (d.1532), who was at the army camp at Çorlu, also arrived to the city and directly went to the imperial palace to see the new sultan¹³⁵. There he informed Süleyman of the events that happened at the army camp and of his father's death. Then he left the palace, and informed the ulema, the notables (*ayân*), and soldiers that they should come to the imperial divan the next day to offer their condolences (*edâ-yı hizmet-i ta'ziye*) to the new sultan.¹³⁶ Celâl-zâde's use of the word condolence (*ta'ziye*) instead of greeting (*tehniyet*), which was the commonly used term for the accession ceremonies in the sixteenth century accounts, is very interesting. One possible explanation can be that he may have wanted to draw attention to the funeral ceremony of the deceased sultan, which would take place after the *bi'at*. Even though the reason behind this choice is not clear, for the purpose of this study what matters to us is that after mentioning this word Celâl-zâde describes the *bi'at* ceremony of Süleyman. This is the first time we learn about a formal *bi'at* ceremony that was held in the imperial palace with the participation of

¹³³ Kemâl Paşa-zâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân, Defter 10*, ed. Şefarettin Severcan. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996); p.22; Celâl-zâde Mustafa, (hereafter Celâl-zâde) *Geschichte Sultan Süleyman Kanunis von 1520 bis 1557 oder Tabakât'ül-memâlik ve derecâtü'l-mesâlik*, (hereafter *Tabakat*) facsimile with introduction and notes by Petra von Kappert (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981), fol. 25a.

¹³⁴ Although contemporary Ottoman chronicles are not in consensus whether the enthronement of Süleyman happened in the day of his arrival or in the next day, since Celâl-zâde is the only author among his contemporaries that relate the *bi'at* ceremony I follow his timing. For a discussion on defining and timing of Süleyman's enthronement see Zeynep Nevin Yelçe, "The Making of Sultan Süleyman," pp. 130, 131.

¹³⁵ Historian and bureaucrat Celâl-zâde Mustafa provides a detailed account of Süleyman's reign from the first day of his rule. As a contemporary to these events his source is one of the most reliable sources for Süleyman's reign. For a critical study on his life and works see İbrahim Kaya Şahin, "In the Service of the Ottoman Empire: Celâl-zâde Mustafa (ca.1490-1567), Bureaucrat and Historian" (Ph.d diss., University of Chicago, 2008).

¹³⁶ Celâl-zâde, *Tabakât*, fols. 25a, 25b.

the court elites. The striking instance was that the ceremony was not held on the day Süleyman entered the city but rather scheduled to take place following day. One possible explanation for the delay of the ceremony can be that fact that Süleyman was the sole inheritor of the throne. Contrary to the previous decades there was not any rivalry or competition between the princes to take over the throne, as a matter of fact this may have ceased the tension so that the taking of *bi'at* was not an immediate need. At the same time in the eyes of the soldiers and the imperial elite the entry of Süleyman to the imperial city and his reception by the crowd as their new sultan seem to have ensured the continuation of their unwritten rights and privileges.¹³⁷ This feature of *bi'at* ceremonies was also present during the age of Bayezid II and Selim I and the continuity of this norm brings the mind the possibility that the reception of the new sultan during his entry to the imperial city by the city dwellers, soldiers and the elite was a public display of the recognition of the new ruler before the actual ceremony was performed. For this reason this welcoming ceremony must have functioned in a way to acknowledge the rule of the new sultan when he entered the imperial city.

During Süleyman's accession ceremony some peculiar features of the *bi'at* came to the forth for the first time. For instance, certain officials such as the palace usher (*çavuş*),¹³⁸ and the steward of the door keepers (*kapıcılar kethüdâsı*) who had

¹³⁷ This particular feature of accession would completely change in the coming decades with the reformulation of the Ottoman concept of sovereignty and structure of the state.

¹³⁸ The ceremonial duties of the palace ushers and chief the gate keepers were codified with Mehmed II's law code. However until the reign of Süleyman their existence in the accession ceremonies was not mentioned in the narratives. This brings to mind the possibility that this part of the text may well have been compiled and/or added to the main text by the mid-sixteenth century. These officials had supervisory roles in various ceremonies such as the accession and *mu'âyede*. See Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, vol. 1, pp. 321, 326. For more information on palace ushers, and the imperial gate keepers see Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı*, pp. 392-407, 408-419; also see Murat Uluskan, "Divan-ı Hümayun Çavuşbaşılığı," (Master's Thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul, 1998).

some specific ceremonial duties in the Ottoman court were mentioned by the chronicles as partaking in the *bî'at* ceremony.¹³⁹ Secondly for the first time the ceremony took place in the main ceremonial space that is, the second courtyard of the imperial palace. Probably most significantly the narratives enable us to learn about the details of the *bî'at* ceremony such as who actually participated in the ceremony and in which order the imperial elite swore their allegiance to the sultan by kissing his hand or the ground.¹⁴⁰ Celâl-zâde recounts that nobody else other than the grand vizier and the members of the ulema was present at the ceremony¹⁴¹ and it was the grand mufti (*müftî'l mümünin*) who primarily swore his oath of allegiance to the sultan by kissing his hand.¹⁴² Later came the members of the religious hierarchy and the other office holders to express their allegiance.

According to the slightly more embellished account of Lokman on the other hand, the ceremony was held with the full participation of the janissaries, cavalry troops, members of the ulema, and the various Imperial Council members.¹⁴³ This anecdote reveals a number of things to us: Lokman, writing approximately sixty years after the actual event, probably recounted the ceremony as it would have been

¹³⁹ Celâl-zâde only mentions palace usher (*çavuş*) *Tabakât*, fol.25b.; while Lokman mentions both groups as participating in the ceremony. Seyyid Lokman, (hereafter Lokman) *Hünernâme*, vol. 2, facsimile with transcription and notes by Zekeriya Eroğlu, “Şehnâmeçi Lokman’ın Hünernâme si (2. Cilt): İnceleme, Metin, Sözlük,” (Master’s Thesis, Istanbul University, 1998), p.126.

¹⁴⁰ Especially for the sixteenth century it is not easy to decipher (from the chronicles) if there was a differentiation between the status of the elites and what they kissed (the hand or feet of the sultan, hem of the sultan’s skirt, the ground, the throne etc.). Chroniclers of this time interval generally use formulaic descriptions to relate the act of *bî'at* without making a distinction between the highest members of the court or lower rank elites. The most common uses seem to be to kiss the hand of the sultan (*el öpmek*, *dest-bûs*), the hem of his skirt (*dâmen-bûsi*) and prostrating oneself before the imperial throne (*serîr-i alâya yüz sürmek*) to explain the performance.

¹⁴¹ Since the army and the imperial council members were still at the army camp none of the highest ranking officials were able to partake in the ceremony. The grand vizier was the only member to represent the Imperial Council as he had arrived to the city at the day of Süleyman’s entry.

¹⁴² Celâl-zâde, *Tabakât*, fol. 25b.

¹⁴³ Lokman, *Hünernâme*, vol. 2, in Eroğlu, “Şehnâmeçi Lokman’ın Hünernâmesi,” pp. 125-127.

held during his own life time when particular features of *bî'at* ceremonies were firmly elaborated and *bî'at* acquired its recognizable features. What he depicts is an elaborate ceremony that took place in the second courtyard of the imperial palace and in which hundreds of people, soldiers on their horses, exotic animals such as elephants and giraffes and the bands of musicians participated.¹⁴⁴ Although it is not as elaborate as the written description, the visual representation of that ceremony in *Hünernâme* also displays the same anachronistic features. On the double page depiction one sees a large group of people composed of viziers, soliders, ulema, and palace officials participating in the ceremony (fig. 3). Contrary to this depiction in another courtly commissioned history namely the *Süleymannâme* that was produced in 1558, one observes a relatively small number of people participating in the public *bî'at* ceremony (fig. 4).¹⁴⁵ This illustration stands closer to the actual nature of the ceremony.

The late years of Süleyman's (from 1550s onwards) reign is generally accepted to be an age of canonization and growing standardization of the various branches of the state structure and also imperial culture. As Necipoğlu and Fleischer suggest, Süleyman's reign should be evaluated in two periods because of the noticeable changes in the methods of rule, and cultural as well as ideological tone of the Ottoman state.¹⁴⁶ The first part of his reign that is from 1520 to 1550s was

¹⁴⁴ Lokman, *Hünernâme*, vol. 2, in Eroğlu, "Şehnâmecî Lokman'ın Hünernâmesi," pp. 125, 126. For the visual representations of the ceremony see Lokman, *Hünernâme* vol. 2, (ca. 1587-88), TSK, H 1524, fols.25b., 26a., [reproduced in Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde...*, pp. 54, 55 and Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 58].

¹⁴⁵ For an earlier pictorial representation of Süleyman's *bî'at* ceremony see Ârifi, *Süleymannâme*, (1558), TSK, H. 1517, fols. 17b, 18a [reproduced in Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde...*, pp. 50, 51 and Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 42].

¹⁴⁶ Necipoğlu notes that this periodization can also be observed through the careers of two grand viziers, Ibrahim Pasha (1523-1536) and Rüstem Pasha (1544-53/1556-61) whose policies differed greatly from each other. As Necipoğlu has put it Ibrahim Pasha's period is characterized by eclectic

characterized by experimentation, rapid change, and energetic compilation.¹⁴⁷ By the 1550s, although to some extent the experimentation and innovation continued in various sectors, the multiplicity of competing and contradictory ideals and forms seems to have been gradually replaced by the emergence of an imperial culture.¹⁴⁸ Süleymanic re-codification of the dynastic law, institutionalization and standardization of central and provincial bureaucratic structures, the visual and literary codification of the imperial iconography¹⁴⁹ and a re-formulation of the

syncretism and enthusiastic consumption of luxury goods and Western European vocabulary in communicating Ottoman imperial claims whereas Rüstem's policies were towards reinforcement of the Islamic imperial tradition, and promotion of an orthodox image of the sultan. See Necipoğlu, "A Kanun for the State," Idem., "Süleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg-Papal Rivalry." In *Süleyman the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), pp. 214-220. Fleischer on the other hand, evaluates Süleyman's reign from a different perspective. Through the study of the sixteenth century histories Fleischer focuses on the honorific titles used for describing Süleyman. And he suggests that until 1550s Süleyman was represented as the "World Conqueror" or "Master of the Conjunction" (*sâhib-kıran*). This image was related with the apocalyptic expectations that arose at that time since this century was the tenth of the Muslim era. Parallel to what Necipoğlu claims, Fleischer notes that about the year 1550 the cultural and ideological tone of Ottoman state changed noticeably. The eclecticism, universalist dreams and innovations were replaced by a sense of consistency. As an outcome by 1550s the new representation of Süleyman would be the Emperor (who was) the Refuge of the World (*padîşâh-i âlem penâh*) rather than the world conqueror (*sâhib kıran*). See Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah."

¹⁴⁷ For a study on the creation of Süleyman's public image through uses of rhetorical, ceremonial and symbolic devices in the first ten years of his reign see Yelçe, "The Making of Sultan Süleyman."

¹⁴⁸ This canonization and reformulation in various sectors such as the arts, architecture, law, and literature is recently addressed by scholars. For the most influential works in this topic see Necipoğlu, "A Kanun for the State,"; Idem., *The Age of Sinan*; Fleischer "The Lawgiver as Messiah"; Idem., "Mahdi and Millennium"; İnalcık, "State, Sovereignty and Law During the Reign of Süleyman." In Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar, eds. *Süleyman the Second and His Time* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), pp. 69-102; Christine Woodhead, "Perspectives on Suleyman," in *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*; Cemal Kafadar, "The Myth of the Golden Age," in *Süleyman the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Cemal Kafadar (Isis Press: Istanbul, c1993).

¹⁴⁹ By 1550s the office of official court historian (*şehnâmeçi*) was created. The creation of this post is generally seen as an attempt on the part of the dynasty to control its visual and literary representations. However recent studies propose a broader understanding of *şehnâmeçi* and his works, they demonstrated that *şehnâmeçi* and his team had multiple patrons and their works indeed projected the interests of many individuals of which royal family was but one. On the *şehnâmeçi* see Christine Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of Shahnameci in The Ottoman Empire c. 1555-1605," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morhenlandes* 75 (1983): 157-182; Emine Fetvacı, "The Office of the Ottoman Court Historian." In *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond*, The Freely Papers. vol. 1, ed. Robert G. Ousterhour (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 7-21; Baki Tezcan, "The Politics of Early Modern Historiography," In *The Early*

dynastic image laid the foundations of later developments. As a matter of fact starting with the late years of Süleyman's reign the structure of the Ottoman state altered profoundly from its earlier decades. Some factors were instrumental in this noticeable change; for instance this phenomenon coincided with the clear definition of the geographical boundaries of the Ottoman state. By the mid century Ottoman state started to ideologically differentiate itself from its main rivals; Safavids on the east and Habsburgs on the west. Especially the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry was very crucial for the transformation of Ottoman state's official ideology by fostering the Sunni orthodoxy as opposed to Shiism.

The legal formulations of the grand mufti Ebussuûd (d.1574) who held the office between the years 1545-1574, were very instrumental in that process.¹⁵⁰ During the time he held the office the institutions and personnel associated with the *ilmiye* was restructured and were integrated into an administrative hierarchy. One dimension of this reconfiguration was that the political authority started to unify the legal traditions. As a result of that *kanun* and sharia started to be harmonized. A second dimension of that trend was that by the mid sixteenth century the Ottoman state was more eager to control the *ilmiye* class and lesson their autonomy.¹⁵¹ Baki

Ottomans: Remapping the Empire, ed. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press 2007), pp. 167-198.

¹⁵⁰ For more on the institutionalization of the cadres of Ottoman *ilmiye* and creation of an orthodox Sunni image for the sultan and Ottoman state see Colin Imber, "Süleyman as Caliph of the Muslims: Ebussuud's Formulation of Ottoman Dynastic Ideology," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son Temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), pp. 179-184; also see Markus Dressler, "Legitimation of Ottoman Rule under Süleyman I: Bureaucratization of Charisma," in *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurius Reinkowski. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 160-173; Madeline Zilfi, "Sultan Süleyman and the Ottoman Religious Establishment," in *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurius Reinkowski. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp.121-132; Baki Tezcan, "The Ottoman Mevali as 'Lords of the Law,'" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20:3 (2009), pp. 383-407.

¹⁵¹ Ebussuûd restricted the rights of the discretionary powers of judges and governors, at the same time he extended the control of the sultan over the *miri* lands. See Imber, "Süleyman as Caliph," p. 183.

Tezcan argues that however, this was not a one way process because the lifting barrier between the two laws increased the power and authority of the high ranking jurists.¹⁵² Especially the intervention of the high ranking Ottoman jurists into the dynastic politics was a crucial development that opened the way for the jurists to regulate the dynastic affairs such as the royal fratricide in the coming decades. No need to say this development further empowered the high ranking *mevâli*, who became extremely influential in the court politics in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁵³

Another change was made on the sultanic image since by the mid century the sultan increasingly withdrew from active government and also from the public eye. The imperial seclusion that was initiated by Mehmed II reached an unprecedented degree, which was also reflected in the architectural setting of the imperial palace as well as the court ceremonial.¹⁵⁴ The sultans, as Gülru Necipoğlu states, grew increasingly arrogant in their ceremonial practice that they almost became an idol-like figure during the state ceremonies.¹⁵⁵ They became a distant figure whose image

¹⁵² Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 41.

¹⁵³ Some legal developments such as the permissions of cash waqf, monies given over for a permanent religious or charitable purpose, brought a privileged status to the high ranking jurists so that they could convey their status and wealth to their sons. Throughout the sixteenth century the high ranking ulema gained political as well as economic power which in turn paved the way for them to emerge as an exclusive group in the seventeenth century. The members of some ulema families dominated the highest religious positions for generations so that they almost constituted an aristocratic class. See Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 36-43; Idem., "Searching for Osman : A Re-Assessment of the Deposition of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1618-22)," (Ph.d. diss., Princeton University, 2001), pp. 100-116 ; also see Zilfi, "Sultan Süleyman ...," pp. 127-132. The empowerment of the high ranking ulema and also the grand mufti is discussed in detail in the Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁴ Gülru Necipoğlu points to the intertwined nature of the ceremonial changes and the renovation of the Palace during the age of Süleyman. The best proof of this was the reconstruction of the Chamber of Petitions (*Arz Odası*), an important stage for the central administration, and the new council hall (*Divânhâne*). Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, pp. 79-84 and 96-110.

¹⁵⁵ Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p.102.

became more significant than the personality. As a reflection of this trend, by the last decades of the sixteenth century the office of the sultan was depersonalized.¹⁵⁶

The novel concept of the sultanate that began to emerge as a result of Süleyman's re-formulations eventually caused a re-shuffling in the central state structure. The growing bureaucratic apparatus headed by the grand vizier appeared as the single supreme organ of government.¹⁵⁷ Especially the grand vizier who chaired the Imperial Council turned into a powerful figure by this time. As Hüseyin Yılmaz pointed out through an extensive study of the sixteenth century political treatises on the vizierate, in the political culture of that time "the vizier was commonly considered as the pillar of rulership (*rukn al-saltana*) upon whose existence rulership depended, and as the axis of the state (*qutb al-dawla wa madarih*) around which the state evolved."¹⁵⁸ This pivotal status of the vizierate in Ottoman statecraft also signified the growing power and influence of the viziers in the sixteenth century Ottoman court politics.¹⁵⁹

The effects of these transformations were felt first in Selim II's accession. Süleyman had died during the Hungarian campaign on the night before the conquest

¹⁵⁶ See Hüseyin Yılmaz, "The Sultan and the Sultanate: Envisioning Rulership in the Age of Süleyman the Lawgiver: 1520-156," (Ph.d diss., Harvard University, 2005).

¹⁵⁷ On the procedural relationship between the sultan and the Grand vizier see Pal Fodor, "Sultan, Imperial Council, Grand Vizier: Change in the Ottoman Ruling Elite and the Formation of Grand Vizieral Telhis," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47 (1994): 67-85; Idem., "The Grand Vizieral Telhis: A Study in the Ottoman Central Administration 1566-1656," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 15 (1997), pp. 137-188.

¹⁵⁸ Yılmaz, "The Sultan and the Sultanate," p. 275.

¹⁵⁹ The viziers were not be the only group to fill the power vacuum since the gradual withdrawal of the sultans' from active government also led to the entry of new intermediary agents to the dynastic politics, particularly palace dignitaries, the imperial household, and the high ranking members of the ulema. Yet, the introduction of these new actors into the politics would not readily be visible until the last decades of the sixteenth century. This phenomenon will be deeply discussed in Chapter 3. For more see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 113-152; also see Idem., "The Family as Faction: The Dynastic Politics in the Reign of Süleyman," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son Temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Francaise, 1992), pp. 105- 116.

of the Szigetvar castle. Despite the fact that just like his father Süleyman Selim II was the only surviving male heir to the throne at the time of his father's death, his accession was not without problems. As Metin Kunt has put it, "although there was no question but that he would succeed how he was to accede to the throne was still a question."¹⁶⁰ This evident change of attitudes from the time of the accession of Süleyman to the accession of his son in 1566 indicates the changing nature of the Ottoman state structure within four decades; hence this time interval can be taken as a breaking point in the Ottoman political as well as ceremonial culture. The centralization efforts of the Ottoman state through extensive bureaucratization, and the ideological as well as physical demarcation of the sultan from the elites inevitably empowered certain groups and institutions. Just as the grand vizier who emerged in the sixteenth century as the head of the government, the religious and military establishments of the state also appeared as prominent partners to exert influence on politics.¹⁶¹

Although the death of the reigning sultans during the campaigns was not unprecedented in Ottoman history, at the death of Süleyman the danger was bigger than the other cases because the army was in the enemy territory. Therefore differently from the previous cases this time the grand-vizier invited the new sultan, who was residing at that time in Kütahya, not to the capital city rather to the army front in order to command the army and take over the throne.¹⁶² During that time

¹⁶⁰ Kunt, "Sultan, Dynasty and the State," p. 223.

¹⁶¹ See Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 113-152; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 36-45 and 93-108; Kunt, "Sultan, "Dynasty and the State," pp. 225-230; Abdurrahman Atçıl, "Route to the Top of Ottoman İlimiye Hierarchy of the Sixteenth Century," *Bulletin of School of African and Oriental Studies* 72/3 (2009), pp. 489-512.

¹⁶² Feridun (Ahmed) Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Ahbar der Sefer-i Zigetvar*, (hereafter *Nüzhetü'l Ahbar*) TSK H. 1339, 1-147 folios published by Nicolas Vatin, *Feridûn Bey, les plaisants secrets de la campagne de Szigetvár: édition, traduction et commentaire des folios 1 à 147 du Nüzhetü-l-esrâri-l-ahbâr der sefer-*

the grand-vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha (d.1579) took all the measures to keep the death of the sultan secret for forty eight days until the new sultan arrived.¹⁶³ Two eye-witnesses Feridun Ahmed Beg (d.1583) and Selâniki Mustafa Efendi (d.1600?) provides insights into the details of the events that happened during the time between the death of Süleyman and the accession of Selim II. As the private secretary and confidant of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, Feridun Beg focuses on the acts of the grand-vizier and his primary role in handling the transfer of power from one sultan to the other successfully.¹⁶⁴ He recounts the accession of Selim II as a flawless affair whereas from the account of Selâniki it appears that the transition was not as smooth as Feridun related.

After Sokullu Mehmed Pasha's man reached Kütahya in order to invite the prince to take over the throne, instead of directly moving to the army front the new sultan preferred to go to the capital and sit on his throne. However the pasha left in charge of the capital, had not been informed of the death of Süleyman and thus became suspicious of Prince Selim's request to enter the city.¹⁶⁵ This instance indicates that the arrival of Selim with his retinue to the capital city was something

i Sığevâr. Critical edition and translation (in French) (Wien: Lit, 2010), fol.55b in p. 279; for life and works of Feridun Ahmed see J.H. Mortdmann and V.L. Menage, "Feridun Beg," *EI2* vol. 2, pp. 881, 882; Selâniki Mustafa Efendi, (hereafter Selâniki), *Tarih-i Selaniki*, 2 vols. ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1989), vol. 1, p. 40; for his life and works see Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Selâniki," *EI2*, vol. 9, pp. 126, 127.

¹⁶³ Feridun Beg recounts in detail how Sokullu managed the day to day affairs of the state as if the sultan was alive. He headed the occasional councils, distributed war booties to the soldiers, and even sent orders from the sultan to the troops and council members to make sure that nobody would get suspect of the death of sultan. Feridun Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Ahbar*, fols. 52b-59b in Vatin, *Feridun Beg*, pp. 269-289; G. Veinstein, "Sokullu Mehmed Pasha," *EI2*, vol. 9, pp. 706-711.

¹⁶⁴ Emine Fetvacı points to Feridun Ahmed's possible intentions and preoccupations when writing his account on the Szigetvar campaign. See Fetvacı, *Viziers to Eunuchs*, pp. 97-106.

¹⁶⁵ Selâniki, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, vol. 1, p. 41; Feridun Beg skips this detail probably to prevent to display any confusion or disagreement between the grand-vizier and new sultan. Feridun Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Ahbâr*, fol. 71b in Vatin, *Feridun Beg*, p. 325; Kunt, "Sultan, Dynasty and State," p. 223; Idem, "A Prince Goes Forth per Chance in Return," p. 67.

unexpected since the grand-vizier had advised the prince to come to the Hungarian front. When the grand vizier's letter was submitted to the pasha he was convinced of Süleyman's death and then he let Selim II and his retinue proceed to the imperial palace where he would have a *bî'at* ceremony with the participation of a reduced number of palace crew and member of the ulema to congratulate his accession (*tehniyet-i cülûs-ı saltanât*).¹⁶⁶ Metin Kunt draws attention to the fact that although Selim listened to his advisors by going to the capital city where he had the ceremony of enthronement, he felt uneasy about his situation as he did not break his father's seal on the treasury door but borrowed from his sister to pay the accession donatives to household officials who had stayed at the palace.¹⁶⁷

Take it as a fact or not, it is for sure that after some days of delay Selim moved to the Hungarian front. Yet the letters continued to come from the grand-vizier in which he recounted the urgency of the situation. Even after Selim reached Belgrade the grand-vizier sent letters to the new sultan to make sure that no problem would occur.¹⁶⁸ Strikingly in one of these letters, the grand vizier related the details of the *bî'at* ceremony that would supposedly be held when the imperial army and the new sultan would meet just beyond Belgrade. According to the grand vizier, the new throne that came from Istanbul would be situated between the horse tail standard

¹⁶⁶ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, p. 43; Feridun Beg does not directly say that a ceremony was held at the imperial palace yet the fact that he mentions the customary visit to the tomb of Eyyüb Ensâri after a couple of days brings the mind the possibility that he consciously chose not to mention this first ceremony. Feridun Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Ahbâr*, fols. 71b-74a in Vatin, *Feridun Beg.*, pp. 325-225.

¹⁶⁷ Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth," p.68; Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 1, p. 43; Feridun Beg does not mention such an event.

¹⁶⁸ Sokullu's wish for the performance of a second *bî'at* in Belgrade is also examined by Vatin and Veinstein. See Vatin et Veinstein, *Le Sérail ébranlé*, pp. 262-265.

(*tuğlar mâbeynine*)¹⁶⁹ that would be put in front of the imperial tent. When the new sultan would accede to the throne with the felicity and prosperity, the dignitaries of the state would pay their homage to him. Then, according to the custom the dignitaries of the state and soldiers would hear from the sultan that their accession donatives were granted. Then, the palace usher in charge of acclamation (*du'acı çavuş*) would call the customary prayer after which the funerary prayer of the deceased sultan would be performed. And on the following day the imperial council would be summoned during which the high officials of the state would prostrate themselves before the sultan for a second time, this time to congratulate the new rule.¹⁷⁰

Despite the fact that Sokullu wanted to convince Selim II to make another *bî'at* ceremony with the participation of the imperial army and high dignitaries, it seems that the advisors/confidants of Selim have suspicious that the grand vizier had an ulterior motive: "There is no need for this measure, the matter of accession has been settled", they said, "(Their) desire is to hold the sovereign a captive (of their whims)."¹⁷¹ In addition, they expressed the redundancy of performing a second *bî'at* at the army front by saying "It is an old saying that no Ottoman ascends the throne without first passing under the swords of his household troops but it is for contested right of succession and does not apply to your case."¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ For the symbolical meaning, origins and uses of the horsetail standards (*tuğ*) see Zdzislaw Zygmunt, *Ottoman Art in the Service of the Empire* (New York, London: New York University Press, 1991), pp. 69-100.

¹⁷⁰ Selânikî, *Târih-i Selânikî*, vol.1, p.48.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 49: "Bu mertebeye ihtiyâc yok, emr-i cülûs ber- taraf olmuştur. Murâdları hâkimi mahkûm idinmekdür."

¹⁷² Quoted in Kunt, "Sultan, Dynasty and State," p. 223; Selânikî, *Târih-i Selânikî*, p. 49: "Evvel zemânda bir söz işidülirdi, vâki' imiş. Meselâ 'Âl-i Osmân saltanat tahtına geçmez, mâdem ki kulun kılıcı altından geçmeye dirlerdi, gerek imiş. Vâris-i mülk munhasır olıcak bu takavvülât dağdağadır."

Feridun Beg's account does not narrate this disagreement between the retinue of Selim and the grand-vizier, and recounts as if a *bi'at* ceremony was held at Belgrade. Nevertheless the revolt of the army upon their return to Istanbul, an incident that Feridun Beg also recounts, substantiates the possibility that the ceremony was not held at Belgrade.¹⁷³ If a *bi'at* ceremony had been held at Belgrade, then the army would have received their accession gifts and they would not have revolted.¹⁷⁴ When the discontent within the army was first expressed by the soldiers, the grand vizier convinced the sultan to pay at least some of the expected amount. However upon their arrival to the capital city tensions reached such a degree that the soldiers blocked the sultan's entrance to the imperial palace after which Selim had no choice but to recognize their prior claims for promotions and revenue grants.¹⁷⁵

The refusal of this second *bi'at* means that in the eyes of Selim's advisors the ceremony that was held in Istanbul was credible; thus, there was no need for a repeat. Quiet interestingly however, in the pictorial representations of Selim II's *bi'at* ceremony, his *bi'at* was depicted to take place in front of an imperial tent most likely at Belgrade. Whether this ceremony was actually held or not its pictorial representation in the army encampment implies that in the eyes of Ottoman literati the credible ceremony after which Selim's reign actually started was not the one held

¹⁷³ Feridun Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Esrar*, fols.109 b-115b, in Vatin, *Feridun Beg*, pp. 425-441.

¹⁷⁴ According to Feridun Beg the accession gifts were not distributed because the customary amount of accession gift per person was not known. Thus the imperial treasury registers would be consulted to distribute the fair amount of gold for each person. So according to Feridun Ahmed the revolt was groundless. See Feridun Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Esrar*, fol. 115b, in Vatin, *Feridun Beg*, p. 441.

¹⁷⁵ Selânikî, *Târih-i Selânikî*, vol. 1, pp. 49-56; Fetvacı, *Viziers to Eunuchs*, p. 102.

at the imperial palace but at Belgrade with the participation of the dignitaries of the state.¹⁷⁶

Actually the circumstances under which Selim acceded to the throne are were very similar to those at Süleyman's accession. Like Selim's first *bî'at* ceremony at the imperial palace, Süleyman had acceded to the throne without the participation of the imperial army and high dignitaries except the grand-vizier. However this *bî'at* was acknowledged and did not create any tension. Then what made Selim's case different? Why was there a need in the eyes of the grand-vizier to perform a second *bî'at*, and what does the refusal of a second *bî'at* indicate to us?

Behind all this lie the altered patterns and notions of Ottoman statecraft. After a transitional phase what gradually emerged was a large body of bureaucratic infrastructure that acted to limit the power of the sultan in the government. The need to perform a second *bî'at* with the participation of the highest members of the bureaucratic structure and the imperial army derived from the same reason. Although four decades before or in earlier times the full participation of the dignitaries, and the solemn expression of allegiance was not a necessity, by 1566 *bî'at* had become a mutual obligation that should be performed by both sides; oath givers and oath takers. This was probably the reason why the soldiers revolted, as the most prominent ingredient of an oath of allegiance, the distribution of the accession gifts symbolized the continuation of the rights and privileges of the imperial elite and army. Thus, from the first day of a new rule, the sultan had to distribute bestowals such as the accession donatives in order to secure the loyalty of his *kuls* who had

¹⁷⁶ For the visual representations of Selim II's *bî'at* ceremony see Feridun Beg, *Nüzhëtü'l Esrar*, TSK H.1339, fols. 110b, 111a (fig. 5); Lokman, *Şehnâme-i Selim Han*, TSK A. 3595 fol. 26b (fig. 6) [reproduced in Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde...*, pp. 66, 67 and 69].

sworn their allegiance to him.¹⁷⁷ The distribution of the accession donatives then, were material expressions of the continuation and perpetuation of the given rights that had been granted by the deceased sultan to his elites and soldiers. This implies that *bî'at* was a reciprocal agreement between the Sultan and his *kuls*, which as Cemal Kafadar puts it, bound both sides with expectations of *hizmet* (service) and *ni'met* (benefaction).¹⁷⁸ The omission of a second *bî'at* ceremony during Selim II's accession then revoked the established rights, a fact that eventually created tension within the members of the imperial army. In this sense Selim II's accession in 1566 serves as an instructive example of the dangers of the transfer of power in the Ottoman system. Not surprisingly, the *bî'at* ceremony was a crucial device to get through these dangers and threats and to re-bind various groups to the state.

The growing significance of the central government and especially the grand vizier in Ottoman politics was another key development that was projected through Selim's accession. Sokullu Mehmed Pasha who was referred to by some of the historians of the day as the virtual sultan (*padişah-ı mânevi*),¹⁷⁹ not only ensured the transfer of power from Süleyman I to Selim II but also took a leading role in its all phases. His detailed description of the *bî'at* ceremony to the new sultan signals that together with his administrative duties the grand vizier was the key agent in the Ottoman ceremonies in that time interval. One may also propose that the grand vizier functioned as the predecessor of the chief protocol officer (*teşrifâtçıbaşı*) in the Ottoman court ceremonies. The preeminent status of the grand vizier in the court

¹⁷⁷ Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁸ Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff," p. 131.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted by Emine Fetvacı. *Idem.*, *Viziers to Eunuchs*, p. 100, footnote 41. She says that the term was used by both Mustafa Âli in his *Künhü'l Ahbâr*, fol.125b, and İbrahim Peçevi's *Târih- i Peçevi*. See Peçevi, *Târih- i Peçevi*, facsimile published with a preface and index by Fahri Ç. Derin and Vahid Çubuk (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980), vol. 1, p. 25.

ceremonies, especially in the *bî'at* ceremony, would be more apparent in the coming decades during the accessions of Murad III in 1575 and also Mehmed III' in 1595.

The clash of interests between the central government and the princely household, another feature that played a role in Selim's accession, indicates the introduction of new actors to Ottoman court politics, which would be more visible in the coming decades. The refusal of the second *bî'at* and Selim's retinue's suspicion of Sokullu's motives give us hints into the emergence of factional strife within the Ottoman court that partly derived from the growth of princely households.¹⁸⁰ At least for that time interval, however the victorious party seems to have been the central government headed by the grand vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha. This was in parallel to the developments of the Ottoman political culture in the late sixteenth century.

All these show the pivotal role and function of the *bî'at* ceremony in Ottoman political culture during the 1560s when *bî'at* ceremony during accession began to acquire a normative pattern and a novel meaning. However one should not forget that although from the 1550s on the cultural and ideological tone of the imperial regime started to change noticeably, the outcomes of these changes would not be completely visible until the last decades of the sixteenth century. In the coming decades, the reformulations in the state structure, and imperial ideology would take a palpable form that was once again reflected within the structure and meaning of the *bî'at* ceremonies during the accession.

¹⁸⁰ During the course of the sixteenth century the royal households grew considerably. Especially Selim II's household was extraordinarily large as he came to the capital with roughly 8000 men to whom permanent positions were promised. The problem was how to merge these men into the royal household which already had a large body of service holders. A tool for creation of new offices for the princely retinue was redeployment of former service holders in the palace which is referred as the great exodus (*büyük çıkma*). Here I borrowed the term from Rhoads Murphey. For the details of this system and an analysis of Selim II's distribution of offices and salaries to his retinue see Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, pp. 117-125; also see Kunt, "A Prince Goes Forth," pp. 69, 70; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 193-197.

The *Bi'at* Ceremony as an Arena for Court Politics: The Accessions of Murad III and Mehmed III

Under Selim II his grand-vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha had reached the climax of his power and prestige as the administrative head of the empire. During his long tenure in office he created a network of kinship connections as well as trusty confidants to maintain his control over the various branches of the state. When Selim II died in 1574 it was once again Sokullu Mehmed Pasha who coped with the succession crises yet this time his prominence was considerably greater. Murad III was the only prince to hold a governing seat; all his brothers were minors during the time of their father's death.¹⁸¹ For that reason there was not any possibility of a civil war to be caused by the rival princes struggling to win the throne. However as it happened during the accession of Selim II, being the only male inheritor was not a guarantee to gain the throne. Thus the death of the reigning sultan was once again kept secret by a small number of people. When he received the letter informing him of his father's death, Murad III, who was residing at that time at Manisa, immediately set off for Istanbul and reached the capital city in five days. Differently from the previous examples this time it was not only the grand vizier to handle the situation until the arrival of the prince but also the queen mother (*vâlide sultan*) Nurbanu Sultan who would be a very powerful figure in Ottoman politics during his

¹⁸¹Leslie Peirce asserts that starting with the reign of Selim II, the male heirs of the dynasty pursued a conscious reproductive policy. Selim II during his princely government for twenty three years produced only one son in order to avoid a possible civil war after his death. Even though he produced other male heirs after he became sultan; because of the age differences his eldest son was the apparent heir to the throne. See Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 92-97; also see Günhan Börekçi, "İnkırazın Eşiğinde Bir Hanedan: III. Mehmed, I. Ahmed ve I. Mustafa ve On yedinci Yüzyıl Siyasi Krizi," *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 26 (2009), pp. 45-96.

son's reign.¹⁸² Thus, the preeminence of the imperial women in the state affairs disclosed itself from the first day of the new rule.

The new sultan, as the chronicles recount, was welcomed at Sarayburnu by his grand vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha. Historian Peçevi (d.1649/50) on the authority of Tiryaki Hasan Pasha, who was an eyewitness to the event as a man in the retinue of Murad III, recounts that when Murad disembarked from the boat; he bent down to kiss the grand vizier's hand but was stopped by the latter. He hints that this humiliation was the reason behind the sultan's enmity towards his grand vizier.¹⁸³ This anecdote reveals the anxiety of the sultan whose fate seems to have been in the hands of his grand vizier. Since during his reign Selim II had almost totally withdrawn from active governance, his grand vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha had filled the power vacuum. By the time of Murad III's accession Sokullu's power and influence over politics had reached an unprecedented degree. By that time, Sokullu had been holding the office of grand-vizirate for almost a decade and for sure within this long time in internal he had formed a wide network of political patronage and connections with a great number of people who were holding positions in various branches of the state structure.¹⁸⁴ This means that at the time of Murad III's accession Sokullu was not only the head of the governing body and but also probably the most influential figure within the court. For this reason his support and allegiance

¹⁸² Selânikî, *Târih-i Selânikî*, vol. 1, p. 98; for the growing authority of the queen mother in the politics see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 91-112.

¹⁸³ Peçevi, *Târih- i Peçevi*, pp. 26, 27; Selânikî in *Târih-i Selânikî* does not give this detail in his narrative of Murad III's entrance to the imperial palace.

¹⁸⁴ Baki Tezcan quotes the report of Venetian ambassador Giacomo Soranzo who was in Istanbul around 1575. The ambassador notes that Sokullu controls all appointments and sells everything publicly. Quoted in Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 94; also see pp. 95, 96. On networks of clients and protégés of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha also see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 52, 53 and 71-73.

were extremely important for the new sultan. Peçevi relates that upon his arrival to the capital city by kissing the hand of his grand vizier Murad III probably wanted to display his gratitude to Sokullu. Although the grand vizier did not let new sultan do that and kissed his hand instead, Murad still seems to have been unsure of his position because during the time that had passed from his father's death, one of his five brothers could well have been enthroned and thus he could be walking to his death. Probably because of this unease, Peçevi relates, Murad III wanted to see his mother instantly to be sure of his sovereignty.¹⁸⁵ As Baki Tezcan points out this incidence raises the question of who was the real ruler and who was the power holder.¹⁸⁶

After Murad III reached the imperial palace with his grand vizier, the two went to the Privy Chamber (*Has Oda*) where Murad III ascended to the honorable throne (*taht-ı izzete cülûs eylediler*).¹⁸⁷ This information implies that a kind of private *bî'at* ceremony (*bî'at -ı hasse*) was held with the participation of a few people upon Murad III's arrival to the palace. The function of this ceremony was probably to bring in legitimacy to the new rule before the public ceremony was held. The mention of the private *bî'at* ceremony in the imperial palace appears for the first time in the chronicles as a part of the accessions during Murad III's reing. This ceremony might have been invented to immediately cease the tension, since Murad III had entered in the palace late at night, at a time when the dignitaries of the state had not yet been informed of the accession. It is also possible that this was the first time the chroniclers mention the existence of this ceremony. Whether one accepts the former

¹⁸⁵ Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 1, p. 27.

¹⁸⁶ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 98.

¹⁸⁷ Selânikî, *Târih-i Selânikî*, p. 100.

or the latter interpretation the existence of such a private ceremony in the last quarter of the sixteenth century shows us that the importance of the *bî'at* ceremony had become greater.

Early in the morning Murad III's public *bî'at* ceremony was held with the full participation of the dignitaries of the state and in the second courtyard of the imperial palace.¹⁸⁸ As Selâniki recounts, the sultan entered to the ceremonial space while the aghas and the imperial tasters (*çaşnigîrler*) walking alongside him on his left and right side, then he saluted the viziers and sat on his throne. The first official to swear an oath of allegiance was the grand vizier Sokullu Mehmed Pasha who saluted the sultan at the salutation spot and then kissed the floor at first, and then prostrated himself humbly before the hem of the sultan (*eteğine yüz sürdü*). Then the viziers came in order of their ranks, thereafter the governor-generals (*beglerbeg*), the chief military judge of Anatolia (*kadı'asker*), the director of finances (*defterdâr*), the chief magistrate of the capital (*şehr-emîni*) and the head armourer (*cebecibaşı*) all swore their allegiance to the new sultan. The grand mufti and the members of the religious establishment came after these officials, and the last group to swear their allegiance was the highest members of imperial army.¹⁸⁹

In *bî'at* ceremonies during the accession it seems that there was a hierarchical organization between different groups that are represented in the court. The Imperial Council members or ulema for instance, represented a group and their ordinances

¹⁸⁸ For the symbolic language of the second courtyard of the imperial palace see Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, pp. 88-90.

¹⁸⁹ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 1, p. 101. Like all other visual representations of *bî'at* ceremony Murad III's *bî'at* follow an established visual pattern. Except two cases, (one is Süleyman's *bî'at* ceremony depicted in *Süleymannâme*, the other is the *bî'at* ceremony of Ahmed I depicted in İÜ, T 6624, fols. 1 b, 2a [replicated in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 40] always a soldier (*solak* or *yayabaşı*) is depicted as kneeling and kissing the feet of the sultan. For the visual representation of Murad III's *bî'at* ceremony, see Lokman, *Şehinşahnâme*, vol. 1, İÜK F. 1404, fols. 11b, 12 (fig. 7) [reproduced in Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde...*, pp. 74, 75].

were arranged among themselves. For this reason, the *bî'at* of each group started with the highest ranking member of this particular group such as the grand vizier or grand mufti, and continued until the lowest members of that group would be summoned. According to this logic to see the grand mufti expressing his allegiance after the chief military judges is not confusing because this does not mean that the rank of the grand mufti was lower than the chief military judge. Rather it was because they were a part of different institutional bodies within the court.

The order of the elites during Murad III's accession ceremony is different from Süleyman's *bî'at* ceremony that was held at the same spot in 1520. The first person to swear an oath of allegiance during the accession ceremony of Süleyman had been the chief mufti whereas he was replaced by the grand vizier in the ceremony of Murad III. Ceremonies can be taken as a replica of the structure of the states since they always include hints to understand the character of the political power and they serve as a visual diagram of the organization of the hierarchies within the state structure.¹⁹⁰ Since in the Ottoman court the distinctions in status were strictly regulated and checked, this change reflected the changes in power balances within the Ottoman court. So to say it displayed which was the most influential and powerful group at that time since its highest member was privileged to express his loyalty and extended esteem in the first order. Needless to say this privilege in turn was serving to increase the power and prestige of this particular person and his group as well. Just like the ceremony of Selim II, by 1574 the Imperial Council headed by the grand vizier was the most important administrative body within the empire.

Additionally, the rising power of the grand viziers, a development dates back to the

¹⁹⁰ For an analysis of the symbolic language of Ottoman court ceremonies and their utilization by the political authorities see and Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, pp, 209-221; also see Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 140; Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 68.

reign of Süleyman, was explicitly projected through this *bi'at* ceremony.¹⁹¹ As far as the unprecedented power of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha over the government is concerned the precedence of the grand vizier in Murad III's *bi'at* ceremony makes more sense.

At the same time however after he came to power Murad III undertook measures to curb the power of the grand vizier. Sokullu remained in office until his assassination in 1579, but his relatives and protégés were one by one dismissed and his political policies were opposed.¹⁹² Actually the anti-Sokullu faction pre-dated Murad III's accession but the latter gave a new impetus into the anti-Sokullu coalition, some members of which were the Falconer Mehmed Pasha (the governor-general of Rumelia, executed in 1589), Hoca Sa'deddin (the sultan's tutor and advisor), the chief white eunuch (*bâbü's sa'âde ağası*) and the head of the Privy Chamber (*hasodabaşı*), Gazanfer Agha (d.1603), the stewardess of the harem (*kâhya kadın*) Canfeda Hatun and Lala Mustafa Pasha (d.1580).¹⁹³

The introduction of members of the imperial household to court politics can be seen as a response of the dynasty to the great power and authority of the grand vizier in the politics. Baki Tezcan argues that by creating new offices and by strengthening some of the existing ones Murad III tried to find new ways to respond

¹⁹¹ Süleyman's reign bore a number of powerful viziers who were not only famous of their political power but also their wealth. Sokullu Mehmed Pasha was not the first example of that kind. The grand viziers such as İbrahim Pasha, Rüstem Pasha, Ali Pasha all were very influential both in political matters of the state and had acquired a good amount of wealth. For sure the preeminent status of the viziers was something related to the political culture of the sixteenth century. For fortunes of those grand viziers see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 94, 95 for a more detailed evaluation see Idem., "Searching for Osman," 146-155. For the image and perception of the vizierate in the sixteenth century Ottoman political culture see Yılmaz, "Chapter Four: The Vizierate and the Ottoman Government," in "The Sultan and the Sultanate," pp. 274-359.

¹⁹² Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 68.

¹⁹³ See Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 72-74; Fetvacı, *Viziers to Eunuchs*, pp. 71-72 and 128-131; Pal Fodor, "The Grand Vizierial Telhis," p. 76; Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, pp. 131, 132.

to the challenges. One of the new offices created was that of the chief black eunuch (*dârü's sa'âde ağası*)¹⁹⁴ in 1575 and another was the office the chief gardener (*bostancıbaşı*).¹⁹⁵ These newly introduced actors into the political scene, particularly the members of the imperial household, acted as power-brokers in order to undermine the authority of the grand vizier.¹⁹⁶ During the years following the assassination of Sokullu (between the years 1580-1595) the office changed hands among five viziers for a total of nine terms. Besides according to Selâniki, though it was impossible to realize, Murad III had even thought of running of empire without a grand vizier.¹⁹⁷ In this atmosphere the members of the imperial household (including the sultan, his tutor, female members of the royal family, and the servants of the inner household) and the high members of the religious establishment appeared as powerful players in Ottoman politics by challenging the power of the viziers. Tfor this reason Murad III's reign witnessed intense factional strife in the palace, a trend that had its roots in the previous decades and which would be the norm for the court politics in the coming decades.

The reign of Murad III is generally considered to be a period of elaboration for the bureaucratic structure of the state, and development of its institutions and the imperial ideology. Especially in the domain of visual arts and historiography saw an unprecedented effort to create an officially codified genre for the Ottoman

¹⁹⁴ Murad III charged the chief black eunuch with the oversight of the endowments of that was established in the Holy Lands and granted him the supervision of sultanic endowments as well. All this means that, apart from the political prestige, chief black eunuch now became also the controller of a significant amount of money.

¹⁹⁵ The holders of these two offices will be so powerful partners into the court politics that during the military uprisings of Janissaries, respectively in 1601 and 1603, the soldiers held them responsible of the misfortunes and troubles. And the sultan had to either dismiss or execute them in order to ease the tension. For more see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 66, and pp.100-104.

¹⁹⁶ See Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 81-104.

¹⁹⁷ See Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol.1, pp. 209-213.

dynasty.¹⁹⁸ In that matter Murad III's reign contributed greatly to the creation of a new image for the sultan that would be in accordance with his new life style. The generosities, grandeur, good rulership of the sultan were the most common themes to be heightened in the visual and written representations of the dynasty. The dynastic longevity, order and precedence were to be emphasized in courtly commissioned works during the reign of Murad III, who was famous as a bibliophile sultan. Especially the serial portraits of *Kıyâfetü'l İnsâniye fi Şemâü'l Osmâniye* [*Şemâilnâme*] (Human Physiognomy Concerning the Personal Dispositions of the Ottomans, completed in 1579), and *Zübdetü't Tevârih* (*The Quintessence of Histories*, completed in 1583) that were produced during his reign by the official court historiographers (*şehnâmecî*), as Gülrü Necipoğlu has argued, convey the message of timelessness and a unified familial group identity of the Ottoman dynasty.¹⁹⁹ These representations were very much parallel to the political standing of the sultan by the late sixteenth century because by that time rather than the autonomy of the individual sultan, his membership in Ottoman dynasty and his adherence to this sequence mattered.

By the last quarter of the century the desired image of sultan was that of a sedentary ruler who was confined to his palace and who ruled and even conquered through a number of intermediaries, in that sense he had become a distant but palace

¹⁹⁸ Necipoğlu, "Word and Image: The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, ed. Selmin Kangal, (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2000), pp. 22-61. Also see Fetvacı, "Chapter 4: Negotiating the Sultanic Image: the Patronage of Mehmed Agha" in "Viziers to Eunuchs," pp. 202-256; Christine Woodhead, "Murad III and the Historians: Representations of the Ottoman Imperial Authority in the Late Sixteenth Century Historiography," in *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan Karateke and Maurius Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 85-98.

¹⁹⁹ See Necipoğlu, "Word and Image,"

emperor.²⁰⁰ In that decade, as Gülru Necipoğlu states, “the principle of royal seclusion had been carried to an extreme with the expansion of harem quarters into which sultan voluntarily retreated.”²⁰¹ Murad’s seclusion reached a peak, as he rarely left the imperial palace even for the Friday prayers, at one point two years passed during which the sultan did not attend the Friday prayers with his subjects.²⁰² This new image of the sultan was not without its critics; yet by the end of the century, it seems that the new image of the sultan had gained acceptance at least among the palace dignitaries. Selânikî says that in 1595 the dignitaries of the state gathered together to consult about whether the sultan should participate in the campaign or not, and in the end all declared he should not.²⁰³ Similarly in an official document issued in 1595, the English ambassador attributed Ottoman military success in the recent decade’s conflict with Safavids in part to Murad III’s decision to stay home.²⁰⁴ Similar examples may easily be given for the early seventeenth century. For instance, Ahmed I (r.1603-1617) and Osman II (r.1618-1622) were strongly advised by the dignitaries of the state against their plans to leave Istanbul, when the former desired to campaign against Jelalis and the latter wanted to make a pilgrimage to the holy lands. This shows that the process that had gained a momentum by the 1550s reached its maturation by the last quarter of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

²⁰⁰ I borrow the term from Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, p. 185; for the new image of the sovereign also see pp. 172-177.

²⁰¹ Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 95.

²⁰² Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, p. 172; Bekir Küttükoğlu “Murad III,” *DİA* vol. 31, pp. 172-176.

²⁰³ Selânikî also recounts that this view was not shared by the janissaries who refused to go on campaign without sultan. See *Târih-i Selânikî*, vol. 2, pp. 524, 548, and 549.

²⁰⁴ Quoted in Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, p. 170.

This re-formulation intrinsically affected the court culture and ceremonials that were the most suitable tools through which the concept of sovereignty would be expressed.

The conditions upon the accession of Mehmed III in 1595 were very similar to his father's in 1574. Like his father he gained the throne without any opposition since he was the heir apparent to the throne.²⁰⁵ When he obtained the letter informing him of his father's death, from his governing seat at Manisa he set off for Istanbul immediately. Differently from all the previous accessions this time it was the queen mother Safiye Sultan (d.1605) and the chief white eunuch of the palace Gazanfer Agha rather than the grand-vizier who sent news to the prince and arranged for his passage to Istanbul.²⁰⁶ The transition of power from the deceased sultan to his successor was under the prerogative of the grand vizier for a long time. Especially during the last two accessions the grand vizier had played a central role in the transmission of power. By the end of the century however in accordance with the growing influence of the imperial household in political matters the mother of the sultan and the chief white eunuch took the lead in one of the most prominent matters of the Ottoman politics. As a matter of fact, this difference reveals the changing balance of power within the court.

The accession ceremonies in 1595 are depicted in detail by the historian Selânikî who was himself directly involved in one of the most prominent aspects of

²⁰⁵ Like his father's situation upon his accession, Mehmed III also had brothers when he ascended to the throne. However there was a considerable age difference between him and his brothers thus he was the only one to hold a provincial post during his father's reign. Consciously or not the eldest son policy seem to be in circulation for that decades. See Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, pp. 97-99; Börekçi, "İnkirazın Eşiğinde Bir Hanedan," pp. 66-81.

²⁰⁶ In his history Topçular Kâtibi 'Abdülkâdir (Kadri) Efendi (d.1644?) relates that when Murad III died, it was the chief white eunuch Gazanfer Agha who informed the deputy grand vizier of the situation. See 'Abdülkâdir (Kadri) Efendi, *Topçular Kâtibi 'Abdülkâdir Efendi Târîhi*, (hereafter *Târîh*) ed. Ziya Yılmaz (Türk Tarih Kurumu: İstanbul, 2003), vol. 1, p. 52. For this information also see Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Mehmed III," *İA*, vol. , pp. 535-542 and Kütükoğlu "Murad III," pp. 172-176; S. A. Skilitter, "Mehmed III," *EI2*, vol. 6, pp. 981-983.

the accession; the distribution of the donatives to the Cavalry of the Porte.²⁰⁷ At the time the bulk of the army that was headed by the grand vizier Sinan Pasha (Koca) (d.1596) was away on the Hungarian campaign, wintering in Belgrade. Contrary to the situation of Selim II upon his accession in 1566, this time the sultan was not called to the army front. This was probably related to the altered concept of rulership by the end of the sixteenth century since by that time the sultan had become a distant figure when compared to the beginning of Selim II's reign. Despite the fact that Mehmed III did not move to the army front to lead the army and to win their loyalty, he took their rights and privileges for granted that on the third day after the accession he distributed the accession donatives to the army. Of these fifty five pouches of gold were sent to the Janissary Agha and the rest was held in escrow, waiting for the return of the army from the front.²⁰⁸ This recognition in turn was crucial to ensure the allegiance of the army and prevent the possible crises related to of the change of the throne.

The *bî'at* ceremony of Mehmed III, as Selâniki recounts, started with the entrance of the new sultan to the second courtyard after which he sat on the throne which was put in front of the Gate of Felicity (*Bâb-ı Saâdet*) as usual. When the palace usher in charge of acclamation (*du'acı çavuş*) made the customary prayers the high dignitaries of the state began to take their positions to exchange their oaths with the new sultan. The first group to swear allegiance was the Imperial Council members. Since the grand vizier was not present at the ceremony, the second ranking vizier came first to swear his allegiance sultan. Then came the chief military judges (*kadıasker*), the director of finances (*defterdâr*). When this group was summoned,

²⁰⁷ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 1, p. xvi and vol. 2, p. 443.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 438.

the grand mufti, the tutor of the sultan, and other members of the religious establishment came to express their allegiances. The last that swore allegiance to the sultan were some members of the military establishment that had remained in the city.²⁰⁹

Even though the viziers were the first group to come in that *bî'at* ceremony, as it has been stated before, they were not instrumental in the events preceeding the *bî'at* ceremony. This fact implies that their precedence may point to a different condition. It seems that the real power holders during the accession of Mehmed III were the queen mother and the chief white eunuch, who would be very assertive throughout the reign of Mehmed III.²¹⁰ Since, however the main audience of the public *bî'at* ceremony was the high dignitaries of the state even if the chief eunuchs were physically present in the ceremony they were not among the ones to swear oath of allegiance to the new sultan. The imperial women on the other hand were totally out of the picture. Then, even if they were instrumental in the transference of power this was not projected through the *bî'at* ceremony.

What is clear at any rate is that there were a number of powerful groups in the Ottoman court who were striving for a say in the Ottoman politics and that the *bî'at* ceremony was an arena through which the intentions of these groups were clearly projected. After a long period of development both the structure and ideological connotations of *bî'at* took a palpable form. Almost like a reflection of the concept of

²⁰⁹ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 2, p. 434. The order that Selâniki gives is also supported by a much later source *Topçular Kâtibi Abdülkâdir Efendi Târihi*. See 'Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 1, p. 53.

²¹⁰ The queen mother became a principal advisor to whom statesman could appeal. For instance in 1599, when Mehmed III saw reluctance to contribute funds from the treasury to the Hungarian campaign the grand vizier appealed to Hoca Sa'deddin, the former tutor of the sultan who was the grand mufti at that time. Hoca Sa'deddin in turn appealed to the queen mother Safiye Sultan to solve the problem. This anecdote is recounted by historian Nâima Mustafa Efendi, quoted in Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 238, 239. For the great power of Safiye Sultan over the politics see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 72-77 and Fetvacı, *Viziers to Eunuchs*, pp. 71-72, 128-131.

sovereignty, the *bi'at* ceremony by the end of the century explicitly symbolized that the sultan's power was increasingly shared among various factions all striving for ultimate control.

Conclusion

From the late fifteenth to the late sixteenth century the main function of *bi'at* ceremony was to give an end to the political turmoil after the death of the reigning sultan by bringing legitimacy to the rule of the new sultan. While this feature of *bi'at* prevailed in the coming decades, what it symbolized and meant changed considerably in time.

Until the ceremony of Selim II in 1566, *bi'at* ceremony was more of a greeting ceremony in which multiple factions of the state as well as the city dwellers welcomed the new sultan and expressed their loyalty to him. Although there was an open competition among the princes after which the most eligible one would win the throne, still the princes needed the support of some groups to succeed as it was the case in Selim I's rise to power, but this support was more contributory than decisive. By the reign of Selim II, on the other hand the new sultan was more dependent on the acts of the dignitaries of the state such as the viziers, and the highest religious dignitaries, and the imperial army that had emerged as the real executive and governing figures in political matters. For sure this was related to the economic, political as well as ideological transformations that the Ottoman state was living through. As an outcome of the newly emerging concept of rulership from 1550s onwards the age of the charismatic sultans began to wane, and the sultanate turned into a depersonalized institution. For this reason the new sultan at the start of his

reign now needed a formal acknowledgement of his sovereignty rather than just a greeting to be a legitimate ruler.

In the *bi'at* ceremonies of Selim II, Murad III and Mehmed III we see the growing power and participation of a number of figures such as the grand vizier, the imperial household, the army, and ulema into the dynastic politics was readily visible. By the end of the sixteenth century *bi'at* ceremonies in accession also signified who were the most assertive partners to the sovereign at the time.

Neither the organizational rules of the *bi'at* ceremony nor its meaning remained static after the late sixteenth century. Some changes were introduced to the *bi'at* ceremonies in the accessions throughout the seventeenth century in accordance with transformations and reconfigurations in Ottoman court culture and political system, a subject that is evaluated in the coming chapter.

CHAPTER III

A PERIOD OF RESHUFFLING: *Bİ'AT* CEREMONY DURING THE ACCESSION: 1603-1695

Introduction

The seventeenth century is generally described as a period of crisis for the Ottoman state.²¹¹ The Ottoman state was confronted by a series of crises during that century. Yet, contrary to the conventional assessments of the period recent scholarship has convincingly shown that these were not the signs of a decline. Rather, the Ottoman state in the seventeenth century engineered new ways and methods of control, ruling and incorporation. For this reason, the century has even been considered to be a second period of state formation for the Ottoman Empire.²¹²

As far as the social, economic, military and political circumstances are concerned one may identify three critical periods of crises that caused severe problems for the Ottoman state. The first period of crisis corresponded with a period of prolonged warfare on two fronts, with the Habsburgs between the years 1593-1606 and with Safavid state between 1603-1623, when internal as well as external dynamics accelerated changes in the Ottoman administrative mechanism. Social

²¹¹ Suraiya Faroqhi "Crisis and Change: 1590-1699," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 413- 636; Karen Barkey, *The Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 24-52; Börekçi, "İnkirazın Eşiğinde Bir Hanedan," pp. 45-96; Christoph K. Neuman, "Political and Diplomatic Developments," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, *The Later Ottoman Empire 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 44-64.

²¹² For the revisionist perspectives on the seventeenth century Ottoman literature see Abou- El-Haj, *Formation of The Modern State*; Mardin, "Freedom in an Ottoman Perspective"; Quatert, "Janissaries, Artisan and the Question..."; Kafadar, "Janissaries and the Other Rifraff"; Idem, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4 (1997-8), pp. 30-71; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*.

upheavals in the countryside,²¹³ successive military revolts that broke out in the capital city²¹⁴ as well as economic burdens caused by prolonged warfare contributed to the strife and crises that the state was living through at the beginning of the century.

Another period of military, economic and political crisis occurred in the middle of the century, during the period of the Ottoman-Venetian war over Crete that lasted between the years 1654-1669.²¹⁵ The most critical years of this crisis was between 1654-1656, especially during the Venetian blockage of the Dardanelles that prevented the passage of food supplies to Istanbul from Egypt and other Mediterranean provinces. And the Venetian capture of Lemnos and Tenedos in 1656 was a major blow to the Ottoman state.

The third phase of crisis also corresponded with a period of protracted warfare between the years 1683 and 1699, when the Ottomans had to fight against a

²¹³ A part of the social tension in the countryside was the depopulation trend in Anatolia. As recent scholarship points out, this was not only caused by the devastation of Celâlis but also from the abnormal climatic changes in the seventeenth century Anatolia. For a discussion on the climatic changes of the Ottoman lands and its implication in population trends see Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, "Ecology of the Ottoman Lands," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, *The Later Ottoman Empire 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 18-43. Also see Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change," pp. 442-452; Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," pp. 27-30. For the Celâli rebellions during that period see Mustafa Akdağ, *Celali İsyanları, 1550-1603* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1963); William Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion, 1591-1611* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1983); Barkey, *The Bandits and Bureaucrats*, pp. 141-228; Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change," pp. 433-447; Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*; also see Idem., "Searching for Osman: A Re-Assessment of the Deposition of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1618-22)," (Ph.d diss., Princeton University, 2001), pp. 205-218; also see Günhan Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites at the Court of Sultan Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) and His Immediate Predecessors," (Ph.d diss., The Ohio State University, 2010), pp. 27-41.

²¹⁴ See Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change," pp. 414; Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (London: John Murrey, 2005), p. 177; Perce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 242-243; Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," pp. 48-51 and 172-197. Also see A. H. De Groot, "Murad III," *EI2*, vol. 7, p. 596.

²¹⁵ See Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change," pp. 423, 424; Metin Kunt, "Naîmâ, Köprülü and the Grand Vizierate," *Boğaziçi University Journal*, vol. 1, (1973), pp. 57, 58.

coalition of European countries including the Habsburgs, Venetians and Russians..²¹⁶

This period of warfare not only ended with major Ottoman territorial concessions, but was also detrimental to the Ottoman state economically and politically. Between those years, the defeats on the western front caused intense factional strife within the court and also among the soldiers as a result of which the commander of the army changed hands for a number of times. Indeed, the war caused the murder of the grand vizier Sarı Süleyman Pasha in 1687 and also the deposition of the reigning sultan Mehmed IV. The end of the war was probably more troublesome to the Ottoman state since the peace treaty created a huge territorial loss for the Ottoman state. Indeed, the dissatisfaction that arose after the war caused the deposition of the reigning sultan Mustafa II in 1703. Strikingly this period also witnessed a significant administrative change since in 1695 the system of life-term revenue tax farming (*iltizam*) was adopted which granted the tax contractor the right to collect taxes. This brought about a totally new economical and institutional organization in the Ottoman state.

The seventeenth century, however, was not only a period of crisis but also of institutional transformation. In different periods of the century, the Ottoman administrators had to deal with significant domestic as well as international problems. Under such circumstances the Ottoman state mechanism, institutions and to some degree even the political culture were redefined. As far as Ottoman ceremonials are concerned, it seems to me that the first and the third periods in particular brought about some changes. These changes however, were not as radical as those of the sixteenth century. Even though the general format of the *bî'at*

²¹⁶ See Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change"; Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of The Modern State*; also see Idem., *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of the Ottoman Politics*.

ceremony remained the same in the seventeenth century, a critical feature of the ceremony kept changing throughout the century, namely the first person to swear an oath of allegiance to the sultan. This slight configuration of the ceremony was not only related to the ongoing changes in the Ottoman state mechanism but probably was also related to the matter of legitimacy since both the grand mufti and *nakibü'l eşraf*²¹⁷ who were the representatives of two significant (and overlapping) groups; the ulema and the descendents of the prophet Muhammed (*eşraf*) respectively that were living in the empire. Giving the privilege of taking an oath of allegiance in the first order to the heads of the ulema or *eşraf* might also have been directed towards taking the support of these groups. This means that probably the dynasty was in search of gaining legitimacy not only from the court circles but also from a larger group of influential people outside the palace circles and the central government.

Since by the late sixteenth century the *bî'at* ceremony during accessions had already attained a peculiar form,²¹⁸ my aim in this chapter will be to find out how and by what means some of the features of the ceremony were reconfigured in the seventeenth century. And these changes will be analyzed within the context of the

²¹⁷ Translated to English as the marshal of the nobility (*nakibü'l eşraf*) whose main duty was to keep the registers of the descendent of Prophet Muhammad and be concerned with their legal privileges as well as jurisdiction. The *nakib* had to keep a register of the descendents of Muhammad, to enter the dates of their births and deaths and to identify the false claimants to enter into the ashraf. This institution is thought to be first established under the Abbasids and then was later adopted by the other Islamic states. For this institution, and its development under the Ottoman state see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti İlmiye Teşkilâtı*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), pp. 161-172; Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), vol. 2, p.647, 648; Havemann, "Nakib al- Ashraf," *EI2*, vol. 7, pp. 926, 927; Murat Sarıçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Nakibü'l Eşrafılık Müessesesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003); Rüya Kılıç, *Osmanlıda Seyyidler ve Şerifler* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2005). For the biographies of sixty two *nakibü'l eşraf* that served under the Ottoman court see Ahmed Rıfat, *Devhatü'n-nükâba*, published as *Osmanlı Toplumunda Sadat-ı Kirâm ve Nakibü'l Eşrafılar: Devhatü'n-nükâba*, ed. Hasan Yüksel and Fatih Köksal (Sivas: H. Yüksel, 1998). Also see J. Mouradgea D'ohsson, *Tableau General de l'Empire*, vol. 4, pp. 555-566.

²¹⁸ Whether the details of the accession ceremony of a sultan is related or not, starting with the early seventeenth century the common expression in almost all contemporary chronicles for expressing allegiance to the new sultan became "*bî'at etmek*" (to take an oath of allegiance). More importantly from that time onwards the chroniclers start each reign with the performance of *bî'at* ceremony. This is an indicator of the well-established and primary role of that ceremony by the seventeenth century.

transformations of Ottoman political culture and the methods of rule. For this reason to succeed this chapter is divided in three sections that corresponds roughly to the three points of crises discussed above.

Accidental Reformulations in the *Bî'at* Ceremonies: The Accessions of
Ahmed I, Mustafa I, Osman II and Murad IV

Starting with the turn of the century three successive military revolts that broke out in the capital city in 1600, 1601, and 1603 that were directed against Mehmed III's court created severe problems to the Ottoman state. Although in general terms these revolts were directed against some high ranking office holders of the court such as the chief white eunuch, chief gardener and the grand vizier, in 1603 the strife reached a point even to challenge the legitimacy of the dynasty. According to Hasanbeyzâde, when the rebellion broke out, there were rumors that the soldiers were about to depose the sultan, and enthrone the grand mufti Sun'ullah (d. 1612) instead, an anecdote that portrays the growing power and prestige of the grand mufti in the Ottoman court politics.²¹⁹ Besides this episode indicates that already by the turn of the century the concept of deposition had entered the Ottoman political vocabulary, something that would be realized first in the year 1622 and later on for many other times.

The rebellions that broke out at the beginning of the seventeenth century shed light on the changing balance of power and the newly emerging patterns of political order in the Ottoman court. From this time onwards, the central army forces would

²¹⁹ Hasanbeyzâde, *Hasan Beyzâde Tarihi: Tahlil Kaynak Tenkidi*, (hereafter *Târih*), 3 vols. ed. Şevki Nezihi Aykut (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004), vol III, p. 692. For the other cases of search for an alternative for the rule of the House of Osman see Feridun, M. Emecen, "Osmanlı Hanedanına Alternatif Arayışlar Üzerine Bazı Mülâhazalar," *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6 (2001), pp. 63-76.

appear more forcefully as prominent partners who shaped and influenced the imperial politics through their alliance with the higher echelons of the elites such as the highest ranking ulema, imperial household members and the viziers. Indeed these kinds of military rebellions against the sultan or court factions would reiterate themselves during the course of the seventeenth century. ²²⁰

When Mehmed III unexpectedly died in 1603, just a few months after he had executed his elder son Mahmud,²²¹ there were only two heirs to the throne; the eldest son Ahmed, who was thirteen years old and Mustafa, who was only four years old. Since Mustafa was too young to be a viable candidate, Ahmed was the obvious candidate to the throne. The accession of Ahmed was unusual in many respects. For the first time in the history of the Ottoman dynasty, a prince who had not been given a governorship thus did not have his own household had ascended to the throne. Besides he was the youngest sultan sitting on the Ottoman throne, who indeed at the time of his accession was not yet circumcised. Moreover, as he was still living in the imperial palace when his father died, the transfer of power was for the first time resolved within the court, this pattern would set a precedent.

An eye witness to the events Hasanbeyzâde, who was a senior secretary in the Ottoman court at that time, vividly relates us the atmosphere under which Ahmed's

²²⁰ The cycle of revolts continued with those that broke out in the years 1622, 1648, 1651, 1655, 1656, 1687. For more on the seventeenth century military rebellions see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 213-226.

²²¹ It is related in the Ottoman chronicles that Mehmed III was disturbed by Mahmud's eagerness to take up the role of a warrior prince and his growing popularity among the Janissaries. What triggered the execution was that the mother of Mahmud, Halime Sultan asked a Sufi sheikh to tell his son's fortune. According to the reply the prince would succeed to the throne in six months. When this letter was taken hold by the chief eunuch of the harem and delivered to the queen mother and the sultan, the execution came in being. Historian Peçevi relates this anecdote in his history see Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2 p. 280, 244. For Mahmud's execution see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 98, 231; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Üçüncü Mehmed'in Oğlu Şehzade Mahmud'un Ölümü," *Bellekten* 94 (1960), pp. 263-267; Börekçi, "Factions and Favorites," pp. 63-70.

accession took place.²²² According to him, early on Sunday morning, December 21, 1603, while the preparations were made for the regular imperial council meeting, the deputy grand vizier²²³ Kasım Pasha received an imperial superscript, which was written to him by the sultan himself. The vizier could not decipher the illegible handwriting; all he could read was the word *babam*, my father, which made him more suspicious because the father of the reigning sultan had passed away eight years ago. Then, the deputy vizier gave the letter to Hasanbeyzâde, who was very good at deciphering illegible handwritings. According to Hasanbeyzâde what he read was the following: “You Kasım Pasha! My father is gone by God’s will, and I have taken my seat on the throne. You had better keep the city in good order. Should sedition arise, I will behead you.”²²⁴

Kasım Pasha was so surprised by what he heard since he had not been informed that Mehmed III was ill. So he decided to send a note to the chief white eunuch asking whether the prescript he received was a trick to test his loyalty to the sultan or not. In response he was called to the audience hall, where he saw Ahmed sitting on the throne. Thereafter he was assured that Mehmed had actually died and

²²² There are also some other contemporary and near-contemporary sources that relate the event such as Mustafa Sâfi, Mehmed bin Mehmed, Peçevi, Topçular Kâtibi ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, Solak-zâde, and Na’imâ. Their story of the accession though less detailed, their depictions are very much parallel to that of Hasanbeyzâde’s. See Sâfi, *Zübdetü’l-Tevarîh*, vol. 1, pp. 11-12; Mehmed bin Mehmed, Er Rumi (Edirneli) (hereafter Mehmed bin Mehmed), *Nuhbetü’l-Tevarîh Ve’l-Ahbar*, (hereafter *Nuhbet*) transcribed by Abdurrahman Sağırlı (Ph.d diss. Istanbul University, 2000), pp. 610, 611; Peçevi, *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 290; ‘Abdülkâdir (Kadri) Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 1, p. 372, 373; Solak-zâde Mehmed Hemdemi Çelebi, (hereafter Solak-zâde), *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, ed. Vahid Çubuk (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 444, 445; Na’imâ Mustafa Efendi, (hereafter Na’imâ), *Târih-i Na’imâ: (Ravzatü’l-Hüseyn fi hulâsati ahbârî’l-hâfikayn)*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007), vol. 1, p. 263.

²²³ Since in the seventeenth century the Grand viziers were regularly assigned to lead the successive campaigns, they were absent from the court for long times. In this atmosphere their deputies in Istanbul emerged as power holders.

²²⁴ Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, p. 800: “Sen ki Kâsım Paşa’sın, babam Allâh’ın emri ile gitti ve ben tahta cülûs eyledüm. Şehri önât gözleyesin. Bir fesâd olursa sentün başını keserüm.” The English translation is quoted from Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 72, 73.

his eldest son had acceded to the throne. Then immediately he sent orders for the preparation of the public accession ceremony and sent a messenger to the grand mufti Ebü'lme'yâmin Mustafa Efendi to invite him to the court.²²⁵

As we learn from Hasanbeyzâde when major officials of the state gathered in the second courtyard, they were still thinking that they would see Mehmed III. When eventually the grand mufti arrived to the second courtyard everybody took their ceremonial positions and (in a while) they were amazed to see the thirteen year old Ahmed who came out of the gate, saluted all directions and ascended to the throne. Just after the ushers called for the customary prayers (*du'a ve sena*), the dignitaries of the state started to perform the ceremony of oath of allegiance. The first official to express his allegiance to the new sultan was the grand mufti Ebü'lme'yâmin Mustafa Efendi and after him the other officials came in order to take their oath of allegiance.²²⁶ The visual representation of that ceremony in a miniature painting also captures that moment (fig. 8). The absence of a crowd and slight disorderly appearance of the participants hints on the impromptu nature of this accession.²²⁷

This ceremony has some similarities with the previous ones and at the same it shows some slight changes. As for the continuity, during the accession of Mehmed III in 1595, as I argued in the previous chapter, as in Ahmed's accession it was again the mother of the sultan and the chief white eunuch who took the lead in the process

²²⁵ Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, p. 801-803.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 804: "İbtidâ Müfti'l enâm, bey'at edüp, sonra sâir-i nâs ale't-tertib, çün bu vaz-i garîb üzre, Dîvân-ı âli'de mevcûd olanlar bey'at eylediler. The same precedence is also repeated in a later source, Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Târihi*, vol. 2, pp. 444-445.

²²⁷ See *Terceme-i Miftâh-ı Cifru'l-Câmi*, İÜK, MS T. 6624, fols. 1b-2a [reproduced in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p. 69].

of transition of power.²²⁸ In this respect, the growing influence of the imperial household members on dynastic politics, a development that dates back to the late sixteenth century seem to be perfectly palpable in the accession of Ahmed I in 1603. Differently from the previous ones however, for the first time the succession issue was resolved within the harem circles before any high ranking dignitaries of the state such as the grand vizier, deputy grand vizier or grand mufti was informed of the situation. Probably, the court faction formed by the queen mother Safiye Sultan and the chief eunuchs of the imperial palace Mustafa Agha and Abdürrezzak Agha, immediately took control of the situation and put Ahmed on the throne without seeking the consent of any of the highest members of the court. Another differentiating feature of this ceremony was the first official who came to express his allegiance to the new sultan, who was the grand mufti in this case.²²⁹ As has been argued in the previous chapter, except the ceremony of Süleyman I, during the *bî'at* ceremony of Selim II, Murad III and Mehmed III it was the grand vizier, who came in the first order to take his oath of allegiance to the sultan. This precedence as has been argued before was the projection of the power and influence of the grand vizier on the Ottoman political culture, a development that dates back to the reign of Süleyman I.

In the ceremony of Ahmed one may certainly suppose that since the members of imperial household (royal women and chief white eunuch in this case) were not able to attend the accession ceremony, their position might well have been filled by the grand mufti. However, although the situation was very similar to the *bî'at* ceremony of Mehmed III, interestingly in 1595 it was not the grand mufti but the

²²⁸ For the growing power of the imperial household members including aghas, royal women and newly created officials such as the chief gardener on the court politics see Chapter 2.

²²⁹ This change is also mentioned by Vatin et Veinstein, *Le Sérail Ebranlé*, pp. 277-280.

grand vizier who came first in order to swear his allegiance to the sultan during the public *bi'at* ceremony. Then what might be the reason behind this change?

As has been argued in the previous chapter, starting from the early days of the reign of Murad III, the power of the grand vizier was considerably curbed, and after the assassination of Sokullu Mehmed in 1579, the post was destabilized by constant dismissals and the introduction of new actors to the court politics. In this atmosphere a number of other figures became influential in political arena, and one of these was the grand mufti. The legal opinions (*fetva*) of the grand mufti started to exert control over the dynastic matters to such an extent that the grand mufti could even oppose the will of the sultan pertaining to his own family. For instance, when Osman II demanded a legal opinion to execute his younger brother Mehmed, before leaving the capital for a military campaign in 1621, the grand mufti Es'ad Efendi²³⁰ opposed him and the sultan had to get the opinion from the chief judge of Rumelia.²³¹

It is evident that by the beginning of the seventeenth century the high ranking *mevâli* (judges and professors) started to constitute a kind of economically and socially privileged group.²³² Parallel to this, they emerged as a considerable locus of

²³⁰ Es'ad's family was well entrenched in the court circles. His grand father was Hasan Can, who later became a courtier of Selim I, was among the ones whom the sultan took with him from Tabriz to Istanbul in 1514. His father was Hoca Sa'deddin who was the tutor of sultan Murad III. During Sadeddin's long tenure in this Office through marriage alliances with important ulema families, the socio-political influence of the family grew enormously. Indeed the family members were credited with the highest positions within the religious hierarchy for instance Es'ad and his elder brother almost monopolized the office of grand mufti from 1608 to 1622. For more see Tezcan, "Searching for Osman," pp. 116-124.

²³¹ See Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 63. The information is related in contemporary historians Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol.3, p. 927 and Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, p. 375.

²³² For a detailed evaluation of the political and economic empowerment of the *mevâli* see Tezcan, "Searching for Osman," pp. 100-115; Idem, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 37- 43; Idem, "The Ottoman Mevâli as 'Lords of the Law,'" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20:3 (2009), pp. 383-407. Also see Zilfi, "Sultan Süleyman ...," in pp.121-132; for the eighteenth century see Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*.

socio-political power.²³³ As the head of the ulema, the grand mufti similarly appeared as a highly influential member in Ottoman court politics. Of course, to some extent, the highest ranking *mevâli* were also vulnerable to the intense factionalism of the Ottoman court. Even the most influential grand muftis of the seventeenth century such as Es'ad and Karaçelebi-zâde, for instance, were also subjected to dismissals from the office. Yet, still when compared with the viziers, the positions of the grand muftis appear to me to have been more stable.

One should also emphasize that the growing prestige and influence of the grand mufti in the Ottoman court can also be related to the fact that this post carried a considerable source of religious legitimacy. Furthermore, as has been mentioned before, in the person of the grand mufti a huge group was represented. This matter of representation also needs to be considered when trying to understand why the grand mufti might have acquired a primal role in the *bî'at* ceremony.

The accessions of the next three sultans exemplify the aforementioned developments in the Ottoman political culture namely, the factional strife in the court, changing concept in the sultanate and the growing power of certain office holders over the dynastic matters.

Mustafa I's accession in 1617 represents a new break with the customary succession policies. When Ahmed I unexpectedly died at a young age in November 21, 1617 the major statesmen, who were at that time at the capital, made a radical decision and enthroned his brother Mustafa as the Ottoman sultan on the next day.

²³³ As Metin Kunt argues by the mid-seventeenth century Ottoman *ümerâ*, that constitutes district governors (*sancakbeyi*) and governor generals (*beylerbeyi*) emerged in control of vast economic resources, and political as well as military power. Indeed they were able to pass their status to their sons and other relatives just like *mevâli*. For more see Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); also see Idem., "Ethnic- Regional (*cins*) Solidarity In The Seventeenth Century Ottoman Administration," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 5 (1974): pp. 233-239.

The contemporary chronicles do not give us the details of Mustafa's accession ceremony but rather only mention that the notables of the state and the high dignitaries of the ulema were present in the ceremony. Thanks to the chronicle of Topçular Kâtibi Abdülkâdir Efendi (d. 1644 ?) we know the names of viziers who were present in the capital. According to this source, the deputy grand vizier²³⁴ Sofu Mehmed Pasha, Gürcü Hadım Mehmed Pasha, Etmekçizâde Ahmed Pasha, Davud Pasha, Nakkaş Hasan Pasha and Ciğalzâde Mehmed Pasha were in Istanbul at that time.²³⁵ As for the high ranking ulema, Zekeriyazâde Yahya and Ahizâde Hüseyin were the chief military judges and Sa' deddin-zâde Es'ad was the grand mufti. Highly probably these were the ones who attended the accession ceremony and swore their allegiance to the new sultan.²³⁶

The fact that almost all contemporary authors use the word "to enthrone" (*iclâs etmek*) as opposed to the customary expression "to accede" (*cülus etmek, tahta oturmak*)²³⁷ to relate the change of the throne from Ahmed I to Mustafa I is another indication of the changes that were going on the Ottoman court by the early seventeenth century. As Baki Tezcan discusses, the difference in terminology signifies that until this point the Ottoman sultans had seated themselves by taking

²³⁴ Grand vizier Halil Pasha was in Diyarbakir, wintering there in preparation for a new campaign against Safavids the next spring.

²³⁵ 'Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 1, p. 663.

²³⁶ Though the details of the ceremony are absent in their narrations, many chroniclers mention Mustafa's enthronement ceremony to take place upon his accession. For its examples see Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3., p. 922; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2., p. 464; Kâtip Çelebi (Hacı Halife Mustafa bin Abdullah), *Fezleke-i Kâtip Çelebi*, (hereafter *Fezleke*) (Istanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matbaası, 1287 [1869].), vol. 1, p. 385; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 2, p. 433; Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, p. 360; Karaçelebi-zâde Abdülaziz Efendi, *Ravzatü'l Ebrar*, p. 535.

²³⁷ As had been discussed in Chapter Two, in the earliest Ottoman chronicles the most often used expression are to sit on the throne and to take over the throne. In the sixteenth century chronicles however, generally the word *cülus* is used relate the act. See Chapter Two, pp. 40, 41.

over the throne but now others seated the sultan on the throne.²³⁸ Indeed as discussed in the previous chapter, throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth century even though the support and consent of various groups such as the viziers, imperial army and/or imperial household members were necessary for the princes to ensure their father's throne, literally and truly they were the ones to win the throne in some way or the other.²³⁹ Furthermore this situation was the same during the accession of Ahmed I in 1603 who is referred in the sources to accede to the throne as well. Starting from the reign of Mustafa I however, the notables of the state to whom Baki Tezcan refers as the "king-makers,"²⁴⁰ started to choose one prince among the other candidates who were all resident in the imperial palace to inherit the throne.

It has recently been argued that, the grand mufti Es'ad Efendi was the architect of this crucial move. The longest account on the accession of Mustafa is provided by Peçevi, whose account signifies that the decision was not initially welcomed by some of the dignitaries of the state since they hesitated to swear their oath of allegiance to the new sultan. According to Peçevi, the most outspoken opposition came from the chief black eunuch Mustafa Agha, who explained the reason of his opposition to the deputy grand vizier Sofu Mehmed Pasha and the grand mufti Es'ad Efendi by saying that Mustafa had levity (*hiffet*) in his mind and his behaviors did not include value of soundness (*kadr-i isâbet*). However, as Peçevi recounts, the opposition was silenced because it was thought that bringing a child prince to the throne would cause rumors among the populace and would create possible troubles/dangers when there was a grown up prince. Since the decision was

²³⁸ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 72.

²³⁹ For late fifteenth and sixteenth century accessions of the sultans see Chapter Two.

²⁴⁰ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 47.

out of a necessity (*bi'z-zarûrî*), the dignitaries reached a consensus on the enthronement of Mustafa.²⁴¹ Although one can never be sure of the real reason behind the enthronement of Mustafa, the clash between the chief eunuch and the grand mufti on the dynastic policies symbolizes that these were probably the most powerful figures directing the court politics at that time. In this case the winner seems to have been the grand mufti yet, after a short period with the dethronement of Mustafa and the enthronement of sultan Osman, the power balance would be redefined.

Whether for this reason or another, what we know is that upon the death of Ahmed I in 1617, his brother Mustafa was enthroned. When evaluating the implications of the lapse of fratricide and shift to the seniority on a more general level Baki Tezcan proposes that, having multiple choices for the throne “would mean that the *devlet* (fortune) of a particular sultan was totally accidental and not necessarily deserved.”²⁴² This means further institutionalization of the office of sultanate so that if necessary a sultan could be deposed but, the political system would always survive with the enthronement of another candidate.²⁴³

The deposition of Mustafa I in 1618 and the enthronement of Osman II in his place exemplify the clash of the interests of some dignitaries of the state on the matter of Ottoman dynastic politics. The contemporary sources explicitly designate

²⁴¹ Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, pp. 390, 391.

²⁴² Tezcan, “Searching for Osman,” pp. 72.

²⁴³ Although Baki Tezcan calls this a “constitutionalist” act that was personified in Es‘ad Efendi, I see this act more in line with the developments of the Ottoman political culture (ie. the methods of rule and the concept of sultanate) from the sixteenth century onwards and avoid using such a differentiation as constitutionalists-absolutists. My contention is that the growing executive force of some groups on the court politics does not necessarily mean that these groups were acting as constitutionalists rather they were using the competence that the current political culture enabled them. This power that some groups enjoyed was of course larger than the mid sixteenth century and/or late sixteenth century in its implications and possibilities yet, even at that time the absolute power of the sultan was limited to a certain extent as has been discussed in the previous chapter.

the chief black eunuch Mustafa Agha, who had previously opposed the enthronement of Mustafa I, as the architect of Osman's enthronement.²⁴⁴

Whether the real reason was his mental incapability or not, it is evident that Mustafa I was dethroned and Osman was brought to the Ottoman throne, most likely, by Mustafa Agha. This can be credited as the pinnacle of the rising power of the members of the imperial household, most particularly the chief eunuchs in court politics. Although starting from the accession of Murad III the eunuchs of the imperial harem had played an active role in the transference of power, now they acquired the status of king-maker, a fact that truly reflects their impact on Ottoman practical politics. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the empowerment of some office holders such as the chief eunuch was one of the measures undertaken by the late sixteenth-century Ottoman sultans to bypass the authority and power of the viziers. Baki Tezcan perceives this development as a consequence of the absolutist policies of the reigning sultans of that time. He argues that, since the office of Mustafa Agha was a creature of the absolutist intentions of the dynasty, the deposition of Mustafa by Mustafa Agha then, can be considered as the victory of the absolutists in the name of the chief black eunuch. I would like to quote his view in full as it deserves close attention:

Although Mustafa Agha was probably acting in his own interests while preparing his plot to depose Mustafa I, his office was a symbol of the late sixteenth century Ottoman court that was reconfigured to become a center for absolutist policies. The very fact that a court officer, whose office had either not existed or not made it into the contemporary chronicles until the late sixteenth century, could engineer a

²⁴⁴ Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, p. 919; Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, pp. 360-362. Also the French ambassador Baron de Sancy in his dispatch indicates that Mustafa Agha was the man who worked vigorously to enthrone Osman. Dwelling on the information provided by Sancy, Baki Tezcan draws attention to the organic link and alliance between Mustafa Agha and Ali Pasha, who was the former grand admiral, that might have been influential in organizing the deposition for his report see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 110-114.

deposition in 1618 suggests that the efforts of Murad III, Mehmed III, Ahmed I to promote the court as the center of power did bear fruit.²⁴⁵

While I agree with Tezcan that Mustafa Agha's power and political networks was a result of a novel configuration within the court in the late sixteenth century via the promotion of certain offices and creating some others, I question his assertion that Mustafa Agha's enthronement of Osman was the victory of the group of people who were representing the absolutist intentions of the court. It seems implausible to me to assume that the office holders who had been initially empowered by the sultans, probably to counterbalance the power of some other officials of the court such as the viziers, were serving the absolutist interests of the dynasty. Rather I perceive these office holders as members a faction within the court. Even though originally they had been empowered by the sultans, when they acquired political and economic power they all formed their own alliances and networks with some other members of the court such as the viziers, high members of the imperial army and the ulema. For this reason, I do not think they were much different from the viziers or the high ranking ulema since they all pursued their own economic and political interests by exerting authority over court politics. Besides, these interests could easily clash with each other or could just as easily alter, which eventually would led to a shift in the established alliances. This is to say that, it is not easy or even not possible to categorize the high-ranking office holders of the state into as an absolutist and a constitutionalist.

It seems that the behind-the-scenes architect of Osman's enthronement was Mustafa Agha. In the written descriptions of Osman's accession parallel to the descriptions of Mustafa I's accession, Osman was mentioned to be enthroned

²⁴⁵ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 114.

(*iclâs*).²⁴⁶ Even though all chronicles mention that the accession ceremony of the new sultan was held with the participation of the dignitaries of the state, only one of them provides us the details. As Topçular Kâtibi ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi recounts in his chronicle, before the public *bî‘at* ceremony, a private *bî‘at* ceremony (*bi‘at-ı hasse*) was held in the confines of the residential part of the imperial palace (*harem-i hümâyûn*) with the participation of a limited number of people including the grand mufti, some high ranking ulema, the eunuchs of the inner section of the palace (*enderûn ağaları*) and some high ranking viziers. The first person to swear his allegiance to the sultan during this ceremony was the grand mufti Es‘ad Efendi and then the viziers and aghas came to express their allegiance.²⁴⁷ Then, with the preparation of the imperial throne in the second courtyard of the imperial palace the public accession ceremony started. According to the description of ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi at first the deputy grand vizier Sofu Mehmed Pasha expressed his allegiance to Osman by prostrating himself humbly before the imperial throne (*hâk-i pâ-y-i şeriflerine yüz sürüp*). Then the viziers, chief military judges, the grand admiral, the director of finances, the chief magistrate of the capital (*şehr-emîni*), *reisü’l-küttâb*, *rûznâmecî*, director of the register of the landed property (*defter emîni*), the chief architect, the comptroller of the supplies of barley for Istanbul and the Sultan’s staples (*arpa emîni*), the supervisor of the dockyards (*tersâne emîni*), the *rikâb-ı hümâyûn ağaları*,²⁴⁸ the chief agha of the keepers of hounds (*sekbân-başı*), the agha

²⁴⁶ Na‘imâ, *Târih-i Na‘imâ*, vol. 2, p. 440; Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, p. 362; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, p. 464; Karaçelebi-zâde ‘Abdülaziz Efendi, (hereafter Karaçelebi-zâde), *Ravzâtü’l Ebrâr* (Mısır: Bulak, 1248 [1832-33]), p. 535.

²⁴⁷ ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 1, p.670.

²⁴⁸ Also called *Özengi Ağaları*, they had the priority to walk by the sultan’s horse. For more see Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, pp. 388-439.

in charge of the arrears of pay (*mândeler ağası*) and the other high ranking officers (*sâyir ehl-i menâsıb*) came in order to prostrate themselves before the imperial.

There are a number of unusual features in this description. The first one is that ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi does not mention any members of the ulema partaking in the public *bî‘at* ceremony. Although he notes their participation in the private *bi‘at*, they are totally nonexistent in the description of the public ceremony, which is very surprising. According to the established practice if they were not in an outer service, all dignitaries of the state had to attend the *bî‘at* ceremonies. For this reason I think ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi consciously or unconsciously neglected to mention their presence in his narration of the *bî‘at* ceremony.²⁴⁹

A second unusual feature concerned the order of dignitaries during the public *bi‘at*. ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi mentions of the deputy grand vizier as the first official to express his allegiance to the new sultan is quiet intriguing when one takes into consideration the circumstances that brought Osman to the throne. Then one may tempted to think that may be the change of ordinance in the *bî‘at* ceremony was a projection of the factional strife within the court. Contrary to the enthronement of Mustafa, this time it was not the grand mufti who played a central role in dynastic politics. Therefore, one can conjecture that probably the enthronement of Osman along with deposition of Mustafa, who had been enthroned by the grand mufti himself, was a challenge to the authority of the grand mufti. For this reason, the grand mufti’s place in ordinance of swearing oath might have been filled by another power holder; the deputy grand vizier, since the real actor of this enthronement Mustafa Agha was not able to attend the public ceremony. The fact that ‘Abdülkâdir

²⁴⁹ The editor of his chronicle Ziya Yılmazır notes that in some instances of his narration, ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi gives inaccurate dates and confuses the names of the dignitaries. This suggests that probably he was not a careful observer or narrator. See ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 1, p. xlii.

Efendi was present at that time in Istanbul working as an overseer in Tophane of the making of the artilleries brings to mind the possibility of then liability of his account. This connection strengthens the credibility of the information he provides at least for this accession ceremony.

As a minor sultan sitting on the Ottoman throne at the age of thirteen, just like his father Ahmed I Osman II needed advisors to rule over a vast empire. He had two close advisors, the chief black eunuch Mustafa Agha, the man who had brought Osman to the throne and Ömer Efendi, who was a preacher, and the preceptor of Osman from his early childhood onwards.²⁵⁰ Though Mustafa Agha was sent for retirement to Egypt in 1620, Ömer Efendi remained the advisor of the sultan for all his reign. Throughout his reign Osman II displayed an image of an active ruler like his father who enjoyed hunting and public appearances in the city. Also he is known to have had an interest in warfare and heroic epics such as *İskendernâme* (the Book of Alexander) and the *Shahnâme*.²⁵¹ Even though Osman was possibly aiming at reviving the image of a warrior sultan, as has been discussed in the last chapter, from the late sixteenth century onwards this image was no longer shared by all. For instance when he wanted to lead the Polish campaign personally, he was strongly opposed by the viziers and high members of the ulema²⁵² as had happened to his father when he wanted to undertake a campaign against the Celalis.

²⁵⁰ In the seventeenth century the personal imams of the sultans and preachers emerged as influential actors in the political scene so that they almost monopolized the position of princely tutorage in that century. For career of Ömer Efendi see Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 122- 127.

²⁵¹ He commissioned production of illustrated copies of these books under the supervision of Mustafa Agha. For more of his commissions of illustrated manuscripts see Tülün Değirmenci, "Resmedilen Siyaset: II. Osman Devri (1618-1622) Resimli Elyazmalarında Değişen İktidar Sembolleri," (Ph.D. diss. Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2007), forthcoming as *Minyatürlerle İktidar Savaşı: II. Osman Devri Resimli Elyazmalarında Değişen İktidar Sembolleri*, from Kitap Yayınevi.

²⁵² Baki Tezcan relies on the report of resident French ambassador for this information. See Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire* p. 136, footnote 81.

Apart from these some other acts of Osman II were unusual such as his marriage to the daughter of the grand mufti Es'ad Efendi.²⁵³ More significantly, his plan to make a pilgrimage to Mecca was extraordinary. The rumor that spread quickly in the capital city that Osman II intended to make Cairo his new capital city and dismantle the janissaries by recruiting a new army composed of mercenaries (*segban*). In Wednesday May 18, 1622 when the sultan was about to leave the capital city for a pilgrimage the members of the central army corps gathered in the central square of the city to protest against the pilgrimage campaign. The next day the tension reached such a degree that the corps not only demanded the execution of the highest officials of the court and imperial household but by entering the imperial palace they found and enthroned Mustafa I. And finally in the next day the first regicide in the history of the Ottoman dynasty occurred with the killing of Osman II.²⁵⁴

One striking episode that occurred on the second day of the revolt deserves mention since it signifies the implication and the actual function of *bî'at* in the current political culture. When the soldiers entered the imperial palace; they went to the third courtyard and finally found Mustafa in one of the rooms of the harem. Right after they took Mustafa out of the room by pulling him up to the roof with ropes, they brought him to the Imperial Council (*divânhâne*) and there they swore their

²⁵³ Osman contracted a marriage with the daughter of Es'ad Efendi, Akile. This marriage was made only a few months before Osman's death in 1622. Besides basing her arguments on the privy purse registers of harem, Leslie Peirce notes that highly probably Akile never entered the harem of the imperial palace. This marriage represents a sharp break with dynasty's policy of avoiding forming political alliances through marriage bonds with daughters of influential Muslim families. See Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 106-107.

²⁵⁴ Tezcan in his book provides a re-creation of the event in a minute detail through the comparative use of an extensive amount of published and unpublished Ottoman chronicles. And he proposes that this event was not a confrontation between progressives and reactionaries but rather was an expression of the struggle between absolutists and their opponents. See Tezcan, "Chapter 5: The Absolutist Dispensation Overturned," in *The Second Ottoman Empire*, pp. 153- 190. For an earlier evaluation of historiographical formation Osman's regicide see Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy*, pp. 71-134.

allegiance to Mustafa. More interestingly, they also asked the high ranking ulema who were present there to swear oaths of allegiance to Mustafa probably to ascribe a sudden legitimacy to his rulership. It appears from the chronicles that the ulema and most particularly the grand mufti Es'ad Efendi, were hesitant to take oath of allegiance to Mustafa. Peçevi, Kâtip Çelebi and Na'imâ relate that the grand mufti refused to take the oath by saying that since Osman II was still sitting on the throne it was not lawful (*câiz değildir*) to swear an oath of allegiance to another person.²⁵⁵ According to Solak-zâde, on the other hand Es'ad Efendi's hesitation was related to the mental incapability of Mustafa.²⁵⁶ Whether the reason was the former or the latter, all chronicles agree that Es'ad was forced by the soldiers to take his oath to Mustafa. Indeed as Hasanbeyzâde and Peçevi recount, the soldiers assaulted Es'ad with war equipments (*alât-ı harb ile*) and willingly or unwillingly (*hâh u nâhâh*) made him to take an oath of allegiance.²⁵⁷ It seems that although *bî'at* had already had such a function of bringing legitimacy to the new sovereign in the 1560s, it appears that in the seventeenth century this feature of the ceremony became much more evident.

The dethronement and murder of Osman II through a military uprising can be seen as an expression of the growing political power of the standing army in the making and unmaking of Ottoman practical politics. Throughout the century the interventions of the central army on the political matters would reiterate themselves by bringing about the dethronements of the reigning sultans.

²⁵⁵ Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, p. 383; Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, vol. 2, p. 16; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 2, pp. 483, 484.

²⁵⁶ Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, p. 483.

²⁵⁷ Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2; Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, p. 944.

Even if Mustafa I had assumed the throne in 1622 with the deposition and murder of Osman, the events inaugurated a power vacuum in the centre, at the heart of the government. Besides, three recurrent accessions within six years had almost drained the imperial treasury. Indeed, the severe inflation between 1615 and 1623 had further constrained the financial conditions of the empire. At round the same time, a major revolt broke out in eastern Anatiolia that was led by Abaza Mehmed Pasha, who was in call for taking revenge of sultan Osman's murder. Under such circumstances the dignitaries of the state including the grand vizier Kemankeş Ali Pasha (who remained in office between the years 1623-24 for seven months), the grand mufti Yahyâ Efendi (d. 1644), high ranking ulema and the viziers gathered to discuss the situation. As we learn from the chronicles, in this meeting the dignitaries of the state all agreed on the mental incapability of Mustafa, which was thought to be one of the reasons of disorder, and decided that Mustafa should be deposed in favor of prince Murad, who was the eldest surviving son of Ahmed I.²⁵⁸ Thus, after his second reign for sixteenth months, Mustafa was deposed once again and Murad IV was enthroned in 1623, at the age of eleven with the consent of the dignitaries of the state. As in the case of Mustafa and Osman's accessions, the chroniclers use the word "to enthrone" (*iclâs*) for Murad's takeover of the throne, which by now seems to be the most common expression to relate the change of the throne from one member of the dynasty to another.²⁵⁹ Another similarity with the previous accessions was the need for the advisers to help the young sultan in the day-to-day governance

²⁵⁸ Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, pp. 514, 515; Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, pp. 397, 398; Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, pp. 975-978; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 2, pp. 513, 514, Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, vol 2, p. 38; Karaçelebi-zâde, *Ravzâtü'l Ebrâr*, pp. 554, 555. 'Abdülkâdir Efendi in his account does not mention any of the events that paved the way to the enthronement of Murad IV. See 'Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 2, pp. 783, 784.

²⁵⁹ Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 2, p. 514; Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, p. 978; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, p. 514.

of the state. The early years of Murad's reign was marked by the acts of his mother Kösem Sultan, who was a highly influential figure in shaping the court politics for a relatively long period during the reign of İbrahim and first three years of his grandson Mehmed as well.²⁶⁰

Although the sources mention that the *bi'at* ceremony to the new sultan was performed on the next day of the meeting of dignitaries of the state, none of the chronicles provide us the details of that ceremony.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, they all mention the difficulties that emerged due to the payment of accession donatives, which was one of the most prominent factors ensuring the loyalty of the sultan's *kuls* (servitors) to the state and an indispensable feature of *bi'at* ceremonies. When one takes into consideration the events that happened during Selim II's accession in 1566, that soldiers would almost bring about a revolt due to the fact that their accession donatives were not distributed, the meaning of granting the privileges and rights of the soldiers in the Ottoman political culture become more apparent. Peçevi, Hasanbeyzâde and Solak-zâde relate in parallel to each other that although the higher members of the imperial army had previously announced that they would not ask for a payment, later on they changed their idea. For this reason the accession donatives were distributed to them (and also to all of the officials serving in the court) in order to prevent any possible troubles that may arise because of that situation.²⁶² This preoccupation even under these severe financial conditions portrays the reciprocal

²⁶⁰ For her political career as the regent of three sultans see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, pp. 249-252.

²⁶¹ Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, p. 514; Peçevi, *Târih-i Peçevi*, vol. 2, pp. 399; Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih*, vol. 3, p. 978; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 2, p. 514, Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, vol. 2, p. 38.

²⁶² Hasanbeyzâde, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 3, p. 979; Peçevi, *Târih*, vol. 2, p. 399; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, p. 514.

character of *bi'at*, so that if the requirements cannot be fulfilled the unwritten contract between the state and *kuls* would be easily discarded.

For the enthronement of Murad IV the sources do not point any particular person, but rather they record that the decision was a collaborative act. For this reason, it becomes more difficult to make an assumption about who might be the first person who swore his allegiance to the new sultan during his *bi'at* ceremony. The presence of the grand vizier and grand mufti in the capital city during the time of the accession suggests that the first official who swore his allegiance should have been either the grand vizier or grand mufti. As far as the general political developments of the seventeenth century are concerned the grand mufti seems to be a more viable option since the holders of the post concentrated an immense political power in their hands with some exceptions throughout the century.²⁶³

As far the developments of the first two decades of the seventeenth century are concerned, it appears that while the *bi'at* ceremony preserved its original function of providing legitimacy to the rule of the sovereign, during this phase of recurrent dethronements and enthronements, symbolically it turned out to be a practical tool. This slight change in the symbolical meaning of the *bi'at*, was for sure a reflection of the political transformations that the Ottoman state was living through. During the accessions of the next three sultans this meaning of the *bi'at* would be expressed more vividly.

²⁶³ This does not mean that the Grand muftis had escaped from dismissals from their office. However, when their periods in office are compared with the grand viziers' it seems that they were able to stay in power for longer periods. For instance, although they were dismissed for short tenures, the grand muftis Es'ad Efendi and Yahyâ Efendi were able to hold their offices for considerable time intervals. While the former served nine years in the office, the latter served in total twenty years as the grand mufti until his death in 1644.

A Period of Perpetuation for the *Bî'at* Ceremonies: The Accessions of İbrahim I and Mehmed IV

Though some of the developments had roots in the previous decades, it is evident that the turbulent five years following the death of Ahmed further changed the balance of power within the court. The political developments of the coming period during the reigns of Murad IV, İbrahim to Mehmed IV were not as impromptu as the beginning of the century. Parallel to that, the structure and symbolical meaning of *bî'at* ceremonies did not change much during the period in concern. Rather, it can be proposed that, what had been under formulation for decades became more apparent by the end of this period. For this reason, for the Ottoman ceremonial culture the period after the accession of Murad IV in 1623 and Mehmed IV's enthronement in 1648 was a period of transition until the novel configurations would be formalized for the *bî'at* ceremonies in the late seventeenth century.

The enthronement of İbrahim in 1640 was different from the earlier decades in the sense that after a period of twenty-three years for the first time the throne would change due to the natural conditions. İbrahim was the only surviving male member of the dynasty at the time of Murad's death, in this respect upon the accession of İbrahim the Ottoman dynasty experienced a very severe threat of extinction.²⁶⁴ The fate of the dynasty was not taken for granted because for two years İbrahim was not able to produce an heir to the throne. Possibly it was thereafter that the rumors about the transfer of the Ottoman throne to alternative families started to circulate. According to the dispatch of Alvise Contarini, who was the resident Venetian bailo in Istanbul between 1636 and 1641, if İbrahim would die without

²⁶⁴ See Börekçi, "İnkirazın Eşiğinde Bir Hanedan," pp. 53-54.

producing a male heir then the throne would legally pass to the Crimean Khans.²⁶⁵

This kind of speculations continued to be made by the Europeans throughout the seventeenth century. Although they present different reasons, the writers such as Sir Paul Rycaut, De Bruny and Français de Chassepol relate in their histories that there was an agreement on the transfer of the Ottoman throne to Girays in case of extinction of Ottoman male line.²⁶⁶

The Ottoman chronicler Solak-zâde on the other hand, provides a totally different narration of the event. As he relates in his history, in his death bed Murad wanted to see İbrahim and in this meeting he willingly delivered the sultanate to his brother.²⁶⁷ Parallel to Solak-zâde, none of the Ottoman chronicles mention the threat of extinction and the rumors that were voiced by the contemporary European authors. Then it seems that the Ottoman sources are silent on that issue. Whether the former rumors on the change of Ottoman dynasty or the portrayal of the Ottoman chroniclers was the case, with the death of Murad in 1640 his twenty five year old brother İbrahim ascended to the throne. According to Na'imâ, when İbrahim was informed on the death of his brother he was not convinced of what he heard and thought that this was a conspiracy to test his loyalty. And until he saw Murad's dead body, İbrahim did not actually acknowledge the situation.²⁶⁸

According to the Ottoman sources the formal *bi'at* ceremony of the new sultan was held on the day after the death of Murad IV. Early in the morning the

²⁶⁵ The names of Crimean Khans as alternative candidates to the Ottoman throne would be mentioned once again in 1688 and 1703 during the dethronements of Mehmed IV and Mustafa II respectively. For more see Derin Terzioğlu, "Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyazi-i Mısri," (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1999), p. 346-352.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p.348, especially see footnote 145.

²⁶⁷ Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, p. 551.

²⁶⁸ Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 2, p. 941.

dignitaries of the state started to arrive in the imperial palace where the throne was being prepared in the second courtyard for the public ceremony.²⁶⁹ ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi mentions that before the public ceremony, a private ceremony was held in the harem section of the imperial palace. At that time, most of the dignitaries of the state seem to have been present in the court including the grand vizier Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha, the viziers such as Hüseyin Pasha, Mûsâ Pasha, Kenân Pasha, the grand admiral Mustafa Pasha, and the grand mufti Yahyâ Efendi and the highest members of the ulema. According to ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, in the first place the grand vizier Mustafa Pasha prostrated himself before the imperial throne (*hâk-i pâ-y-i şeriflerine yüz sürüp*), and the viziers followed him in order. Thereafter, the grand mufti Yahyâ Efendi, the chief military judges, judge of Istanbul and later on high ranking officials of the imperial troops such as the agha of Janissaries, and the aghas of the other military corps such as the *ocak ağaları* and *rikab-ı hümayun ağaları* came to express their allegiance.²⁷⁰ They were followed by the finance directors, scribes and *bölük ağaları* who prostrated themselves before the imperial throne.²⁷¹

Solak-zâde however, gives a different order for the precedence of the dignitaries during the public *bî‘at* ceremony of İbrahim. According to him, the first official that took his oath of allegiance was the grand mufti Yahyâ Efendi, who was followed by the chief military judge of Anatolia Çivi-zâde Efendi and the judge of İstanbul Kabakulak-zâde Efendi. Later on, the viziers paid their allegiance to the

²⁶⁹ Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, vol.2, p. 220; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Târihi*, vol.2, p. 552; Na‘imâ, *Târih-i Na‘imâ*, vol. 2, p. 942; ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 2, p. 1134.

²⁷⁰ Agha of Janissaries, *ocak ağaları*, *rikab-ı hümayun ağaları*, as well as *bölük ağaları* were among the ones who were called *özengi* or *rikâb ağaları*. They had the priority to walk by the sultan’s horse when he was in horseback. For more see Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, pp. 388- 439; also see Idem., *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatından...*, vol. 1.

²⁷¹ ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 2, p. 1134.

sultan.²⁷² Contrary to ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, Solak-zâde does not mention the names of the other officers who participated in the ceremony.

Although the account of ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi is much more detailed than Solak-zâde’s, a number of features in ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi’s description render less reliable. First of all, the order given by ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi does not follow the customary ceremonial practices. For instance, he counts the names of the finance directors after mentioning *bi’at* of the high ranking military officials, which is very unusual. Although the military officials should have constituted a group and their performance of *bi’at* should have followed each other, the *bölük ağaları* are separated from the rest and are mentioned after the *bi’at* of the imperial scribes. Therefore, his description seems to be inaccurate. Furthermore, in some instances ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi provides wrong names and dates such as the name of the judge of Istanbul in his description of İbrahim’s accession. He says that at that time the judge of Istanbul was ‘Abdurrahmân Efendi whereas in reality it was ‘Abdürrahîm Efendi.²⁷³ During the time of İbrahim’s accession, most probably ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi was living in his retirement years.²⁷⁴ This might have been one of the reasons behind his unorganized and implausible description because as a retired military officer he was probably distant from the court circles. In all, I intend to prefer the testimony of Solak-zâde for the *bi’at* ceremony of İbrahim, which seems to provide more liable information on the accession ceremony of İbrahim.

²⁷² Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Târihi*, vol. 2, p. 552.

²⁷³ ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi, *Târih*, vol. 2, p. 1134. See the note of the editor Ziya Yılmaz.

²⁷⁴ Ziya Yılmaz notes that in 1640 ‘Abdülkâdir Efendi must have been around seventy years old and probably in a few years he should have died. See, *Ibid.*, vol 1, p. xxxi.

İbrahim's reign ended with a deposition which was the product of a coalition between the central army corps and the ulema. In the contemporary sources²⁷⁵ İbrahim's depletion of the treasury and public resources, and his mental incapability are shown as the real reasons behind his deposition. His actions such as his levy on sable fur on all of the major officials of the empire and his allocation of appendages for his eight concubines are mentioned in the sources to have created reactions from different groups that in turn provoked a revolt. Baki Tezcan on this instance, however, argues that might not be the case. He speculates that may be İbrahim's actions can be seen not as signs of madness but as attempts to centralize the power at the court. The chroniclers writing after his dethronement might have had justified the dethronement by commenting on his mental incapability.²⁷⁶

Whether İbrahim was mentally incapable or not, it is evident that he was dethroned through a rebellion that broke out in the city. The discontent was first expressed at the janissaries' mosque, and in the next day the soldiers and the high members of the religious establishment including the grand mufti 'Abdürrâhim Efendi gathered to discuss the situation at sultan Ahmed Mosque. There, they appointed Sofu Mehmed Pasha to the grand vizierate in place of Ahmed Pasha, who was also held responsible for the ills of the state. More importantly the group agreed on the urgency of İbrahim's deposition and decided to inform the queen mother

²⁷⁵ Kâtip Çelebi, Solak-zâde, Hasan Vecihî Mehmed Halife and Karaçelebi-zâde 'Abdülaziz Efendi were contemporaries to the event. A relatively later source Na'imâ also relates the deposition; indeed his description is much more vivid and detailed than the others. For the deposition of İbrahim see Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, vol. 2, pp. 327-330; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Tarihi*, vol. 2, pp. 577-581; Hasan Vecihî, *Târih*, facsimile printed by Buğra Atsız, *Das Osmanische reich um die mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts: nach den chroniken des Vecihi (1637-1660)* (München : Rudolf Trofenik, 1977) fols. 38a, 38b; Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî* (Istanbul : Matbaa-i Orhaniye, 1340 [1924]), pp. 20-22; Karaçelebi-zâde 'Abdülaziz Efendi, *Ravzâtü'l Ebrâr Zeyli: Tahlil ve Metin*, ed. Nevzat Kaya (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), pp. 2-8; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 3; pp. 1162-1165; also see Emecen, "İbrahim I," pp. 279-281.

²⁷⁶ See Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, p. 215.

Kösem Sultan on that matter.²⁷⁷ Although during their audience initially Kösem Sultan resisted the deposition of his son, later on she had to agree.

Karaçelebi-zâde, who was among the group that held an audience with Kösem Sultan at the imperial palace, notes that right after they got the assent from the queen mother, she went inside to prepare prince Mehmed for the accession ceremony. At the same time, the imperial throne was put the second courtyard in its customary place for the ceremony of hand kissing (*dest-bûst içün mûtâd olan mahalde taht-ı zerrîn kurulup*).²⁷⁸ Karaçelebi-zâde recounts that he took one of the arms of the young sultan when Mehmed appeared from the third gate in the company of his grandmother.²⁷⁹ And then, the accession ceremony was held with the participation of a relatively small number of officials that were present at the imperial palace.²⁸⁰

Although all sources mention that the *bî'at* ceremony of the new sultan was held; only two of them provide us the details. As Na'imâ and Mehmed Halife delineate, when the sultan ascended to the throne it was first the grand mufti 'Abdürrâhim Efendi who swore his allegiance and later on the highest members of the viziers came to swear their oath of allegiance.²⁸¹ Though Mehmed Halife does not include further detail on the ceremony, according to Na'imâ the ceremony continued with the *bî'at* of the ulema and the other grandees (*küberâ*). Furthermore,

²⁷⁷ Kâtip Çelebi, *Fezleke*, p. 327-329; Karaçelebi-zâde, *Ravzâtü'l Ebrâr Zeyli*, pp. 2-4; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 3, pp. 1163, 1164; Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*, p. 21; also see Emecen, "İbrahim I."

²⁷⁸ Karaçelebi-zâde, *Ravzâtü'l Ebrâr Zeyli*, p. 4.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ The accession ceremony of Mehmed IV is related by a number of chroniclers such as, Karaçelebi-zâde, *Ravzâtü'l Ebrâr Zeyli*, p. 4; Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol. 3, p.1164; Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*, p. 22; Hasan Vecîhî, *Târih*, fol. 38b.; Solak-zâde, *Solak-zâde Târihi*, vol. 2, p. 581.

²⁸¹ Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*.

he relates that the rest of the officials who were present at the imperial palace were not allowed to take their oath in order not to terrify the child sultan (*havf itmesin deyü*). So, when the allegiance of the highest dignitaries ended, the sultan was immediately sent to his own residence.²⁸²

This prompt ceremony signifies the adaptability of *bi'at* to the needs of the time. Besides, it apparently shows that by the middle of the seventeenth century due to the transitions in the Ottoman dynastic politics and methods of rule, the symbolical meaning of *bi'at* had become more settled. After the decades of reshuffling by 1640s what had become more explicitly recognized was a depersonalized meaning of *bi'at*. Though during the accessions, the dignitaries of the state and the office holders were still swearing their oath of allegiance to the sultans, it actually represented their allegiances to the office of the sultan rather than the individual sultan sitting on the throne. For this reason, as Rifaat Abou-el-Haj puts it, the fact that Mehmed was just seven years old when he accede to the throne or İbrahim was mentally incapable, were minor matters²⁸³ and they did not violate the nature of the *bi'at*. What actually mattered was the re-establishment of the given hierarchies and loyalties between the ruling elite and the state. It appears that parallel to the further depersonalization of the sultanate and bureaucratization of the state apparatus in the seventeenth century, what the *bi'at* symbolized by the middle of the century was the depersonalized relationship between the oath givers and oath taker.

In many respects this ceremony was a continuation of the previous ones. For instance, once again the factional strife and power balances within the court was projected to the accession ceremony. Like the accession of İbrahim in 1640, once

²⁸² Na'imâ, *Târih-i Na'imâ*, vol .3, p. 1165.

²⁸³ Abou-el-Haj, *The Formation of the Modern State*, p. 5.

again a group of dignitaries were influential in the enthronement of the new sultan since, Mehmed IV's enthronement was a collaborative act of the military corps and the ulema as well. The collaboration between these two factions of the court reminds one of the very similar conditions during the military revolts that had broken out in the capital city at the beginning of the century. The high ranking ulema were well embedded in these rebellions as well. Then, it shows the enduring power and influence of the high ranking ulema in the making and unmaking of the imperial politics. Possibly as an expression of the influential role of the high ranking ulema in court politics during the *bi'at* ceremonies of the sultans in most of the cases in the seventeenth century the grand muftis were the ones to express their allegiance in the first order to the sultan. This order is observed in the *bi'at* ceremony of Mehmed IV as well yet, this feature would subject to change in the coming decades while leaving its place to a more stable, formalized and enduring format.

The Growing Eminence of the *Nakîbü'l Esrâf* in the *Bi'at* Ceremonies: The Accessions of Süleyman II, Ahmed II and Mustafa II

The Ottoman-Austrian war that broke out in 1682 was crucial for the Ottoman state in many respects. The burdens of the war led to severe fiscal problems as well as political instability.²⁸⁴ When the Ottoman army was defeated under the commander of Sarı Süleyman Pasha at Mohács in June, 1687 by the united forces of the Holy League (composed of Austrian Habsburgs, Poland-Lithuania, Venice and the

²⁸⁴ The Ottoman-Habsburg War is recounted in length in a number of contemporary chronicles. Especially the accounts of Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Pasha (d. 1717) and Silâhdâr Fındıklılı Mehmed Agha are very significant since both authors were well entrenched within the inner circles of the court. See Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa (Fındıklılı), *Silâhdâr Târîhi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Orhaniye Matbaası, 1928), vol. 2, pp. 1-298; Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*, pp. 90-253; Râşid, Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid*, 6 vols., (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1282 [1866]), vol. 2, pp. 3, 4. For a detailed survey of the long campaign also see Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, pp. 283-298; Abdülkadir Özcan, "Mehmed IV," *DİA*, vol. 29, pp. 416-417; J.H. Kramers, "Mehammed IV," *EI2*, vol. 6, pp. 982, 983.

Papacy) the soldiers demanded the grand-vizier to hand over the symbols of his office. And they appointed the governor of Aleppo, Sivâyuş Pasha, who was the son-in-law of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, to command the army on their retreat to Istanbul instead, despite the fact that sultan Mehmed IV had ordered the army to winter in Belgrade. As the army reached Edirne, the imperial troops had already decided on the dethronement of Mehmed IV, who had spent most of his time in Edirne with his hunting feasts during his long reign. As the troops were near Silivri, the grand vizier Siyavuş Pasha gathered the high members of the regiments and there they put down a written demand on the deposition of Mehmed IV to be sent to Istanbul. Having received the demand of the troops the deputy grand vizier Köprülü Fazıl Mustafa Pasha called a meeting in Ayasofya mosque.²⁸⁵ As we learn from Silâhdâr Mehmed Agha, who was serving as a page at that time in the privy chamber, the highest dignitaries of the state including the imperial chancellor İsmail Pasha, the grand mufti Debbâğ-zâde Mehmed Efendi, the chief military judge of Rumelia Ebusa‘id-zâde Feyzullah Efendi (d. 1703), the chief military judge of Anatolia Abdülrahim Efendizâde Mehmed Efendi, the *nakibü'l eşrâf* Feyzullah Efendi, *sekban başı* Harputlu Ali Agha, some high members of the *mevâli* and some retired members of the imperial troops were present at that meeting.²⁸⁶ There after getting informed of the demands of the imperial troops, the highest legal authorities of the empire eventually decided on the deposition of Mehmed IV in favor of his brother Süleyman.

²⁸⁵ Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*, pp. 230-254; Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târihi*, vol. 2, pp. 262-292.

²⁸⁶ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târihi*, vol. 2, pp. 295, 296. Sarı Mehmed Pasha does not give the names of all, rather he mentions that the deputy grand vizier, the grand mufti, the *nakibü'l eşrâf*, the high ranking *mevâli* and some old members of the imperial troops were present there. see Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*, p. 254; Râşid, *Târih-i Râşid*, vol. 2, pp. 66-67.

Silâhdâr Mehmed provides us an eye-witness testimony of Süleyman's accession ceremony vividly. According to the account of Silâhdâr, as the dignitaries arrived at the imperial palace, they immediately informed the chief black eunuch Ali Agha and the sultan's sword bearer Merreli Hüseyin Agha of the situation, and ordered the preparation of the imperial throne for the enthronement ceremony of Süleyman. The chief black eunuch then directly went to the apartment of prince Süleyman in order to invite him to leave his quarters for his enthronement. Being uneasy about his situation prince Süleyman replied:

If my removal (execution) had been ordered, tell me, so that I may perform my prayers in the prescribed form. I have been confined for forty years ever since I was a child. Rather than dying each day, it is preferable to die (at once) at the earliest instant, is it worth to live with this fear only for the (survival of the) the soul...²⁸⁷

With the persuasive words of Ali Agha, Süleyman emerged from his apartment; yet it seems that still he was in fear of being executed since when they stopped by the pavilion of felicity (*Has Oda Köşkü*) of the Privy Chamber, he asked the officers accompanying him, if they would bring him to the Lion's House for the execution or not.²⁸⁸ As the officers were trying to persuade Süleyman that he was the inheritor of the throne, the chief white eunuch and the imperial messenger (*kapu ağa oğlanı*) came to escort him to the imperial audience hall. Upon their arrival to the audience hall, they seated Süleyman on the imperial throne. There the first official who swore his oath of allegiance to the sultan was the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* Feyzullah Efendi.²⁸⁹ Then

²⁸⁷ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târîhi*, vol. 2, p. 297: "İzalemiz emr olundu ise söyle iki rek'at namâz kılayım andan emri yerine getir. Sabâvetimden berü kırk yıldır habs çekdüm. Her gün ölmekden ise bir gün ol ölmek yegdir, bir cân için ne bu çekdigimiz korku..."

²⁸⁸ Ibid: "karanlık arslan-hâneye uğrayub beni bunda mı öldürürsüz, buyurmuşlar."

²⁸⁹ Feyzullah Efendi was initially the preceptor of prince Mustafa and later became the grand mufti right after the accession of Süleyman. Though he was dismissed in a short time, upon the accession of Mustafa in 1695 he was re-appointed to the post and simultaneously occupied this post and the imperial preceptor-ship until his murder in 1703 during the Edirne Incident. During his tenures in the office of the grand mufti he almost monopolized the highest religious hierarchy by reserving the

the deputy grand vizier, chief finance officer, the chief military judges of Rumeli and Anatolia, respectively came to express their allegiances. Later on the order passed to the grand mufti, and the ulema, that were flowed by the *bî'at* of the *sekbanbaşı*, the retired members of the imperial troops, chief head keeper and *mataracıbaşı*. Then, the sultan greeted them all, and went to his residential quarters.²⁹⁰

This description differs from the previous descriptions of accession *bî'at* ceremonies in two respects. First of all, according to the description of Silâhdâr the ceremony did not take place in the second courtyard of the imperial palace but in the audience hall as opposed to the customary practice. This departure from the customary practice was probably out of a practical need and it further signifies the adaptability of *bî'at* ceremony during the accession to the needs of the time.

A second and more striking difference between this ceremony and the earlier practices is the first official who came to express his allegiance to the sultan. As it has been pointed out before, up to now, this had been a prerogative of either the grand mufti or the grand vizier and his deputy in charge. But in this case the first person to take an oath of allegiance to sultan was the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*. Quite striking from this time onwards in the accession ceremonies as well as *mu'âyede* ceremonies it would always be the same office holder who would come in the first order to take his oath of allegiance to the sultan. Then, the relevant question is why this significant feature of the ceremony was fixed in the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*?

As far as the developments of the current political culture is concerned actually one might have expected to see the grand mufti, who held this prerogative

important posts to his family members. So he was a very influential and extremely powerful partner in the Ottoman political culture in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. On Feyzullah see Sabra Follet Meservey, "Feyzullah Efendi: An Ottoman Şeyhülislam," (Ph.d diss., Princeton University, 1965); Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety*, pp. 215-220.

²⁹⁰ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târîhi*, vol. 2, p. 297.

for decades, as the first official during Süleyman's *bi'at* ceremony. Apart from that one might also be tempted to think that the grand vizier could also have held this priority since the former decades had witnessed the restoration of the grand vizier's power that was initiated with the appointment of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (1656-1661) to the post in 1656. From this year until 1676 the post was monopolized under Köprülü rule. Metin Kunt discusses that by the 1630s the current intellectual climate was also in favor of a return to a powerful ruler and his deputy, which was the grand vizier in the ruling mechanism. As Kunt puts it, this call was evident from the political treatises of Koçi Bey (written in 1630) and later on Kâtip Çelebi (written in 1653); according to whom the solution to the ills of the Ottoman system was the restoration of the ruling authority.²⁹¹ It seems that the restoration of grand vizier's power was part of an ongoing trend. In fact, during the accession of Süleyman both the grand vizier and his deputy in the capital were members of Köprülü family, a fact which shows the continual influences on Köprülü family in the Ottoman court politics. Nevertheless, the grand vizier was not the first official to take his oath of allegiance to the sultan. Then, it seems that in the organization of *bi'at* ceremony some different factors other than the current political development started to play a role.

There may have been various reasons behind this choice which we cannot grasp from the available materials. One possible explanation can be the religious and social prestige of the office of *nakîbü'l eşraf* since in the person of the office holder the post represented thousands of people who were officially recognized to be descendants of the prophet Muhammad. Belonging to *sadat/eşraf* (pl. of *seyyid/şerif*) meant privilege and notability since *eşraf* status not only granted socio-religious

²⁹¹ Kunt, "Naîmâ, Köprülü and the Grand Vizierate," pp. 57-64.

prestige but also certain tax exemptions as well as judicial privileges.²⁹² This means that although *eşraf* in the Ottoman territories never comprised a rigid social hierarchy, in general terms the *nakîbü'l eşraf* was the representative of a large group of socially and economically privileged people. Indeed from the seventeenth century onwards *seyyid* status in the Ottoman state was promoted from *mu'af* (exempted) to *askeri* (military), which constitute the ruling/administrative elite.²⁹³

Recent studies show that from the mid-sixteenth century onwards Ottoman state had to deal with the issue of a huge number of people claiming membership in *sadat*.²⁹⁴ This continuously increased during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hülya Canbakal draws attention to this phenomenon of rising claimants to *sadat* in the provinces and the presence of a large number of *sadat* among the provincial notables, at a time when the economic and political power of the notables were in general on rise (especially from the late seventeenth century onwards).²⁹⁵ And argues that for the local notables passing to the status of *sadat* which grants a ruling/administrative status in the social hierarchy of the Ottoman state, might have been a practical device for ensuring and even enhancing their notabilities and influences.

²⁹² See Kılıç, *Seyyidler ve Şerifler*, pp. 96-100; Sarıçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Nakîbü'l eşraflık*, pp. 92-102.

²⁹³ Uzunçarşılı, *İlmiye Teşkilatı*, pp. 125-26; also see Hülya Canbakal, "On the Nobility of Provincial Notables," ed. Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Halcyon Days in Crete 5*, Rethymno, (Greece: Crete University Press, January 2005), p. 49, footnote, 33.

²⁹⁴ See Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman state and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c. 1500-1700)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52 (2009), p. 543; Idem., "On the Nobility of Provincial Notables."

²⁹⁵ Canbakal, "The Ottoman state and Descendants..." p. 566; Idem., "On the Nobility of Provincial Notables." p. 50. Also see her *Society and Politics in an Ottoman Town: Ayntab in the 17th Century*, (Leiden: Brill, November 2006).

Apart from that of course the religious prestige of the post in particular and *sadat* in general might have also been instrumental for the Ottoman dynasty since as Canbakal puts it the *sadat/ashraf* also constituted the only blood nobility apart from the ruling dynasty that the Ottoman state recognised.²⁹⁶ Another possible reason can be the relatively apolitical nature of that post when compared with the grand-vizier or grand-mufti.²⁹⁷ Despite the fact that the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* could hold other positions in the court such as the chief military judgeship and the judge of Istanbul and imperial *nakîbü'l eşrâf* was generally a member of an influential and well known ulema family, still the tasks that he was in charge of doing were not related to the political matters.

Then a related question comes to mind: why did this post become more visible in the Ottoman court ceremonies particularly in the third quarter of the seventeenth century? Judging by the evidence deriving from the Ottoman ceremonials, it appears that although the post existed since the late fourteenth century in the Ottoman court, except a short period of time when the post was dissolved sometime during the reign of Mehmed II until it was reimbursed again in 1530s, the post became relatively more eminent and visible in the Ottoman court ceremonies by 1670s.²⁹⁸ From the late seventeenth century onwards, the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* not only was the first to swear an oath of allegiance during the royal accessions and the *mu'âyede* ceremonies but also became one of the officials who were in charge of girding the

²⁹⁶ Canbakal, "On the Nobility of Provincial Notables," p. 49.

²⁹⁷ See Kılıç, *Seyyidler ve Şerifler*, pp. 80-85; Sarıçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Nakîbü'l Eşrâflık*, pp. 128-130.

²⁹⁸ See Kılıç, *Seyyidler ve Şerifler*, pp. 83, 137, 138; Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 92, 93.

sultan with the sword upon the accessions.²⁹⁹ Besides the position of the deputies of the imperial *nakîbü'l eşrâf* in the local political hierarchy was also enhanced for instance they started to attend the governor's divan like other notables of the province, the local *eşraf* began to refuse the deputies sent by the centre, and indeed the post became gradually became hereditary in Cairo and elsewhere.³⁰⁰

Quite interestingly by the end of the seventeenth century a significant administrative change was initiated, which was the adaptation of the life term tax-farming system in 1695.³⁰¹ This means a total reorganization of the fiscal and administrative system of the Ottoman state. With this system the provincial elites gained a significant position in the fiscal and political matters. As has been stated before since there was an organic link between the provincial elites and *seyyidship*, this development can be seen as one of the contributing factors behind the growing visibility of the imperial *nakîbü'l eşrâf* in the Ottoman court ceremonies at around that particular time interval.³⁰²

Apart from that between the mid and late seventeenth century the Ottoman administration mechanism and court structure underwent some changes. For

²⁹⁹ For instance during the accessions of Ahmed III, Mahmud I, and Mustafa III the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* and grand mufti girded the sultan together, whereas during the accession of Ahmed II, Mustafa IV and Mahmud II, Abdülhamid I it was only *nakîbü'l eşrâf* who girded the sultan the sword. See Uzunçarşılı, *Saray Teşkilatı*, p. 191, Kılıç, *Seyyidler ve Şerifler*, pp. 85; Sarıcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Nakîbü'l Eşrâflık*, 162, 163. For a discussion on the meaning and formulation of this ritual see Kafadar, "Eyüp'te Kılıc Kuşanma," pp. 50-61. For a detailed survey on who girded the sultan with the sword in the accession ceremonies of the eighteenth and nineteenth century see Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, pp. 52-61.

³⁰⁰ Canbakal, "On the Nobility of Provincial Notables," p. 47.

³⁰¹ See Halil İnalcık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History, Papers on Islamic History*, volume 4, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), pp. 27-52.

³⁰² It should be stated that the visibility of the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* in the Ottoman court ceremonial dates to an earlier period to the 1670s than the imbursement of tax farming system. But still it can be considered to be a reason behind the making the post probably more significant.

instance, in 1654, the office of the grand-vizierate (*sadâret makâmı*) became a separate institution from the imperial council and together with a number of other offices such as the usher, *reisü'l-küttâb*, *mektupçu*, it was moved to Paşakapısı.³⁰³ Probably as a part of this re-organization, few decades later the office of the chief protocol officer (*teşrifâtçıbaşılık*) was reconfigured since from 1683/84 onwards Nîmetî Ahmed Efendi (d.1709/1710) exceeded the limits of scribal service and started to supervise the imperial ceremonies.³⁰⁴

These developments imply that by the late seventeenth century Ottoman court and its institutions was on the eve of a novel organization. As a part of it the court protocol and its ceremonies were possibly redesigned. Moreover, may be one of these reformulations was the standardization of the first official who would swear his oath of allegiance to the sultan on the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*. This can also be seen further as further formalization the *bî'at* ceremonies probably as a response to the heightened bureaucratization of the Ottoman state structure. From now on this particular feature of the ceremony would be bound to a rule that would not be subject to simultaneous changes. Moreover, the personal initiatives of some court officers would not affect the format of the ceremony. This means that regardless of who was the most powerful figure at the court or under what circumstances the ceremony took place, some particular features of the ceremony would always remain same.

It should be stated that all these points do not necessarily explain the rising prominence of the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* in the Ottoman court by the late seventeenth

³⁰³ Also known as *Bab-ı Âli* (Sublime Porte), an Ottoman administration building presented by Sultan Mehmed IV in 1654 was given to the grand vizier Dervish Mehmed Pasha. This building both served as an official residence and as an office of the grand vizier. For more see *EI2*, "Paşakapısı," vol. 8, p. 282.

³⁰⁴ Çalışkan, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Teşrifât Kalemî," pp. 5-15.

century. But still in the light of information provided here it is reasonable to assume that since the post itself represented a stance and power different from any of the other dignitaries of the Ottoman court, the Ottoman authorities might have wanted to make use of its prestige possibly to ascribe some sort of legitimacy to the Ottoman sultanate. Moreover when one takes into consideration the group that was represented in the Ottoman court in the person of the imperial *nakîbü'l eşrâf* and the growing power of the provincial elites in the Ottoman administrative system, his growing eminence in the ceremonies seem more reasonable.

As evident in the accession ceremonies of Ahmed II in 1691 and Mustafa in 1695, which were held in Edirne, the order of the elites during *bî'at* was fixed in the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*. Süleyman died in 1691 in Edirne palace when he was still reigning. According to the testimony of Silâhdâr, when the chief black eunuch informed the deputy grand vizier Ali Pasha³⁰⁵ of the death of Süleyman II, the viziers agreed on (*ittifâk-ı vükelâ*) the enthronement of Ahmed, the brother of Süleyman.³⁰⁶ An anonymous chronicle, which covers the period between the years 1688-1704, on the other hand relates that the enthronement was made with the collaboration of the grand mufti Feyzullah Efendi, the deputy grand vizier Ali Pasha and the chief black eunuch.³⁰⁷ Within the context of Ottoman political culture the description of the anonymous chronicle seems to be more accurate.

³⁰⁵ The Grand vizier and the chief commander of the imperial army (*serdar-ı ekrem*) Köprülü-zâde Fâzıl Mustafa Pasha was in army encampment in Sofia. See *Anonim Osmanlı Târîhi (1099-1116/1688-1704)*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan, (Ankara Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000), p. 24; Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târîh-i Râşid*, vol. 2, p. 159. Also see Mücteba İlgürel, "Ahmed II," *DİA*, vol. 2, pp. 33-34.

³⁰⁶ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târîhi*, vol. 2, p. 572.

³⁰⁷ *Anonim Osmanlı Târîhi*, p. 24.

As we learn from the embellished testimony of Silâhdâr, first the members of the privy hall members, including Silâhdâr himself, swore their allegiance to the new sultan in the Privy Hall. And then Ahmed II went to the audience hall to wait for the arrival of the high dignitaries for the public *bî'at*. At that time the imperial throne was being prepared for the public ceremony in the second courtyard of the Edirne palace. When the chief of the eunuchs who guarded the entrance to the palace's third courtyard invited the sultan for the public ceremony, Ahmed went to the ceremonial space and sat on the imperial throne. According to the Ottoman custom of the (*mu'tâd-ı 'osmânî üzere*) Silâhdâr says, at first the *nakîbü'l eşraf* Paşmakçızâde Ali Efendi swore his allegiance to the sultan.³⁰⁸ The anonymous chronicle substantiates the description of Silâhdâr, and mentions that the *nakîbü'l eşraf* came in the first order to express his allegiance to the sultan.³⁰⁹

At that point Silâhdâr illustrates a very interesting episode that while the *nakîbü'l eşraf* was performing the prayer Ahmed held the mustache of Ali Efendi and reproached him in determination (*azîm-i itâb eyledi*) by asking him what was the reason behind their confinement of himself with the argument that he was not incapable of ruling (*saltanata lâyük degildir demenize 'aceb sebep ne ola*).³¹⁰ Then, when the order passed to the deputy grand vizier, being still furious Ahmed told Ali Pasha "open your eyes" (*gözün aç*) and take great care to protect the city (*şehri muhafaza emrinde ihtimam eyle*). Moreover he openly warned the deputy grand vizier that he should not think this sultan to be like the previous sultans (*beni sa'ire kıyas eyleme*), clearly implying that the last sultans were weaklings who allowed

³⁰⁸ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târihi*, vol. 2, p. 573.

³⁰⁹ *Anonim Osmanlı Târihi*, p. 24.

³¹⁰ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târihi*, vol. 2, p. 573.

themselves to be manipulated by the high dignitaries.³¹¹ The authenticity of this particular instance may be questionable but perhaps the essential point to be grasped is a different one. Conversely this episode shows the lacking approval of the independent sultan.

After the deputy grand vizier, the council members including the chancellor Elmas Mehmed Pasha, the chief military judge of Rumelia Hükkamzâde Yahya Efendi, the chief military judge of Anatolia Seyyid Topal Ali Efendi, the chief finance officer Dimetokalı Ali Efendi came to express their allegiance. The religious hierarchy followed the council members, since the grand mufti Feyzullah Efendi and the religious school professors (*mevâli-i müderrisîn*) displayed their allegiance by kissing the skirt of the sultan (*dâmen-bûsî*) later on. After this group, the deputy janissary officer Mehmed Agha (*vekil yeniçeri ağası*), *solakbaşı*, chief gate keeper took their oath of allegiance to the sultan.³¹²

The conditions and the actual structure of the accession of Mustafa II in 1695 were very similar to that of Ahmed II's. Silâhdâr once more provides an eyewitness account of the accession, accordingly when sultan Ahmed II died in Edirne in January 1695 of paralytic stroke (*damla hastalığı*), the chief black eunuch İshak Agha instantly informed the grand vizier Ali Pasha of the situation. As the grand vizier learned of the death of Ahmed II he summoned all the highest ranking officers in his palace and there they decided on the enthronement of Mustafa. Immediately they revealed their decision to the Agha and went to the palace. According to Silâhdâr, and *Anonim Tevârih* the public *bî'at* was held as soon as all dignitaries

³¹¹ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Silâhdâr Târihi*, vol. 2, p. 573.

³¹² Ibid.

came together in the second courtyard.³¹³ Teşrifatî-zâde Mehmed bin Ahmed, who was the son of the first protocol officer Nimetî Ahmed Efendi who held the office between 1683/84-1710, in his compilation of the protocol rules gives a parallel description to that of Silâhdâr, and *Anonim Tevârih* on that matter.³¹⁴ Sarı Mehmed and Râşid, however, relate that as the dignitaries were still in the Council Hall they heard that Mustafa had already sit on the throne that was placed in the second courtyard. Thus, according to their version of the event the dignitaries had to take their oath of allegiance in a place that is called the guest room (*misafir odası*).³¹⁵ On this instance of the ceremony the chronicles differ. Even if Mustafa might have had seated himself on the throne without waiting for the arrival of his dignitaries to the ceremonial space, the fact that he needed another ceremony that would be held with the participation of the high ranking officials of the time signifies what the legitimate form of a *bî'at* ceremony was. Obviously, the fact that makes a *bî'at* ceremony legitimate was not the place it was held but the physical presence of the highest ranking officers of the state, who were the real administrative and governing figures, and their display of the allegiance to the sultan.

Perhaps a more important detail of the ceremony for our purposes is the order of the officers during the *bî'at* ceremony. Though a number of chronicles such as the anonymous chronicle, *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*, *Râşid Târihi* and *Uşşâki-zâde Târihi*³¹⁶

³¹³ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Nusretnâme*, ed. Mehmet Topal, "Nusretnâme of Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa," (Ph.d. diss., Istanbul, 2001), p. 2, 3; also see *Nusretnâme*, 2 vols. ed. and trans. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1964); vol. 1, p.4; *Anonim Osmanlı Târihi*, p. 103.

³¹⁴ Mehmed bin Ahmed, *DeFTER-i Teşrifat*, fols. 2a-5a, in Nişancı, *DeFTER-i Teşrifat*, pp. 1-4.

³¹⁵ Râşid Mehmed's narration of the events between the years 1671-1703 is almost totally based on Defterdar Sarı Mehmed's *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*. For this reason, it is not a coincidence to see the same sequence of the events also in this context. See Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*, p. 518; Râşid Mehmed Efendi, *Târih-i Râşid*, vol. 2, p. 294.

³¹⁶ Uşşâkî-zâde Seyyid İbrahim Hasib Efendi, *Uşşâkî-zâde Tarihi*, ed. Raşit Gündoğdu. (Istanbul: Çamlıca Basım Yayın, 2005), p. 175.

mention the accession ceremony of Mustafa II and enumerate some of the officers who participated in it; only Silâhdâr Mehmed and Mehmed bin Ahmed provide us the order of the participants. As they relate, the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* Fenarizâde Mehmed Efendi was the first official to swear his oath of allegiance to the sultan.³¹⁷ Later on according to Silâhdâr Mehmed, the high ranking viziers, the ulema, the high ranking members of the imperial troops expressed their allegiance to Mustafa II in that order. Though Mehmed bin Ahmed's account, which was probably one of the earliest protocol books (*teşrifât defteri*), runs parallel to Silâhdâr Mehmed's on matter of the first official that took his allegiance, it illustrates a totally different picture for the rest of the ceremony. According to his description, during the ceremony the sultan stood up to display his respect for the *nakîb* and the other highest ranking officials, as it was performed during the *mu'âyede* ceremonies. Besides, the grand vizier and the grand mufti, again as in the *mu'âyede*, participated in the ceremony at a certain time when they were informed to come.³¹⁸ Despite the fact that these peculiar features of the *mu'âyede bi'at* would later be evident in the accession *bi'at* as well, the contemporary sources show that at least for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century it was not the case.³¹⁹ Since Mehmed bin Ahmed compiled his account some time during the first half of the eighteenth century, probably after the death of his father Nimetî Ahmed Efendi in 1710, it seems feasible that he related the ceremony as it was performed during his time. For this reason, I do not credit his description of Mustafa II's accession ceremony as a reliable portrayal.

³¹⁷ Silâhdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Nusretnâme*, p. 3; Mehmed bin Ahmed, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, fol. 2a, in Nişancı, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, p. 1

³¹⁸ Mehmed bin Ahmed, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, fols. 3b-4a, in Nişancı, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, pp. 3, 4.

³¹⁹ How the features of these two *bi'at* ceremonies became closer from the late seventeenth century onwards is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

It seems that in the third quarter of the seventeenth century a novel form of the accession *bî'at* ceremony emerged in the ordering of the elites during the ceremony, which was actually parallel to the *mu'âyede*. As it is going to be discussed in detail in the coming chapter, this formulation was already evident in the *mu'âyede* ceremony from at least the 1670s onwards. This link substantiates the claim that the newly emerging format of the accession *bî'at* ceremony was neither accidental, nor an outcome simply of the personal preferences of some particular people.

This altered format of the *bî'at* ceremony would prevail in the long run since from this time onwards under the chief protocol officer's supervision in accession and *mu'âyede* ceremony the *nakîbü'l eşraf* would always be the one in charge of taking his oath of allegiance to the sultan in the first order.³²⁰ Of course not all features of the *bî'at* ceremony during the accessions remained static. Even though the order of the dignitaries was stabilized in the late seventeenth century, some other features of the ceremony would continue to change in the coming periods. Although a detailed discussion of these later changes exceeds the limits of this study, in the coming chapter, we shall see how as a result of some further alterations in the eighteenth century the format of the accession *bî'at* began to closely resemble that of the *mu'âyede*.

³²⁰ For some later examples of this form see the accession of Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730), recounted in Silahdâr Mehmed Ağa, *Nusretnâme*, p. 248; *Anonim Tevârih*, p. 248. For later periods an example can be the accession ceremony of Selim III (r.1789-1803) that was held in 1789. Es'ad Efendi, Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi and Münif Mustafa relate in their accounts that the *nakîbü'l eşraf* Seyyid Muhammed Kâmil Efendi (d.1800/1801), was the first person who swore his allegiance to the sultan during his accession ceremony. See Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, p. 113; Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi, *Târih-i Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi*, vol. 13/3 (1944), p. 73; Münif Mustafa, *Mecmûa-i Merâsim-i Devlet-i Âliyye*, İÜK, TY, no, 8898, fol. 189b quoted in Sarıcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Nakîbü'l Eşraflık*, p. 164.

Conclusion

As has been discussed in the chapter, the seventeenth century was a time of crises, change and reconfiguration for the Ottoman state in many respects. The already formulated political concepts, the institutional structure of the state, and the roles of the hierarchically organized elites within it, underwent a long process of redefinition in that century. The possible causes of this transformation are various, but what matters for the purposes of this study is to understand how and in what respects this transformation led to alterations in the ceremonial practice.

As far as the structural formulation of *bî'at* ceremony is concerned, it seems that in the seventeenth century the format of the ceremony did not radically change. Rather a very critical feature of the ceremony, namely the official who took an oath of allegiance to the sultan in the first order kept changing. Until the middle decades of the seventeenth century, just like the late sixteenth century practice, the representative of the most powerful faction in the court seemingly held the priority of swearing an oath of allegiance to the sultan during the accession ceremony in the first order. The slight changes in the order of the elites during the ceremony and the conditions under which the enthronement of a sultan was accomplished enable us to grasp the actual nature of current court politics and its influential partners. If for the sixteenth century most visible actor of the *bî'at* ceremony was the grand vizier, in the seventeenth century it was for sure the grand mufti. One may also mention the imperial household members as prominent partners of dynastic politics though they had an almost invisible role during the public ceremonies. Probably as a result of that, until the third quarter of the century even if in some cases the grand mufti did not hold the pivotal role in the enthronements, except Osman II's accession ceremony, he was the first one to express his oath of allegiance. This order seems to

have been replaced by a more standardized and stable format starting with the accession of Süleyman II in 1689. There, for the first time the first official that took his allegiance to the sultan was neither the grand vizier nor the grand mufti but, rather it was, the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*. Even though it is not easy to decipher why the order was fixed particularly in that post at that particular time interval, it is evident that this change implies the further formalization of the ceremony.

In all, what reveals out of that picture is that by the end of the seventeenth century both the meaning and structure of the *bî'at* ceremony became extremely formalized and standardized. For this reason, parallel to the developments in the political culture a novel format and meaning of *bî'at* emerged after a long phase of reshuffling. Contrary to the general assumption that attribute most of the institutional and structural formulation to the sixteenth century, the format and meaning of the *bî'at* ceremony that had emerged after the (long) seventeenth, would be the prevailing and enduring one. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all features of the *bî'at* ceremony would always remain same thereafter. As a purely political ceremony the *bî'at* during the accession would continue to adapt itself to the political changes to some extent in the coming decades. Yet, the changes would not be as dramatic as the previous centuries.

CHAPTER IV

BÎ'AT DURING *MU'ÂYEDE* CEREMONIES

Introduction

The two religious holidays, *îd al-adha* (sacrificial festival) and *îd al-fitr* (festival of breaking the fast) were two of the few significant events for mass celebration in the early modern Muslim societies. On these occasions, ceremonies were also held in Ottoman court where the highest ranking officials were coming together for greetings (*mu'âyede töreni*).

In this chapter the focus is going to be specifically on the exchange of the greetings that were held between the ruling elite, imperial household members and the sultan on these occasions. This ceremony deserves special attention for the purposes of this study because it clearly resembled the accession ceremonies of the Ottoman sultans in terms of the use the ceremonial space, the structure of ceremony itself and its participants, to a certain extent was very similar to. Hakan Karateke in says that the great importance given to *mu'âyede* ceremonies in the Ottoman court and the full participation of the highest dignitaries of the state in this ceremony signifies that further meanings were attached to these ceremonies, the most significant of which was re-expressing the loyalty of the elite to the Ottoman sultan through the actual performance of *bi'at*. Similarly, in the contemporary Ottoman chronicles sometimes *mu'âyede* ceremonies were referred to as occasions for the renewal of oaths of allegiance (*tecdîd-i bi'at*).³²¹

Why was there a recurrent need on the part of the sultan to re-take oath from the dignitaries of the state? Gülru Necipoğlu, explains the main reason behind the constant repetition of certain ceremonies in this way:

³²¹Selânikî Mustafa Efendi, see, *Târih-i Selânikî*, v. 1, p. 159.

The perpetuation of ceremonial communicated a message of timeless order and stability; bestowing permanence and legitimacy on an arbitrary social construct. Its power lay in constant repetition, enacted in eerily silence, as if time had been temporary suspended by an endless recurrence. It froze time into an eternal present and created an illusion of an order transcending mere human experience.³²²

One of the functions of the repetitions in the court ceremonies was to ensure the internalization of the given hierarchies and the order of the political rule. *Bî'at ceremony* in this respect was a particularly good example because it was constantly held as a part of various ceremonies such as accessions, imperial festivals and *mu'âyede*. The inclusion of this ceremony on a variety of ceremonial occasions however, does not mean that its structure and its function were exactly the same in all cases. *Bî'at* ceremony during the accessions was totally embedded within the court politics; it was, in other words, a purely politically oriented ceremony. In contradistinction, the *bî'at* ceremony during *mu'âyede* was more about ratifying the distinctions between the sultan and the court elite, and among the elites themselves, though it was also affected by the changing political conjuncture to a certain extent.³²³

The rules and structure of the *bî'at* ceremonies during the *mu'âyede* seem to have been more definite and clear than *bî'at* ceremonies during the accessions because we have sections on the regulations of the *mu'âyede* ceremonies in the *kanunnâme* compilations.³²⁴ At the same time, starting in the eighteenth century the

³²² Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p. 68.

³²³ One miniature painting that illustrates the *bî'at* ceremony of the grand vizier Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha (d.1 585) to sultan Murad III during a religious festival show that the outlooks of the two ceremonies were actually very similar. For this double page miniature painting see *Şehinşahnâme* II, TSK, B. 200, fols. 159b, 160a (fig. 9) [reproduced in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 59 and Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde...* pp. 146,147.]

³²⁴ Leysizâde Mehmed Efendi, (hereafter Leysizâde) *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân*, first published in Arabic letters by Mehmed Ârif, "Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân," in supplement of the *Târih-i Osmânî Encümeni Mecmûa* 'sı 3-4 [1330/1911-12] pp. 9-32. Here I use the recent publication of the document

court elites and chief protocol officers began to produce detailed archival records of the court ceremonies, as well as the collections of customary practices and rules on the court ceremonial and protocol.³²⁵ These sources clearly define the rules and regulations of the *mu'âyede* ceremony. One can also add the Ottoman chronicles to this list since starting from the sixteenth century some of the chronicles also include sections on *mu'âyede* ceremonies.³²⁶ This means that we have a variety of sources that shed light on the history of the *mu'âyede* ceremonies. Then one wonders why there are a variety of sources describing *mu'âyede* ceremonies as opposed to the accessions for the early modern period, why the rules and regulations of *mu'âyede* ceremonies were more clearly spelled out? These questions will form the basis of the discussion on the *mu'âyede* ceremonies.

This chapter is among other things an attempt to understand how, by what means and in what ways the *bî'at* during *mu'âyede* was restructured from the late fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and what these reformulations signify within the context of the development of Ottoman court institutions and political culture. For this attempt to succeed, it is crucial to start with the earliest known notifications about *bî'at* ceremonies during *mu'âyede*, which has come to us in the form of a law

from Ahmet Akgündüz, in *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri I* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2006); an earlier transcription of Mehmed II's *kanunname* came from Özcan "Fâtih'in Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi," pp. 7-56. Other *kanunname* compilations to be used in the thesis are Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*; Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa (Tevkii), "Teşrifât ve Teşkilât Kanunnamesi," *Milli Tetebbular Mecmûa'sı* (I/3), pp. 497-544.

³²⁵ Some examples of the collections of customary practices and rules of protocol are, Naili Abdullah Paşa, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, published as "Divan-ı Hümâyun'a aid Teşrifât," in *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmûa'sı* 16 (1926), pp. 249-60; Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*; Ali Seydi Bey, *Teşrifât ve Teşkilât-ı Kadîmemiz*; Lütfi Simavi, *Teşrifât ve Âdab-ı Mu'aşeret*; Abdülaziz Bey, *Âdat ve Merâsim-i Kadîme*.

³²⁶ For instance see Selânikî, *Târih-i Selânikî*; Mustafa Sâfi, *Zübdetü't- Tevârih*, ed. İbrahim Hakkı Çuhadar, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003); *Zübdetü't- Tevârih*; Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekâyiât*; Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi, *Târih-i Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi*; Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, *Târih-i Ata*.

book, that is the *kanunnâme* of Sultan Mehmed II. There is an ongoing debate on the authenticity of this document. Since it forms the basis of our knowledge on *mu'âyede* ceremonies, I find it relevant to go into that discussion in this chapter. Though it might be seen as a diversion from the main subject, I believe that questioning the authenticity of this particular section of the document is necessary in order to pinpoint where the *kanunnâme*'s description of *mu'âyede* stands within the general development of *bî'at* ceremonies during *mu'âyede*. One of the methods of doing that is to compare the development of the structure of *bî'at ceremonies* during the accessions with that of the *mu'âyede* from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.

The second part of the chapter, on the other hand focuses on the structural features of *bî'at* ceremonies during *mu'âyede* to understand what they signify and within the context of Ottoman court culture. In doing this attention is given to the peculiar characteristics of the *bî'at* ceremony during *mu'âyede*. A related concern throughout the second part will be to understand at what point *bî'at* during *mu'âyede* attained its stable form.

The present chapter neither claims to be exhaustive, nor provide a reconstruction of *mu'âyede* ceremonies in the period studied. Rather by focusing on selected cases from different sources such as chronicles, *kanunnâmes*, and protocol books, it aims to propose a comparative and nuanced understanding of the *bî'at* ceremony during *mu'âyede*. This new interpretation of *bî'at* ceremonies during *mu'âyede*, I believe will also broaden our understanding of *bî'at* ceremonies at large.

Instructions Concerning *Bî'at* Ceremonies during the *Mu'âyede*:

The *Kanunnâme* of Mehmed II

The law code (*kanunnâme*)³²⁷ of Mehmed II is generally accepted to be the initial stage for the development of Ottoman court culture and the hierarchical organization of its elite. This *kanunnâme* dealt with the general features of the Ottoman court ceremonies, the protocol, the duties as well as the rules of promotion for state officials. As the text itself recounts, it was compiled by Leysi-zâde Tevkii Mehmed Pasha who was the chancellor (*nişancı*) in the court of Mehmed II. In the introduction Leysi-zâde relates that since the customary practices and laws of the previous sultans were not written down, the sultan ordered him to compile the existing laws and customary practices code, and complete the missing parts with his permission so that this law code would be permanently in the use of the Imperial Council.³²⁸ One important feature of the document is that stylistically it displays a combination of the first person and the third person narrations. In an unsystematic fashion the narration shifts from the passive third person to the first person that as if the sultan himself was speaking.

³²⁷ For recent studies on the *kanunname* see Tezcan, "Kanunname of Mehmed II: A Different Perspective," p. 659; Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and intellectual*, pp. 197-200; Rifaat Abou- El-Haj, "Power and the Social Order: The Uses of the Kanun," in *The Ottoman City and Its Parts: Urban Structure and Social Order*, eds. Irene A. Bierman, Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, and Donald Preziosi (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas Publishers, 1991), p. 86.

³²⁸ Leysi-zâde, *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân*, in Ahmet Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri I*, p. 313, 314; the *kanunname* document that Akgündüz used in his transcription, is the copy that Hüseyin Bosnavi [Koca Müverrih] had inserted into his history *Bedâyi-ül Vekâyi* (written in 1644-45), which he had copied from *divan kanunnâmesi* while he held the position of *reisü'l-küttâb* in 1613-14. The same document was previously published by Abdülkâdir Özcan with a critical evaluation of Bosnavi's copy with the Vienna copy that dates to 1620. In the preliminary section of 1620 copy of the document (which is at the Austrian National Library and published by Mehmed Ârif,) Leysi-zâde gives detailed information on himself and how to compile that law code. Hüseyin Bosnavi's copy however lacks this preliminary part (*mukaddime*) rather provides a summary of this section. See Mehmed Ârif, "Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman" pp. 9-32; also see Özcan, "Fâtih'in Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi."

Since all extant copies of the document date to the seventeenth century³²⁹, there is an ongoing discussion about the authenticity of the document. There are different views among the scholars. Some ascribe the document to the late years of Mehmed II's reign.³³⁰ Other scholars on the other hand consider the *kanunnâme* a forgery of the late sixteenth and/or early seventeenth centuries particularly due to the existence of some anachronistic elements in the document.³³¹ One of the most out

³²⁹ There are four extant copies of the document dating from 1620, 1644-45, 1650, and 1675. 1620 copy, as it has been stated, is at Austrian National Library and published by Mehmed Ârif in 1911-12. 1644-45 copy is the one that was inserted in Hüseyin Bosnavî's *Bedâyi-ül Vekâyi*. This copy was published by Özcan and Akgündüz. Another copy of the document was inserted by Hezârfen Hüseyin Efendi into his *Telhisü'l Beyân* which was written around 1675. 1650 copy on the other hand, as Baki Tezcan notes, has escaped from the attention of both Özcan and Akgündüz since they say that there exist three copies of the document. However there is a fourth copy of the document that dates to 1650 which is at Austrian National Library just like 1620 copy. This document was published by Joseph von Hammer first in 1815 then, reprinted in 1963. The information provided here is closely based on Tezcan, "The Kanunname of Mehmed II," p. 662, footnotes 1 and 2.

³³⁰ This perception was first outspoken by Mehmed Ârif who in 1911-12 published a copy of the document and there he asserted that the document should have been compiled during the grand vizierate of Karamani Mehmed Pasha (d.1481) which corresponds to the period after 1477.³³⁰ Later on Halil İnalcık,³³⁰ Abdülkadir Özcan³³⁰ and Ahmet Akgündüz,³³⁰ scholars who have also worked on this subject followed Mehmed Ârif's view thus ascribed the document either to the late years of Mehmed II or to the late fifteenth century. İnalcık for instance asserts that the document that we have today must have been brought up to date during the reign of Bayezid II in 1488. His claim rests on an argument on the customary taxes taken for goods that are noted to be two per cent in the *kanunnâme*. However as İnalcık says, it was actually five percent during the late years of Mehmed II, for that reason he thinks that *kanunnâme* dates to the early reign of Bayezid II. Although he argues for a revision still he asserts that the revisions on the original text must have been this sort of fractional. Abdülkadir Özcan ascribes the document to the period between the years 1477-1481 and grounds his argument on the facts that have been stressed by Mehmed Ârif and İnalcık. Ahmet Akgündüz, follows the perceptions of Mehmed Ârif and Abdülkadir Özcan. Like them he acknowledges that the document was issued during the reign of Mehmed II. see Mehmed Ârif, "Kanunnâme-i Al-i Osman," pp. 9, 10; quoted in Özcan, "Fâtih'in Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi," p.15; İnalcık, "Osmanlı Hukukuna Giriş: Örfi, Sultani Hukuk ve Fatih'in Kanunları," *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 13/2 (1958), p. 112; Akgündüz., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, p. 312, 313.

³³¹ Ali Himmer Baki regards the whole document as forgery; Klaus Röhbörn perceives the document to be a benign forgery of the late sixteenth century compiled to legitimize practice current at that time. Konrad Dilger also dismissed the document. See Ali Himmert Berki, *İstanbul'un Beşyüzcü Fetih Yıldönümü Münasebetiyle Büyük Türk Hükümdarları, İstanbul Fatih Sultan Mehmed Han ve Adalet Hayatı* (Istanbul, 1953), Klaus Röhbörn, "Die Emanzipation der Finanzbürokratie im Osmanischen Reich (Ende 16. Jahrhundert)," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 122 (1972): 118-139; Konrad Dilger, *Untersuchungen zur geschichte des osmanischen Hofzeremoniells* (Munich, 1967), pp. 8-36. For more about this discussion among different scholars see Tezcan, "The Kanunname of Mehmed II," p. 622, footnote 2; also see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, p. 199, footnotes 15, 16; and Richard Repp, "Some Observations on the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy," in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), p. 19, footnote 6.

spoken supporters of this idea, Konrad Dilger, dismisses the *kanunnâme* itself as a forgery intended to legitimize the sixteenth century innovations. According to him the existence of some sixteenth century alterations and additions in the document such as the use of term *Sahn* in the *kanunnâme* which was in use in the sixteenth century and not in the fifteenth, proves the inauthenticity of the text.³³² Baki Tezcan, approaching the subject from a different perspective, also defends the claim that the document must have been a product of the seventeenth century. His main focus is on the question why the document might have become popular in the early seventeenth century.³³³ According to him, the presentation of *kanun* as an unchanging law that was enacted by a powerful sultan would fortify the claims of the Ottoman elite whose existence by the late sixteenth century was threatened by the entry of new actors to the Ottoman privileged class. For this reason, the appearance of the first *kanunnâme* documents in the seventeenth century was not a coincidence but probably a conscious creation of the Ottoman elite who wanted to close the doors to the newcomers, who were buying the status of membership to the Ottoman elite.³³⁴

There is also a third position taken by scholars. Some scholars argue that there must have been an original version of the document that was compiled during the late years of Mehmed's reign, yet this original document was brought up to date during the course of the sixteenth century according to the needs of the time. These scholars such draw attention to the fact that dynastic law allowed innovations and modifications to be made when needed. These additions, however, did not violate the

³³² Repp, "Some Observations on the..."; for its mention in the *kanunnâme* see Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, p. 321.

³³³ See Tezcan, "The Kanunname of Mehmed II." The same issue is evaluated more deeply in his book Idem., *The Second Ottoman Empire: The Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 48-59.

³³⁴ Tezcan, "The Kanunname of Mehmed II."

spirit of the original law, namely they do not make the document illegal or unauthentic.³³⁵ It is useful here to provide some specific examples. Gülru Necipoğlu, for instance, in her book *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power* regards the *kanunnâme* of Mehmed II as an effective tool for the newly created self image of the sovereign which centered on the newly constructed imperial palace and its ceremonial. As she has pointed out, by his late years Mehmed II had restricted the sultan's public appearance in the court. As an expression of imperial seclusion the *kanunnâme* states that the sultan would no longer eat in the presence of his subjects³³⁶ and would no longer attend in the meetings of the imperial council (*dîvân*). This change in procedure, as she argues, coincided with the construction of two administrative buildings in the imperial palace; the Chamber of Petitions (*Arz Odası*) and the Council Hall (*Dîvânhâne*) with its curtained window. The construction of the Chamber of Petitions, which can be seen as the material expression of the sultan's isolation, particularly dates to the late years of Mehmed's reign. The relevant passage of the *kanunnâme* reads: "First let there be built a Chamber of Petitions. My sacred Majesty sitting behind the curtain let my viziers and army judges and finance officers enter into my imperial presence with their petitions four times a week."³³⁷ This declaration further stresses the imperial seclusion since it restricts both the number of individuals to present petitions to the

³³⁵ Cornell Fleischer in his book *Bureaucrat and Intellectual* talks about this issue under the subtitle "The Kanunname of Mehmed II." See Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp.199-200; also quoted in Tezcan, "The Kanunname of Mehmed II," p.662, footnote 2. Also see Josef Matuz, *Das Kanzleiwesen des Sultan Süleyman des Prachtigen* (Wiesbaden, 1974); Repp, "Some Observations on the....," p.19; Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p. 20.

³³⁶ Leysi-zâde, *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân*, in Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, p. 327.

³³⁷ Leysi-zâde, *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân*, in Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, p. 326: "Evvelâ bir Arz Odası yapılsun. Cenâb-ı şerîfim pes-i perdede oturub, haftada dört gün vüzerâm ve kadiaskerim ve defterdârım rikâb-ı hümâyûnuma arza girsünler." The translation has been quoted from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p.19.

sultan and the occasions under which these individuals would be able to enter his presence. According to Necipoğlu “this passage about the Chamber of Petitions sets the tone for the body of legislation that has been attributed to Mehmed II and therefore it cannot be a forgery, especially in the light of architectural evidence.”³³⁸ Although later on certain modifications and additions would have been made to the text, Mehmed’s *kanunnâme* sets the main outlines of Ottoman court ceremonial.

Richard Repp has a similar perspective in regard to the authenticity of *kanunnâme*, yet he focuses on a different aspect of the document on the provisions of the learned profession. On that matter he argues that a survey of the careers of the ulema in the biographical sources indicates something very similar to the declarations of the *kanunnâme*. He mentions that even though the biographical sources of the early sixteenth century are not detailed enough to provide a close analysis; the main outlines of the system can be grasped from them. According to him, the picture that these sources reveal confirms the fact that provisions of the *kanunnâme* were in operation by the early sixteenth century.³³⁹

My approach to the *kanunnâme* is parallel to that third group of the scholars. As it has been argued above, different passages of the text present a different story. I believe that scholars such as Necipoğlu and Repp have presented convincing evidence dating parts of the document. But still, the same claim may not necessarily hold for the whole document since certain additions and modifications must have been made to the document during the sixteenth century. For this reason, each particular section of the *kanunnâme* then must be evaluated separately. Parallel to this point of view in the following pages I shall attempt to analyze the prescriptions

³³⁸ Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, pp. 20, 21.

³³⁹ Repp, “Some Observations,” pp. 19, 20.

mu'âyede ceremonies in the *kanunnâme* in order to determine whether to situate the *kanunnâme*'s description of the ceremony, within the developments of the late fifteenth century or of a later period?

Although the *kanunnâme* makes no reference to the accession ceremonies, it codifies the hierarchical order of the Ottoman court on the occasion of the two religious festivals (*bayram*). According to the *kanunnâme* in the two religious festivals the imperial throne should be placed in the second courtyard of the imperial palace. After they kiss the hand of the sultan, the viziers, chief military judges and the chief finance director should stand near him as his companions (*kafâdarum olup duralar*). The sultan should stand up when his tutor, the grand mufti, the viziers, the chief military judges, the chief finance director and the chancellor come to express their allegiance and greetings to the sultan. Then, the document codifies which office holders should kiss the hand of the sultan and which not.³⁴⁰

This short passage reveals a number of things. First of all, this description is too specific and too elaborate to have been composed in the late fifteenth century. It took for the Ottoman state, its institutions, its court culture and the court ceremonies a long process of invention and experimentation to develop and assume their recognizable features. Besides, it was during the late sixteenth century that the peculiar characteristics the *bî'at* ceremonies during the accessions emerged.³⁴¹ What is even more significant, however, is that when one looks at the structural details of this *kanunnâme*'s description of *bî'at* ceremony during *mu'âyede*, there seem to be a number of features that date to a later period.

³⁴⁰ See Leysi-zâde, *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân*, in Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, p. 327.

³⁴¹ This transition is thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two.

To begin with, the practice of sultan's standing up for some of the dignitaries of the state during the *bî'at ceremonies* deserves special attention. This particular feature of the ceremony seems to have been limited only to the *bî'at* ceremonies during *mu'âyede* at least until the eighteenth century since up to this point it is not seen in *bî'at* ceremonies during the accession.³⁴² We see the hints of this practice in the description of a *mu'âyede* ceremony that was held during the religious festival of April 1st of 1567 (*gurre-i şevval* sene 974). As the historian Selâniki relates, to the notables of the state, starting with the tutor of the sultan came in hierarchical order to swear their oaths of allegiances. According to the text, when the tutor of the sultan, Mevlânâ Hoca Atâullah Efendi, who was the most learned of the ulema, arrived at the imperial throne and he was honored by the sultan as he deserved.³⁴³ Although it is not possible to understand exactly what Selâniki actually means when he writes "he was honored" one may speculate that the sultan stood up to show his respect to his tutor whose name is mentioned in the *kanunnâme* among those the sultan would stand up for during the *mu'âyede* ceremonies. For the grand mufti, however, Selâniki's description is more definite since he mentions that when the grand mufti Ebussuûd (d.1574) approached the imperial throne, the sultan stood up on his feet and displayed his respect.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Although the ceremonial developments in eighteenth century exceeds the limits of this study, from a general evaluation of a number of protocol books that dates to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it reveals that by that time this practice became a part of *bî'at* ceremonies during the accession as well. My estimation is that it evolved at sometime during the eighteenth century. For more see Chapter Three.

³⁴³ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 1, p. 61: "... cümleden mukaddem alemü'l ulema ve efdalü'l fudalâ Mevlânâ Hoca Atâullah Efendi pâye-i serir-i âlem-mesire varduklarında lââyık olduğu üzere tevkir ü izâz u ihtirâm buyurdılar."

³⁴⁴ Ibid.: "...Mevlânâ Şeyh'ül-islâm ve Müfti'l-enâm Ebussuûd Efendi hazretleri serdâr-ı ulemâ-i izâm olup pâye-i serir-i saltanata yakın geldikleri gibi hazret-i Hilâfet-penâh bir kadem ikbâl idüp, ikrâm u ihtirâm buyurdular."

This passage shows that the sultan was already standing up for certain notables during the *bi'at* ceremony in *mu'âyede* dating to the 1560s.³⁴⁵ Yet the dignitaries for whom the sultan stood up seem to have been limited only to the grand mufti and probably to his tutor at this stage. According to the *kanunnâme*, however, the sultan should stand up not only for his tutor and the grand mufti, but also for his viziers, chief military judges, chief finance director and chancellor. For sure it is possible that consciously or unconsciously Selâniki might have omitted some parts of the ceremony when narrating. For instance, in another *mu'âyede* description that dates to April 1600 (*şevval* 1008) Selâniki does not relate us the details of the ceremony; but he only counts the names of a limited number of dignitaries who participated in the ceremony.³⁴⁶ On the other hand Selâniki in general seems to have been a careful and conscientious observer and he provides a very detailed account, some features of which seem to parallel the prescription of the *kanunnâme*.

For instance as it has been mentioned before, according to the *kanunnâme* the viziers, chief military judges, and the chief finance director would stand by the sultan after they kiss his hand. Similarly Selâniki relates that after the chief military judges of Rumelia and Anatolia, and the finance directors prostrated themselves before the imperial throne, they took their places on the sultan's right.³⁴⁷ So it appears that even though Selâniki does not mention the chief military judges and

³⁴⁵ In an earlier description of a *mu'âyede* ceremony which dates to May 1532 (*gurre-i şevval* sene 938) we do not see this particular feature. When explaining the *mu'âyede* ceremony that was held at the army camp in Edirne, historian Celâl-zâde only says that all dignitaries of the state prostrated themselves before the imperial throne and kissed the hand of the sultan. This suggests that although the ceremony was held at that time, some of its characteristic features such as the sultan's standing up had not yet evolved at that time. See Celâl-zâde *Tabakât*, fols. 209a, 209b.

³⁴⁶ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 2, p. 860.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 61: "Rûmîli Kadıaskeri Kadı-zâde Mevlânâ Ahmed Efendi ve Anadolu Kadıaskeri Mevlânâ Muallim-zâde Efendi, Celâl-zâde Mir Tevkii, Baş-defterdâr Murad Efendi ve Şikk-ı sâni Defterdârı Balık-zâde Efendi ve Anadolu Defterdârı Hasan Efendi tamâmen pâye-i serir-i saltanata yüz sürüp, cânib-i yemînde makamlarına kaim oldılar."

finance directors among the ones for whom the sultan stood up, he mentions their names in a different context. This shows that their presence in the ceremony was not ignored by Selâniki. Then it seems more likely the sultan did not stand up for these officials.

Selâniki's account shows that the sultan's standing up for some officials had already become part of *mu'âyede* ceremonies by the 1560s. Probably it attained the form described in the *kanunnâme* by the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. In historian Mustafa Sâfi's³⁴⁸ (d.1616) elaborate and detailed description of a *mu'âyede* ceremony that was held in 1613 during the reign of Ahmed I (r.1603-1617), one can see a more articulated form of the practice.³⁴⁹ As Mustafa Sâfi illustrates in his chronicle, the sultan during the ceremony stood up on his feet to display his respect/honor for the grand vizier, chief military judges, the chancellor, chief finance director, grand mufti, and some highest members among the judges and professors.³⁵⁰ These extended numbers of notables for whom the sultan stood up

³⁴⁸ As he relates in his history, Mustafa Sâfi was appointed as the sultan's personal imam in January 1608, and in 1615 with the order of Sultan Ahmed I he became the chief military judge of Anatolia. So he was well positioned in the inner circle of Sultan's intimates and confidants, which makes his account probably more significant. For his life see *Zübdetü't- Tevârih*, pp. xix-xxxi.

³⁴⁹ A parallel description to Sâfi's comes from Hezârfen Hüseyin (d.1676) who collected the existing customary practices and laws on the court ceremonial and its protocol. In his *Telhisü'l Beyân* (completed in 1675). In *Telhisü'l Beyân*'s description as well the sultan stands up to honor a number of dignitaries when they approximated to him in order to swear their oaths of allegiance during the *mu'âyede* ceremony. Its description of *bî'at* during *mu'âyede* is evaluated in detailed in the coming section of this chapter. See Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*, pp. 79, 80.

³⁵⁰ It is not clear from Sâfi's description for which office holders among the ulema the sultan stood up. He says that during the *bî'at* of the ulema, the Grand vizier was informing the sultan for whom he needed to stand up. Moreover also notes that for some of the *mevâli* (comprising judges and religious school professors [*müderriş*]) the sultan showed his esteem by standing up in accordance with the custom. From this information one can suppose that the sultan was standing up only for the high ranking judges and professors. Quite strikingly Hezârfen Hüseyin in his description of *mu'âyede* ceremonies replicates the same expression. See, Sâfi, *Zübdetü't- Tevârih*, vol. 2, p. 251; Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*, p. 80.

seem to be similar to the *kanunnâme*'s description.³⁵¹ Accordingly, at the time when the grand vizier came to the salutation spot, the sultan stood up completely (*kıyâm-ı tâam*) to enhance his honoring (*tevkîr ü tefhim ü tazîmini tevfir için*) of his servant. Then as the grand vizier passed by and took his position alongside the sultan the other viziers and all of the military judges came one by one (*vâhiden bade vâhidin*), and the sultan showed his regard (for them) by standing up and saluting each one of them according to his ranks (*selâm ve kıyâmda alâ haseb-i merâtibihim iltifât idüb*). When this group was summoned the order passed to the ulema. As the grand mufti came to the salutation spot, the sultan stood up for him (*şeyhü'l islâm mahal-i selâma geldikde ol şâh bâ-intibâh hazret-i Mevleviye kıyâm*) and when the mufti kissed his hand and bosom of his garment (*takbil-i dest ü ceyb idince*) this time the sultan stood up for a longer period (*medd-i kıyâm*). Later on, the other members of the religious establishment came to express their allegiance and as Sâfi relates, during their *bî'at* the grand vizier informed the sultan whom he needed to honor by standing up (*nev-i kıyâm ile sûret-i ikrâmı lâzım olanların*).³⁵²

Apart from its form, the symbolical meaning of this practice during the *bî'at* ceremonies in *mu'âyede* is very important. The fact that at certain times during a court ceremony the sultan stood up to display his respect for some of his servants makes reference to the growing power of some of the highest dignitaries of the state including the grand vizier, chief military judges, chief finance director, chancellor, grand mufti as well as some of the highest ranking members of the *mevâli*, on the

³⁵¹ In Sâfi's description, differently from the *kanunnâme* the tutor of the sultan is not mentioned among the ones for whom the sultan stood up. But still it is evident that Sâfi's account points to an increased number of people for whom the sultan stood up. In time some other officials such as the *nakîbü'l eşraf* will also be added to this list. See Sâfi, *Zübdetü't- Tevârih*, vol. 2, pp. 250, 251; for growing visibility of *nakîbü'l eşraf* during the court ceremonies see Chapter Three.

³⁵² Sâfi, *Zübdetü't- Tevârih*, vol. 2, pp. 250, 251.

affairs of the state.³⁵³ This practice, then, can be seen as an explicit recognition of these groups' political standing at the Ottoman court. Moreover since the depersonalization of the office of the sultan and the rising influence of various groups within court politics were evident by the mid sixteenth century, it may not be far-fetched to argue that these developments began to be reflected in ceremonial practice in the *kanunnâme* at around the same time.

A second feature of the *kanunnâme*'s description of *bî'at* during *mu'âyede*, which requires a closer evaluation, is the differentiation among the lower ranking officials of the state in terms of whether they were allowed to kiss the hand of the sultan or not. The privilege of kissing the hand of the sultan was granted only to the higher position holders. While, for instance, the ushers and imperial tasters were allowed to kiss the hand of the sultan, the fief holders and most of the judges were not. Indeed for some office holders there was a hierarchy among themselves as well. Let me provide a few examples, the *kanunnâme* prescribes that only the judges whose income was higher than sixty aspers (*akçe*) could kiss the hand of the sultan, similarly the professors whose income was twenty asper were allowed to kiss the sultan's hand. Likewise only the imperial guards (*müteferrika*) who were registered on the state rolls (*ulûfeli*) could kiss the hand of the sultan.³⁵⁴ To understand why this particular differentiation among the elites is important for the purpose of the study, we must compare it with the *bî'at* ceremonies during the accession.

³⁵³ For the introduction of new groups to the court politics and their growing influence by the late sixteenth century see Chapter 2, pp. 77, 78.

³⁵⁴ See Leysi-zâde, *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osmân*, in Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, p. 327.

During the late fifteenth,³⁵⁵ sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the *bî'at* ceremonies that were held as a part of the accessions there seem to have been no hierarchical differentiation among the elites of the state concerning who was privileged to kiss the hand of the sultan. The chronicles generally use formulaic descriptions to relate the act of *bî'at* without making any distinction between the highest members of the court and the lower ranking officials. The most common expressions are; kissing the hand of the sultan (*el öpmek, dest-bûs*), the hem of his skirt (*dâmen-bûsi*) and prostrating oneself before the imperial throne (*serir-i alâya yüz sürmek*) to explain the act of swearing an oath of allegiance. Moreover, in the chronicles these expressions seem to be used interchangeably. The absence of such a differentiation in the accession ceremonies does not mean that one cannot draw a comparison between the *bî'at* ceremony during *mu'âyede* and accession. As we have already seen, until the mid-sixteenth century the accession ceremony had not yet acquired its characteristic features. Similarly, for the earliest documented instances of accession ceremonies (namely the ceremonies of Bayezid II [r.1481-1512] and Selim I [r. 1512-1520]); there is little indication of the performance of *bî'at*. Since *bî'at* ceremonies during the accessions became more elaborate and relatively more conscribed by the mid sixteenth century, it is sensible to assume the same phase of formation for *bî'at* during the *mu'âyede* as well.

Except for the *kanunnâme*, the available sources that date to the seventeenth and later centuries display a similar differentiation among the court elites in terms of how they expressed their allegiance during *mu'âyede* ceremonies. These sources

³⁵⁵ As it has been argued in the Chapter Two, actually the ceremony that was held during the late fifteenth century was more in the form of a greeting ceremony than a formal *bî'at* ceremony. It is from 1520 onwards we begin to see the emergence of the characteristic features of *bî'at* ceremonies. See Chapter Two.

follow a hierarchical pattern which evidently echoes the description of the *kanunnâme*. For instance, Mustafa Sâfi in his description of a *mu'âyede* ceremony dating to 1613 uses different expressions for different groups and individuals to relate their display of the *bi'at*. Accordingly, during that *bi'at* ceremony the grand vizier kissed the side of the sultan's auspicious skirt (*kûşe-i dâmene-i müteyemmenlerin bûs eyleyüb*), the grand mufti kissed the sultan's hand and bosom of his garment (*takbîl-i dest ü ceyb*), *nakîbü'l eşrâf* kissed the hand of the sultan (*dest-bûs*), the tutor of the sultan and the descendants of the khans of Crimea kissed the skirt of the sultan (*dâmen-bûs*) and some begs, the imperial guards (*müteferrika*) the imperial tasters (*çâşnigîr*), and dismissed governor generals (*mazûl beglerbegler*) kissed the ground (*bisat-bûs*).³⁵⁶

This sort of differentiation is also evident in Hezârfen Hüseyin's (d.1676) compilation of practices of etiquette and protocol rules among the court elite in his *Telhisü'l Beyân*.³⁵⁷ The section of the *Telhisü'l Beyân* on the *mu'âyede* ceremony is quite embellished and provides us valuable insights into prescribed gestures and roles of each and every group or person who was supposed to participate in the court ceremonies. On the differentiation of the court elite in terms of how they would express their allegiance, the *Telhisü'l Beyân* includes a description that parallels to Mustafa Sâfi's. As *Telhisü'l Beyân* prescribes, during the celebrations of the two religious festivals the grand vizier, the viziers and the chief military judges, the ulema and the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* would kiss the sultan's skirt (*dâmen-bûsi*). The grand mufti, on the other hand, would kiss the hand of sultan (*dest-bûs*). While the tutor of

³⁵⁶ Sâfi, *Zübdetü't Tevârih*, vol. 2, pp. 250, 251.

³⁵⁷ See Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*.

the sultan, some begs, the imperial tasters, and dismissed governor generals would kiss the ground (*bîsât-bûsi*).³⁵⁸ Moreover *Telhisü'l Beyân* also relates that the other service holders of the inner palace would swear their oaths to the sultan by kissing his hand (*el öperler*).³⁵⁹

The compilation of the existing practices and customary laws of protocol by Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha (d.1692), which was written in 1676/77, also provides a similar description of how the courtiers would express their allegiance to the grand vizier on the occasion of the two religious festivals.³⁶⁰ According to him, five days before the *bayram*, the courtiers would start to visit the grand vizier at his palace to celebrate the religious festival. There, they were supposed to express their homage or allegiance to the highest member of the court; namely to the grand vizier. The council members (*dîvân halkı*) would kiss the hand of the grand vizier (*dest-bûs*) whereas the members of the outer palace (*bîrûn halkı*), the ushers, gate keepers and steward of the doorkeepers (*kapıcılar kethüdâsı*) as well as the scribes of the council (*dîvân hocaları*) would kiss his skirt (*dâmen-bûs*).³⁶¹ Apparently this differentiation parallels that description of Mustafa Safi and Hezârfen Hüseyin.

A similar tendency to differentiate among the courtiers who took their oath of allegiance to the sultan can be glimpsed from the account of Albertus Bobovious (d.1675) who lived in the inner palace (*enderûn*) for nineteen years as a page for the

³⁵⁸ Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*, pp. 78-80.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 82.

³⁶⁰ Here we have a grand vizier oriented narration probably because the author wrote this *kanunnâme* by the order of the Grand vizier Mustafa Pasha (d. 1683). But also among the elites of the court themselves since the allegiance as an act of submission was also displayed to the grand vizier on the occasion of religious festivals. See Abdurrahman Abdi Paşa, "Teşrifât ve Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi," pp. 520, 521.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 520, 521.

service of the Ottoman sultan.³⁶² In his description of the imperial palace Bobovius also includes a section on the *mu'âyede* ceremonies. As he notes, after the public ceremony that was held in the second courtyard, the throne was put in front of the Privy Hall (*Has Oda*) for the inner palace service holders to express their allegiance to the sultan. During this private *bi'at* ceremony, he relates that the aghas, privy hall members (*has odalılar*) and the superior pages would kiss either the hand or the skirt of the sultan according to their ranks. The lower ranking pages on the other hand would kiss the cuff of the sleeve of the sultan (*yen ucu*).³⁶³

The eighteenth and nineteenth century descriptions of *bi'at* ceremony during *muâyede* also display the same sort of differentiation on how to express the oaths of allegiance to the sultan. For instance in Es'ad Efendi's (d. 1848) and Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata's (d. 1877) accounts, similar to the seventeenth-century sources, different expressions are used for describing the act of *bi'at* for different officials. Some of these expressions are kissing the skirt (*dâmen-bûs*), ground (*zemin-bûs*), the

³⁶² Albertus Bobovius was taken as a captive and was brought to Istanbul sometime in the early seventeenth century. First he entered the school of pages in the Edirne Palace and then was transferred to the Topkapı Palace where he completed his training. He became a master musician at the imperial palace at the same time as Hezârfen Hüseyin also notes, he served as the second ranking translator at the Ottoman court. He wrote his account in the year 1665 and after a few years the account was translated into various European languages. See Albertus Bobovius, *Topkapı, Relation du Serail du Grand Seigneur*, trans. as *Albertus Bobovius yada Santuri Ali Ufki Bey'in Anıları: Topkapı Sarayı'nda Yaşam*, trans. Ali Berkay (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2002), pp. 12-22.

³⁶³ Since Bobovius was in working in the inner service of the palace it is not possible to accept his description of the public *bi'at* ceremony as absolutely credible. Indeed when describing the *bi'at* of the descendents of khans of Crimea he uses the phrase "as I have heard" ("bana nakledildiğine göre...") which clearly indicates that he did not witness these ceremonies. Probably because of his lack of information he might have mistakenly noted that according to what he had heard when the descendents of khans of Crimea were expressing their allegiance the sultan would stand. Yet at that time interval, as derives from more reliable sources such as Hezârfen Hüseyin's *Telhisü'l Beyân*, the sultan was not standing up for the descendents of khans of Crimea during the *mu'âyede*. For the description of the private ceremony that was held for the inner palace service holders on the other hand, we probably have reliable information since it was more probable for him to have attended it personally. And for the private *bi'at* ceremony his differentiation of the inner palace officials in terms of how they ought to display their oaths of allegiance to the sultan resembles the descriptions of Ottoman chroniclers such as Mustafa Sâfi, Hezârfen Hüseyin and Abdurrahman Abdî Pasha. See Bobovius, *Albertus Bobovius yada Santuri Ali*, pp. 63-65.

collar of the sultan's garment (*giribân-bûs*), and the royal threshold (*âsitân-bûs*).³⁶⁴ Although these descriptions are not exact replicas of the *kanunnâme*, or of each other, their resemblance is striking. That such a differentiation among the court elite is attested only in the seventeenth century descriptions of *bî'at* ceremony suggests that, the relevant section of *kanunnâme* on *mu'âyede* ceremonies dates to a later period.

When the prescriptions of the *kanunnâme* on the celebrations of the two religious festivals are examined more closely, it appears that the description of *kanunnâme* does not coincide with the present nature of the Ottoman court ceremonial and court culture during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Primarily, it does not fit the general development of the Ottoman court protocol. Secondly, as far as the structural features of the *kanunnâme*'s description are concerned such as the practice of sultan's standing up for certain dignitaries and the elite's differing gestures to display their oath, it appears that the *kanunnâme*'s description is closer to the structure of *bî'at* ceremonies during the *mu'âyede* in the seventeenth century.

At exactly what point this section of the *kanunnâme* was compiled, we cannot be sure. But the likelihood is that the *kanunnâme*'s section on the celebrations of two religious festivals dates to either the late sixteenth or the early seventeenth century. One reason for positioning it between these time intervals is that the descriptions of Mustafa Sâfi, Hezârfen Hüseyin, Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha and Bobovious are evidently more embellished and detailed than that of the *kanunnâme*. These descriptions for this reason represent the further phases of the ceremonial

³⁶⁴ See Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, pp. 113, 114 and 38- 42; Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, *Târih-i Ata*, pp. 321-325.

development. For an earlier period on the other hand the possibility is even lesser because even if some of its characteristics seem to have been evident in the *mu'âyede* ceremony that dates to 1567, we do not see the actual structure of *bî'at* ceremonies during the *mu'âyede* that is prescribed in the *kanunnâme*. For this reason the most feasible date appears to be the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century for the *kanunnâme*'s description of *bî'at*. This possible timing in the light of evidence given here not only provides a novel perspective for the study of Ottoman court ceremonies but also provides a new dimension to the ongoing discussion on the authenticity of the *kanunnâme* document.

The Characteristic Features of *Bî'at* Ceremonies during *Mu'âyede*: Their Formation, Change and Function

Although the secondary literature generally describes the *bî'at* ceremony during *mu'âyede* as being almost identical to the one held during the accessions, the available material points to the contrary until the eighteenth century when the two ceremonies did indeed become more similar. Just like the royal accession ceremony the characteristic features and form of the *mu'âyede* ceremony emerged over time. For instance, in one of the earliest descriptions of a *mu'âyede* ceremony that was held in May 1532, we do not see any of the peculiar features of the *mu'âyede*.³⁶⁵ The only piece of information we have is that, all of the dignitaries of the state participated in the ceremony, and according to the custom prostrated themselves

³⁶⁵ At this stage of my research, I have not come across in the Ottoman chronicles a ceremony that dates earlier than 1532. But this is not enough to assume that this ceremony is the earliest description of a *mu'âyede* ceremony. For this reason, I find it more suitable to say that probably this is one of the earliest descriptions.

before the imperial throne and kissed the hand of the sultan (*pâye-i serîr-i âlem mâsirlerine yüz sürüb, el öpdiler*).³⁶⁶ Then we can assume that in the 1530s the characteristic features of *mu'âyede* ceremonies had not yet emerged. But, from at least 1567 onwards *bî'at* ceremonies during the *mu'âyede* seem to have attained a distinctive form and meaning which differed greatly from the *bî'at* ceremony during royal accessions. Evidently, these features were subject to change and reformulation in the course of time and a relatively more prevailing format of the ceremony emerged during some time in the eighteenth century. Even afterwards some novel features were added to the ceremony for instance, 1856 onwards the non Muslim dignitaries such as the ambassadors and envoys were allowed to attend the ceremony as observers.³⁶⁷ Therefore, it would not be wrong to assume that the structural patterns of *bî'at* ceremonies of the *mu'âyede* remained unchanged for centuries. On the contrary, despite the fact that they were not as closely tied to the political developments as the accession ceremonies, the structure of the *mu'âyede* ceremonies was also affected by the developments within Ottoman political culture to a certain extent.

As far as the first official who came in the first order to display his allegiance to the sultan is concerned it seems that until the late seventeenth century this particular feature of the ceremony was different in *mu'âyede* and royal accessions. As it has been discussed in the previous chapter, until the late seventeenth century while the power balance changed within the court from time to time, the first official who swore his allegiance sometimes appeared to be the grand vizier who was the

³⁶⁶ Celâl-zâde, *Tabakât*, fol. 209b.

³⁶⁷ See Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa*, pp. 80, 81.

head of the council, and sometimes became the grand mufti who was the head of the religious establishment.³⁶⁸

Until the mid-seventeenth century in *bi'at* ceremonies of *mu'âyede* however, there seems to have been a totally different organization. From the account of Selâniki, it appears that during the *mu'âyede* ceremonies that were held in 1567 and 1600 it was the tutor of the sultan who came in the first order to display his allegiance to the sultan.³⁶⁹ While in 1567 description, the descendants of the khans of Crimea (*Tatar Han evlâdı*) then the imperial guards followed the sultan's tutor, in 1600 *nakîbü'l eşrâf* thereafter the descendants of the khans of Crimea came to express their allegiance to the sultan. According to Mustafa Sâfi in the ceremony that was held in 1613 on the other hand, it was first the descendents of the khans of Crimea and then the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* who preceded the other participants in displaying their allegiance.³⁷⁰ Although there seems to be no consensus in these sources on who displayed his allegiance, it is quite clear that the first person who came to swear his oaths of allegiance to the sultan was not the grand vizier or grand mufti, but rather someone else such as the tutor of the sultan, the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* and the descendents of the khans of Crimea.³⁷¹ Clearly, being the first person to swear the oath of allegiance to the sultan had different connotations during the *mu'âyede* and royal accessions.

³⁶⁸ For the examples of these changes and their possible references to the political culture see Chapter Two and Three.

³⁶⁹ Selâniki, *Târih-i Selâniki*, vol. 1, p. 61, vol. 2, p. 860.

³⁷⁰ Sâfi, *Zübdetü't Tevârih*, vol. 2, p. 250.

³⁷¹ This does not mean that these positions did not bring in to their holders any political power, for sure they did. From time to time for instance especially the tutors of the sultans such as Sa'deddin (d. 1599) and Feyzullah Efendi (d.1703) appeared as very powerful partners in the court politics that could influence top level appointments of the high ranking judges and professors. However, when compared with the political power of the viziers, the grand mufti and the aghas, it appears that because

Until the late seventeenth century, it is not exactly clear who came in the first order during the *bî'at* ceremony of the *mu'âyede*, but after this time interval it became the privilege of the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*. The first account relating that the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* came to express his allegiance to the sultan in the first order is Hezârfen Hüseyin's *Telhisü'l Beyân* (which was compiled in 1675).³⁷² Thereafter, this order seems to have been repeated by the authors that wrote about the eighteenth and nineteenth century court ceremonies. A number of examples would substantiate this point. A book of protocol that relates the *mu'âyede* ceremony of Ramadan in the year 1795 mentions that primarily it was the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* that kissed the dust under the foot of the sultan ("evvela nakîbü'l eşrâf hak-i pâ-y-i şahâneyi takbil ile...").³⁷³ Similarly, Es'ad Efendi in his *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme* (first published in 1870) when writing the customary rules and laws of protocol says that, during the *mu'âyede* ceremonies it was customary for the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* to come in the first order for expressing his allegiance to the sultan.³⁷⁴ Another example can be the history of Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, when recording the existing rules of protocol in his *Târih-i Ata* (published in 1876), he notes that on the occasion of a *mu'âyede*, the *nakîbü'l eşrâf* would come in the first order to display his allegiance to the sultan.³⁷⁵ Similarly, J. Mouradgea D'ohsson (d. 1807) in the fourth volume of his *Tableau general de l'Empire Ottoman* (published in 1788) mentions that, on the occasions of

of the nature of their service the holders of these positions (*sultan hocası, nakîbü'l eşrâf*) were not at the core of the politics in most cases. That is why I call them the prestigious positions.

³⁷²See Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*, p. 80

³⁷³ *Mecmuâ-i Merâsim-i Devlet-i Âliyye*, İÜK, TY, no, 8898, fol. 25a quoted in Sarıçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Nakîbü'l Eşrâfluk*, p. 165.

³⁷⁴ Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, p. 48.

³⁷⁵ Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, *Târih-i Ata*, p. 224.

the two religious festivals the *nakīb* was the first official to express his allegiance to the sultan.³⁷⁶

As it has been discussed before quite strikingly at around the same time interval the *nakībū'l eṣrâf* also became the first person to take an oath of allegiance during the royal accessions. This feature appears for the first time in the accession of Süleyman II (r. 1687-1691), and thereafter in each enthronement ceremony one can observe the same feature.³⁷⁷

A relevant question that comes to mind is why the muayede ceremonies seem to have been more prescribed and elaborate when compared with the descriptions of the royal accession ceremonies? From its early phase onwards the *mu'âyede* ceremony had a more fixed form since all of the *kanunnâme* compilations (of the court protocol and etiquette) that have been examined in this chapter include sections that describe the structure of the *mu'âyede* ceremonies, whereas we do not observe the same for the accession ceremonies. This is probably related to the fact that by their nature accessions were unexpected and politically tense events since no one could exactly know when and under what circumstances an accession ceremony would take place. As a result, the structure of the *bî'at* ceremony during the

³⁷⁶ D'ohsson, *Tableau General*, vol. 4, p. 564.

³⁷⁷ For the accession ceremonies of Süleyman II, Ahmed II (r. 1691-1695), Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703) and Ahmed III (r. 1703-1730) Silâhdâr Mehmed Agha (d.1726/27) provides detailed descriptions. In each ceremony he notes that first the *nakībū'l eṣrâf* swore his allegiance to the sultan. *Anonim Tevârih* substantiates the narration of Silâhdâr Mehmed for the accession ceremonies of Ahmed II and Ahmed III. See *Silâhdâr Târihi*, vol. 2, pp. 573; Idem., *Nusretnâme*, 2 vols, vol. 1, p. 4; also see Mehmet Topal, "Nusretnâme of Silâhdâr Mehmed Agha," p. 2; *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osman (1099-1116/1688-1704)*, pp. 24, 248. For later periods one example can be the accession ceremony of Selim III (r.1789-1803) that was held in 1789. As Es'ad Efendi, Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi and Münif Mustafa relate in their accounts that the *nakībū'l eṣrâf* Seyyid Muhammed Kâmil Efendi (d.1800/1801), was the first person who swore his allegiance to the sultan during his accession. See Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, p. 113; Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi, *Târih-i Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi*, p. 73; Münif Mustafa, *Mecmûa-i Merâsim-i Devlet-i Âliyye*, İÜK, TY, no, 8898, fol. 189b quoted in Sarıçık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Nakibü'l Eşrâflık*, p. 164. For more see Chapter Three.

accessions was more flexible and adjustable than that of the *mu'ayede*. Another possible explanation can be that the *mu'ayede* ceremonies were held two times a year during the celebrations of two religious holidays. Whereas the royal accession ceremonies were held only during the times of changes of throne which sometimes did not happen for decades. Thus, there is a considerable numerical difference between the occurrence of the two which inevitably makes the format *mu'ayede* ceremony more apparent. Indeed, when relating the *bi'at* ceremony during the accession of Mustafa II Teşrifâtî-zâde Mehmed Efendi relates that the imperial throne was prepared for the ceremony as it was practiced during the religious festival (*iyd-i şerif tertibi üzere*).³⁷⁸ Parallel to this reference, while recounting the accession of Selim III, which was held in 1789, Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi notes that the ceremony took place according to the custom /etiquette of *mu'âyede* (*mu'âyede resmi üzere*).³⁷⁹ Similarly, in his account for the same ceremony Es'ad Efendi relates that, everybody took their positions in accordance with their ranks just like the custom of the *mu'âyede* (*mu'âyede resmi gibi herkes merâtib üzere turduğu halde*).³⁸⁰ Another instance that Es'ad Efendi uses this expression is that, when the ceremony was summoned the deputy grand vizier and agha took the sultan by his arms and walked together to the inner section of the palace as it was used to be practiced during the *mu'âyede* ceremonies (*mu'âyede resmi üzere*).³⁸¹ These expressions signify that the acknowledged and remodeled form for the court ceremonies was that of the *mu'ayede*'s.

³⁷⁸ See Mehmed bin Ahmed , *Defter-i Teşrifât*, fol. 2a, in Nişancı, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, p. 1.

³⁷⁹ See Teşrifâtî Naim Efendi, *Târih-i Teşrifâtî Naim*, p. 73.

³⁸⁰ Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, p. 113.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

As has been argued above, being the first person to swear an oath of allegiance to the sultan during the *mu'âyede* was not an indicator of the political authority of that person. But this does not mean that *mu'âyede* ceremonies did not carry any features that made references to the current political hierarchy. One of these was that the two most prominent groups of the Ottoman court, the viziers headed by the grand vizier and the ulema headed by the grand mufti participated in the ceremony at a certain time after it started. According to the descriptions dating from the late seventeenth century and the later centuries, at a certain time (generally when the imperial guards [*müteferrika*] started to swear their oath of allegiance) in ceremony the steward of the doorkeepers and the chief usher (*çavuşbaşı*) would go to notify first the grand vizier and the imperial council members and then, the grand mufti and the ulema that they could participate in the ceremony. When they entered in the ceremonial space, first the grand vizier and the council members and thereafter the grand mufti and ulema would come to express their allegiance to the sultan.³⁸² This feature, I believe, symbolizes the fact that they were the two most powerful parties within the court and therefore they had the privilege to attend the ceremony only after the other participants such as the imperial soldiers, guards, gate keepers, ushers etc. had already taken their places in the ceremonial space.

Another distinctive feature of the *bi'at* ceremony during the *mu'âyede*, was the practice of sultan's standing up for certain dignitaries of the state as a means to express his respect and esteem for these notables. As has been examined above, this particular feature of the ceremony was still underdeveloped by the 1560s and reached

³⁸² For some examples of this description see Hezârfen Hüseyin, *Telhisü'l Beyân*, pp. 80, 81; Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, pp. 48, 49; Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, *Târih-i Ata*, pp. 234, 235; Ali Seydi Bey, *Teşrifât ve Teşkilâtımız*, pp. 30, 31.

its recognizable form only in the early seventeenth century. This feature of the ceremony interestingly emerged at a time when various groups within the Ottoman court emerged as active partners in court politics. This coincidence makes me think that, this practice can be seen as an explicit recognition of the political standing and prestige of the highest members of these groups. Indeed the number of people for whom the sultan stood up seems to have increased over time to include the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*, the grand admiral, and the judge of Istanbul.³⁸³ Then it may not be far-fetched to argue that when the number of influential people in the court politics arose, they started to enter into the ranks of those who were honored by the sultan by standing up during the royal ceremonies. Probably it is the same reason why the sultan was not standing up for the high ranking judges (except the two chief military judges and the judge of Istanbul) and professors. Even though their statuses were high in the hierarchical order of the ulema, these officers did not possess much political power. All this demonstrates the ever changing nature of the Ottoman court ceremonies by responding to the novel formulations in political culture, even after they had attained to their characteristic form.

³⁸³ Since the names of these officials were not mentioned among the ones for whom the sultan stood up in the seventeenth century descriptions of the *bî'at* but in the eighteenth and nineteenth century descriptions, my estimation is that this increase in the number of people for whom the sultan would stand up evolved in some time during the course of the eighteenth century. For example, Mehmed bin Ahmed in his description of the protocol during the *mu'âyede* ceremonies, which was compiled in the first half of the eighteenth century, note that the sultan would stand up when the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*, high ranking judges of the city and also the tutor of the sultan. Es'ad Efendi and Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata in their detailed descriptions of *bî'at* ceremony mention do not mention the tutor of the sultan. But they agree with Mehmed bin Ahmed's description in the sense that when *nakîbü'l eşrâf*, judge of Istanbul the approximated to the throne the sultan stood up. And also they mention the grand admiral to be among the ones that the sultan stood up. Different from Es'ad, Tayyar-zâde also mentions the descendents of the khans of Crimea to be among the ones for whom the sultan stood up, whereas Es'ad does not mention the descendents among the participants of the ceremony at all. See Mehmed bin Ahmed, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, fols. 69b-75a, in Koca, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, pp. 69-75; Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, p. 114; Tayyar-zâde Ahmed Ata, *Târih-i Ata*, p. 234.

One interesting episode in Tûghi's chronicle³⁸⁴ substantiates the claim that the practice of the sultan's standing up during the royal ceremonies meant the acknowledgement of the power and political standing of some groups/officials by the sultan himself. Accordingly, less than three months after the regicide of Osman II and second enthronement of Mustafa I (r.1617-18/1622-23) the *îd al-fitr* was celebrated in the Ottoman court.³⁸⁵ In his description of the *mu'âyede* ceremony Tûghi claims that, on the first day of *bayram*, during the *mu'âyede* ceremony sultan Mustafa was standing up, as opposed to sitting on his throne and by doing that he was following the tradition of the first four caliphs of Islam.³⁸⁶ This anecdote implies an indirect criticism of the existing ceremonial conventions and practices of the Ottoman court. I think the reason behind Tûghi's comparison with the time of the first four caliphs can be that, in those times there were not yet rigid hierarchies

³⁸⁴ Tûghi (Hüseyn bin Sefer bin Abdullâh) was a janissary and poet. He wrote an eye witness story of the regicide of sultan Osman II, and this story was later on adopted by other Ottoman chroniclers such as Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1657) and later on by Na'imâ (d.1716). His chronicle relates the regicide of sultan Osman II. The interesting point about his chronicle is that different versions of the text display significant variants. Baki Tezcan recently analyzed all extant versions (in total fourteen manuscripts) that are attributed to Tûghi, after demonstrating that only seven of these manuscripts represent the variants of Tûghi's text, the others on the other hand did not belong to Tûghi. And for Tûghi's texts he argues that successive versions of the text comprise the evolution of Tûghi's narration since Tûghi's representation of the events changes in different versions. See "The History of the Primary Source: The Making of Tûghi's Chronicle on the Regicide of Osman II," *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*, 72/1 (2009): 41-62; for a more detailed analysis of the texts see Idem., "Searching for Osman," pp. 268-300.

³⁸⁵ I am indebted to Prof. Baki Tezcan for kindly providing me information on the successive versions of the text some of which I was not able to reach. As he has stated, the episode seems to be repeated in the manuscripts belonging to different versions. The episode first appears in Konya manuscript which represents one of the two earliest versions of the text, then in M. A. Danon's edited version which was translated into French in 1919, and a Romanized edition of which was published in *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, ed. İsmail Hami Danişmend. vol. 6. "Batı dillerinde Osmanlı Tarihleri," published by Türkiye Yayınevi in 1972. And lastly we see it also in the final versions of Tûghi's chronicle, one of which is the manuscript Ho. 74 at the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

³⁸⁶ Translated in Tezcan, "The History of the Primary Source," pp. 54, quoted from Konya manuscript, fols. 33a-b; also quoted in A. Danon "Genç Osman Vakası'na Ait Monografiler," p. 305: "Ve şeşenbih günü id-i fitr'un evvel günü olup saâdetlü pâdişah taht-ı pâdişâhî kurup ayağ üzerine durup el öpdürdüler: Bihamd-illah li pâdişâhumuz âdâb-ı Hulefâ-ı selefe riâyet idüp ayağ üzerine durdılar; zîrâ Çâr- Yâr-ı Güzin Rıdvân-ullâhi Teâlâ-aleyhim-ecmâîn hazretlerinin zamân-ı hilâfetinde id-i şerif oldukda ayağ üzerine durup müsâfaha iderlerdi."

between the elites so to say there was a more egalitarian structure among the elites. Probably as an expression of that, as Tughî relates, without making any differentiation among the participants, the caliphs were standing up during the *bî'at* ceremonies. One may suppose then that the portrayal of Mustafa as following the custom of the first four caliphs meant the same. By standing up throughout the *mu'ayede*, Tughî might have wanted to say that Mustafa honored all of his officials including bureaucrats, officers, and soldiers of all ranks equally. Indeed when one takes into consideration how Mustafa was brought to the throne for a second time, this link makes more sense. Whether or not one regards this story as credible, Tughî's portrayal is very interesting because it carries us hints into the symbolical meaning of this gesture in the early seventeenth century.

Perhaps why Kâtip Çelebi in his *Mizân al- Hakk* (Balance of Truth)³⁸⁷ dedicated an entry on the issue of bowing and inclining oneself before a superior can be seen in line with Tughî's description. As we understand from Kâtip Çelebi, by the mid-seventeenth century there was an ongoing dispute among the Ottoman scholars, on the subject of whether bowing and inclining before superiors was contrary to the *sunna* (the normative example of the prophet) and should be abandoned or not. Kâtip Çelebi first gives the readers a background to this practice, and notes that in the times of the first four caliphs and companions³⁸⁸ the universal salutation was only the phrase "peace be upon you" but later in the period of the Islamic kings different forms of greetings emerged, and these forms became the established pattern. As he

³⁸⁷ Kâtip Çelebi, *Balance of Truth*, trans. Geoffrey L. Lewis (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 103-105.

³⁸⁸ Although they were parts and representatives of different socio-political groups that both Kâtip Çelebi and Tughî make reference to the time of four caliphs is quite interesting. This link requires further research since it might have been related to the contemporary historical and literary traditions.

relates, in the Ottomans, kissing the ground in the sultan's presence and inclining, bowing or kneeling oneself before the great ones of the faith and state had become the customary practices of greeting.³⁸⁹ Even if the mere salutation by word peace was adequate according to the *sunna*, since it signifies equality of rank and/or age, this kind of salutation was not in accordance with the contemporary customary rules of etiquette between the inferiors and superiors in the Ottomans.³⁹⁰ Even though Kâtip Çelebi resolves the issue by saying that because of the hierarchical divisions in Ottoman society, following the customary practices of bowing oneself and inclining before a superior was a necessity; his insistent effort to justify his point urges me to think that probably the debate over that matter was not to be easily settled.

Writing in the eleventh century Hilâl al-Sâbi' makes an almost identical reference to this practice. Accordingly, as he relates, in the past the practice of the salutation for an amîr, vizier or high dignitary when they saw the caliph was saying: "Peace be upon you, O Commander of the Faithful, and may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you."³⁹¹ Yet, during his time this practice was already replaced by kissing the ground and this rule was applied to all people. The obvious similarity between these narrations implies that possibly drawing a comparison with the earlier periods of Islam was a well-established historical and literary tradition that the Ottoman literati also adopted.

Just as we observe the precedence of the *nakîbü'l eṣrâf* when taking his allegiance to the sultan first in the *bi'at* ceremonies of the *mu'âyede* and later on in

³⁸⁹ Kâtip Çelebi, *Balance of Truth*, pp. 103, 104.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

³⁹¹ Sâbi', *Rusûm dar Al-Khilâfah*, pp. 29, 30.

the *bî'at* ceremonies of royal accessions, we have a similar case for the practice of sultan's standing up for certain notables during *bî'at* ceremonies. This means that a practice primarily appears in *bî'at* ceremonies of the *mu'âyede* and then in the accessions. This suggests that the form of *mu'âyede* ceremonies and royal accessions were getting closer. As Mehmed bin Ahmed recounts during the accession ceremony of Mustafa II in 1695, the sultan was standing up to honor his notables such as the grand vizier, grand mufti, *nakîbü'l eşrâf* and judge of Istanbul.³⁹² As has been discussed in Chapter Three, the description of Mehmed bin Ahmed for the ceremony of Mustafa II does not match with the actual nature of the ceremony at that time and also with the contemporary accounts that relate the event. But still the fact that this book was compiled during some time in the first half of the eighteenth century makes the description significant for our purpose because it implies that this practice was in use from that time onwards. Another author Es'ad Efendi, writing in the nineteenth century makes a similar mention of this practice. As he relates, during the accession ceremony of Selim III that was held in 1789, the sultan stood up not only for his deputy grand vizier, grand mufti, chief military judges and chancellor but also for the *nakîbü'l eşrâf*, judge of Istanbul, and the grand admiral (*kapudan pasha*).³⁹³ But still some notables such as the judges and professors were not included in this list.³⁹⁴ This piece of information is a further indication of the fact that the form of the accession *bî'at* became closer to that of the *mu'âyede* at some point during the course of the

³⁹² Mehmed bin Ahmed , *Defter-i Teşrifât*, fols. 2a-5b, in Nişancı, *Defter-i Teşrifât*, pp. 1- 4.

³⁹³ Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, pp. 113, 114.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 114: "mevâli-i kirâm ve müderrisin-i benâm dahi bila-tarif ferda ferda dâmen-bus ve bila-kıyâm hitam buldıği gibi..."

eighteenth century so that their nineteenth century forms became very close to each other.

Conclusion

All this not only underlines the peculiar form and function of *bî'at* ceremony of the *mu'âyede* but also challenges its static descriptions that dominated the narratives from the late eighteenth century onwards. As it has been argued, the formation of its characteristic features dates to the late sixteenth century and even after that some of its features were subject to slight changes according to the needs of the time.

The performance of *bî'at* during the *mu'âyede* ceremony, which was held at the Ottoman court for celebrating the two religious festivals, served another need than the acknowledgment of the rule of the sovereign. It was intended to ratify the given hierarchies within the court elites so as to make them internalize the present order of the Ottoman court. It was the same reason why five days before than the religious festivals the dignitaries were obliged to make visits to the houses of the grand mufti and grand vizier in order to congratulate the *bayram*.³⁹⁵ Without any hesitation one can claim that these visits symbolize the submission of the notables and officials to the two highest position holders before they all would perform the

³⁹⁵ According to the practice, five days before the religious festival, the ceremonies of congratulation among the dignitaries of the state of the religious festivals (*tehniyye-i îdiyye*) started. According to Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha first the grand mufti would visit the grand vizier at his palace, for Es'ad Efendi however it was the reverse since he notes that five days before the *bayram* the Grand vizier was expected to visit the Grand mufti at his house and the next day the Grand mufti and his retinue would visit the grand vizier at his house. Whether one accepts the former or the latter order, it is certain that five days before the *bayram* the congratulation ceremonies started. As a part of that all of the officials started to visit their superiors according to their ranks. Likewise Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha notes that, it was the ongoing practice that during such occasions all of the high ranking officials would visit those that were higher in rank and degree than themselves ("eshâb-ı menasıbdan herkes mansıbında ve pâyede kendüden yüksek olanlara varagelmisdir"). See Abdurrahman Abdi Pasha, "Teşrifât ve Teşkilât Kanunnâmesi," p. 521, for the beginnings of these celebrations five days before the *bayram* see Ibid., pp. 518-520 and Es'ad Efendi, *Teşrifât-ı Kadîme*, pp. 30-38.

actual *bi'at* to the sultan on the first day of the religious festivals. Then it appears that with recurrent displays of homage to a superior, that can be the sultan, the grand vizier and grand mufti, the Ottoman elite were expected to ratify their and the other people's statuses. *Bi'at* that was held as a part of *mu'âyede* ceremonies for this reason was a very instrumental tool. And this function of *bi'at* ceremony during the *mu'âyede* is probably what makes it strikingly different the *bi'at* during the royal accessions.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study has been an attempt to understand the nature and dynamics of the *bi'at* ceremonies that were held in the Ottoman court between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries. The central concern of the study was directed towards unearthing and then contextualizing the changes that occurred in the meaning and function of the *bi'at* ceremonies in this period. This endeavor enabled me to observe that the *bi'at* ceremonies followed a parallel path of formation and transition with Ottoman political culture. The rapid formulations in the political culture, shifts in the power balances within the court, and the alterations in methods of rule were all projected through the *bi'at* ceremonies. Nevertheless, while observing this, an important differentiation between the function and the format of two particular forms of the *bi'at*, namely the *bi'at* during the accession and *mu'âyede*, also came to the fore. The function of the two ceremonies was always different. While in very general terms the accession *bi'at* was directed towards bringing an end to the political turmoil by superficially re-creating the state, the *mu'âyede bi'at* was about ratifying the given hierarchies and statuses within the ruling elite and other position holders.

As for the format of the two ceremonies, contrary to the general assessments it appears that only from the late seventeenth century onwards the structure of the *bi'at* during the accession and *mu'âyede* became closer. Yet, still their connotations within the Ottoman political culture were significantly different. This, obviously brings about a nuanced understand of the *bi'at*.

A detailed study of the *bi'at* ceremonies shows that, the structural formulation of *bi'at* was gradual. For the royal accession *bi'at*, the recognizable features and

format of the ceremony seem to appear only after the mid-sixteenth century. Though the ceremony of Süleyman that was held in 1522 can be accepted to be the first “formal” *bi‘at* ceremony, which was held in the second courtyard of the imperial palace with participation of the court elites, it was still somewhere in between a greeting ceremony and *bi‘at*. By the accession of Selim II in 1566 on the other hand, upon his arrival to the capital city a *bi‘at* ceremony was held only with the participation of a limited number of court officials. This ceremony however seems not to have been recognized as legitimate. For this reason, it is with Murad III’s accession in 1574 that for the first time we see the performance of the *bi‘at* with all its recognizable patterns, in its actual setting and with the attendance of all the court factions. Yet, even this format was not stable since some particular features of the *bi‘at* ceremony would change in coming decades. From time to time the setting of the ceremony also changed according to the practical needs; whether it was the Chamber of Petitions, the Edirne Palace or the army encampment what it signified remained the same.

The fact that the *bi‘at* ceremony reached its recognizable structural patterns by the late sixteenth century calls into question the notion of “Ottoman classicism” in two ways. First if the word “classical” is used to denote the appearance of the characteristic features of Ottoman royal ceremonial and protocol, this study suggests that this process took place slightly after rather than during the period that is generally taken to be the peak of Ottoman classicism. Moreover, if one looks for a “classical” format and meaning of the *bi‘at* that remained unchanged for centuries, this study argues that it never existed because neither the organizational rules of *bi‘at* nor its meaning remained static even after the late sixteenth century. *Bi‘at* ceremonies in the accessions throughout the seventeenth century recurrently

responded to the reconfigurations in the Ottoman court culture and political system by adapting its form and meaning.

The changes in the symbolical meaning of the *bi'at* ceremony that was held during the royal accessions in the Ottoman court, on the other hand, provide us hints in understanding how the sultan and the sultanate was perceived, what displaying *bi'at* meant within Ottoman political culture. As has been shown in the second chapter, when the *bi'at* ceremony attained its recognizable form by the late sixteenth century, a period during which the absolute power of the Ottoman sultans is thought to have been firmly established, there were a number of people striving for a say in court politics. The performance of *bi'at* by the end of the century then meant much more than just a greeting ceremony. Rather, it became necessary to re-affirm the given privileges and rights of certain factions of the court in order to ensure their loyalties. This, of course, implies a reciprocal meaning of the *bi'at*, in a strictly hierarchically-fashioned Ottoman court.

As has been discussed in Chapter Three, in the seventeenth century it seems that symbolically the ceremony turned into a practical tool as sovereignty became something that was literally given to a prince by the highest members of the court. As the sultanate became more institutionalized and depersonalized, so did the *bi'at* ceremony. The accession *bi'at* ceremony by the end of the seventeenth century projected and symbolized an increasingly depersonalized agreement. Regardless of the personality of the sultan, the oath was taken by the state officials to the office the sultan represented.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the *bi'at* ceremony during the royal accessions and *mu'âyede* acquired a new form in the ordering of the elites. As one of the most prominent structural features of *bi'at*, the first official who would

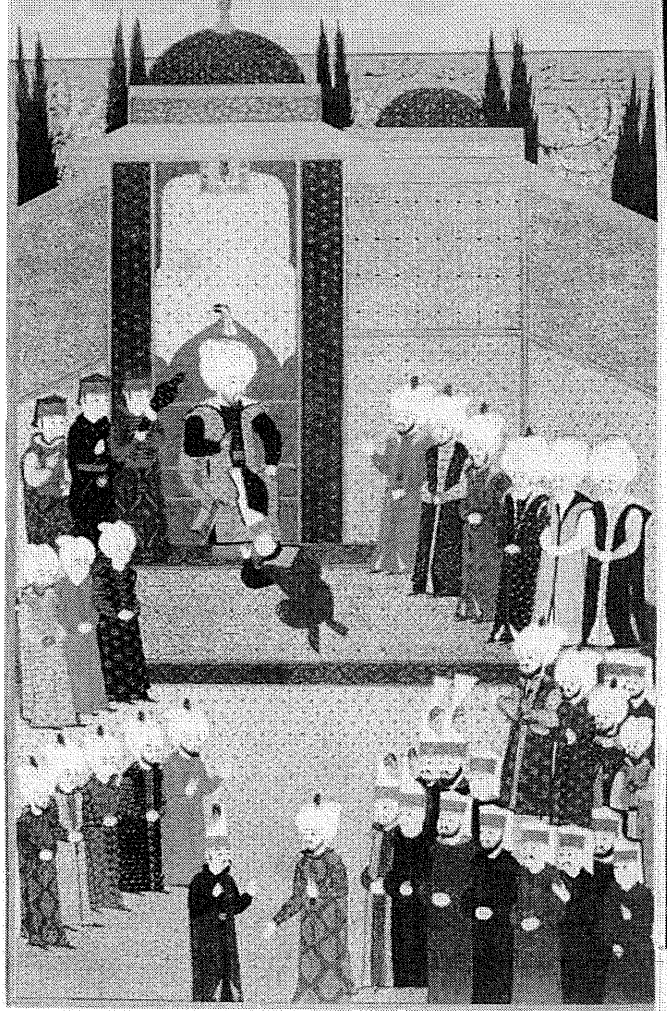
display his allegiance to the sultan was fixed as the *nakibü'l eşraf*. As the sources of the period indicate, this change was first evident in the *mu'âyede* ceremony during the 1670s. Then it also became evident in the royal accession in the 1680s. As the provincial power-holders started to hold a critical position in the Ottoman administrative and political system, the Ottoman court elites probably wanted to stress this relationship in the court ceremonies. Granting the privilege of being the first office-holder to the *nakibü'l eşraf*, who was the representative of a large group of people living in various parts of the Ottoman domain can be seen as an outcome of this intention. Parallel to that, it can also be seen as a part of the bureaucratic re-organization of the Ottoman court that coincided with this time interval.

In future studies a diachronic analysis of the later phases of the ceremony in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be meaningful. This kind of an endeavor surely would enable us to see whether certain changes in the political culture continued to affect some of structural features of the ceremony or not. And more significantly the symbolical meaning of *bî'at* can be addressed since in the eighteenth century and especially in the nineteenth century Ottoman state mechanism, the ruling/administrative elites and socio-political realities considerably changed. Apart from that this kind of a study would be helpful to question the almost identical descriptions of the *bî'at* ceremonies especially in the compilations of the rules of etiquette and protocol. A comparative investigation of the descriptions of the accession ceremonies and *mu'âyede* ceremonies recorded in the archival documents, chronicles as well as compilations may bring to the fore slight alterations among the ceremonies.

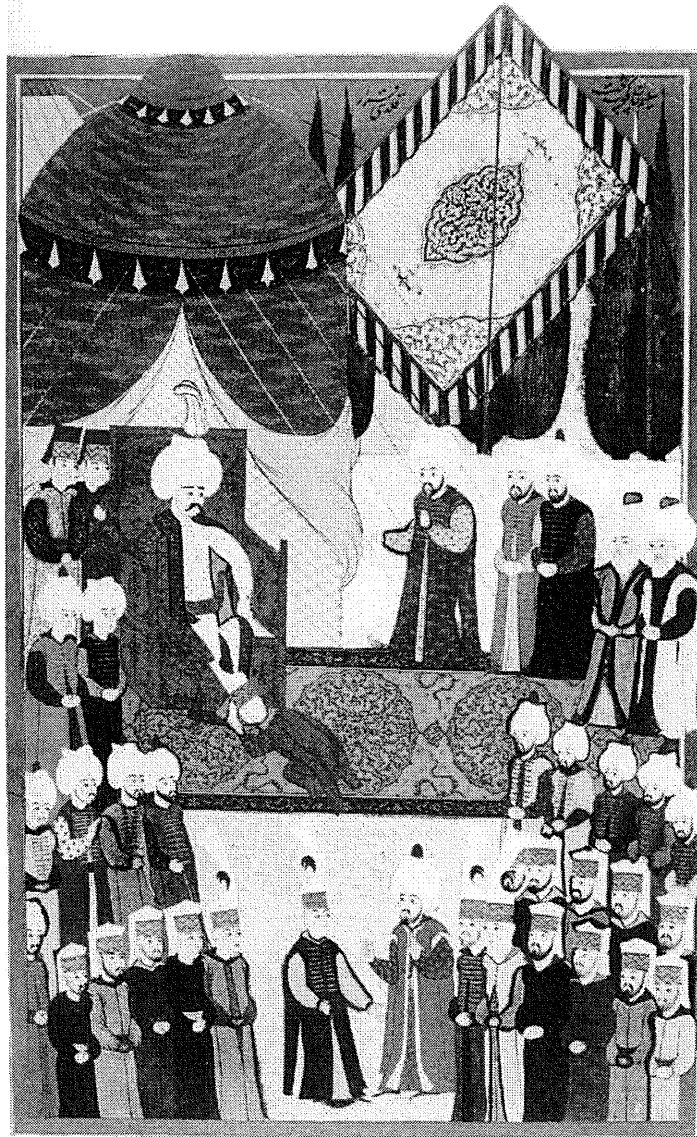
Also the studies on some similar displays of *bî'at* that were held under in different settings such as the girding ceremony at Eyüp and the celebrations of the

royal circumcisions and weddings would bring out a comparative outlook to the perception of *bî'at*. And may bring about new insights in understanding the relationship between the ruling elite and the sovereign or the office the sovereign represented as well as between the subjects and the state since they were public events. Thus, different forms of *bî'at* need to be addressed in the future studies.

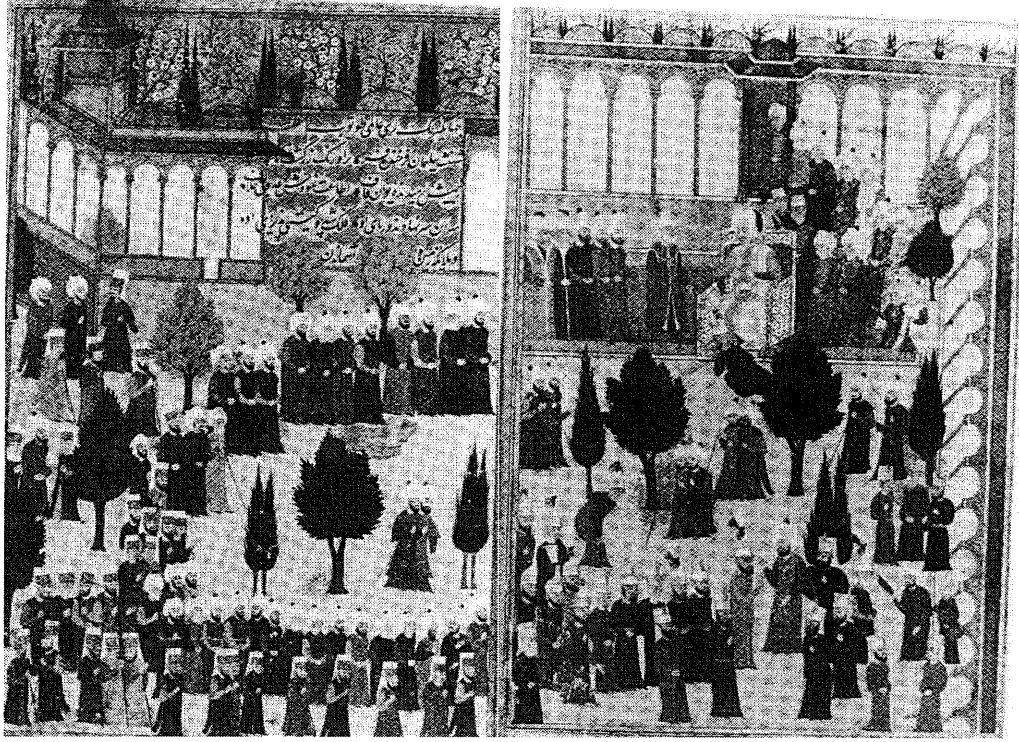
APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS



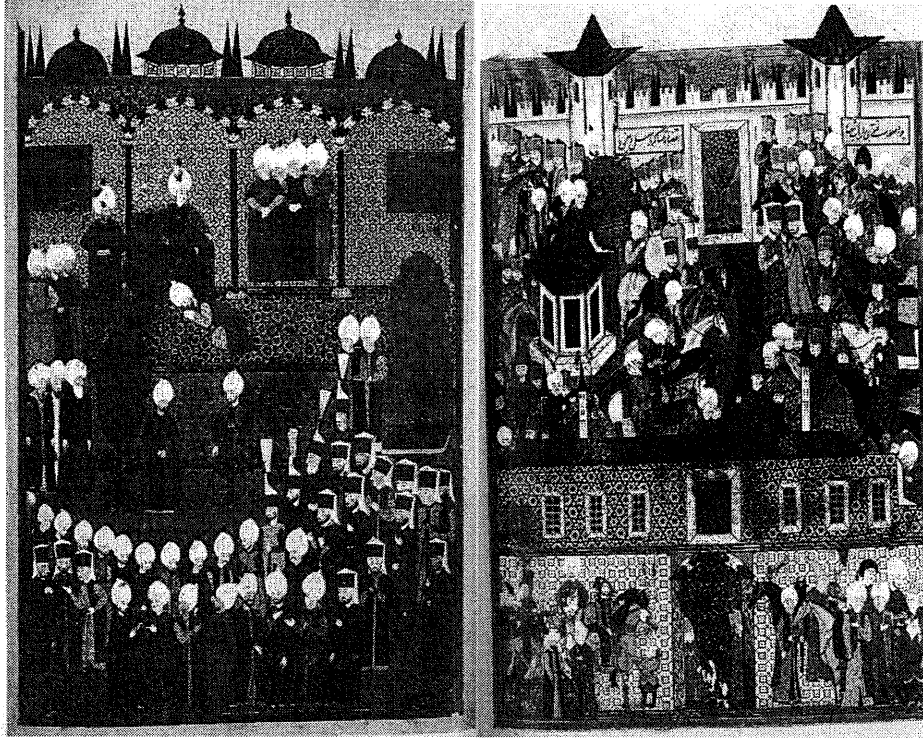
1. Accession ceremony of Bayezid II, Lokman, *Hünernâme* vol. 1, TSK H. 1523, fol. 178 b. (reproduced from *Hünernâme: Minyatürleri ve Sanatçıları*).



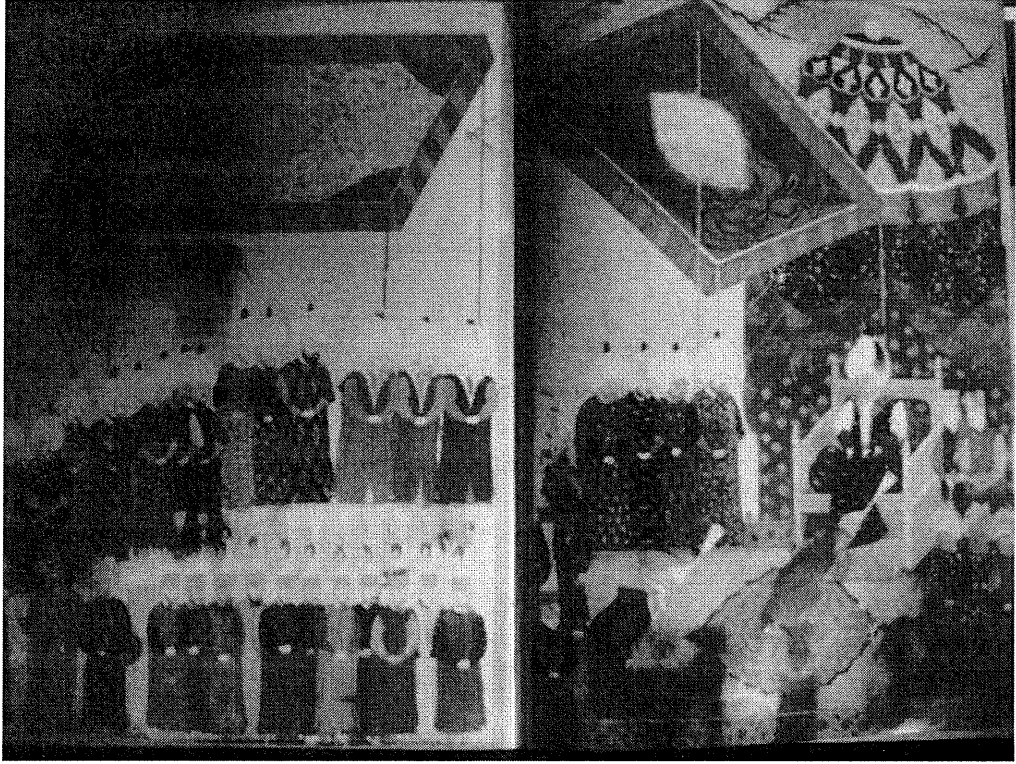
2. Accession ceremony of Selim I, Lokman, *Hünernâme* vol. 1, TSK H. 1523, fol. 201 a. (reproduced from *Hünernâme: Minyatürleri ve Sanatçıları*).



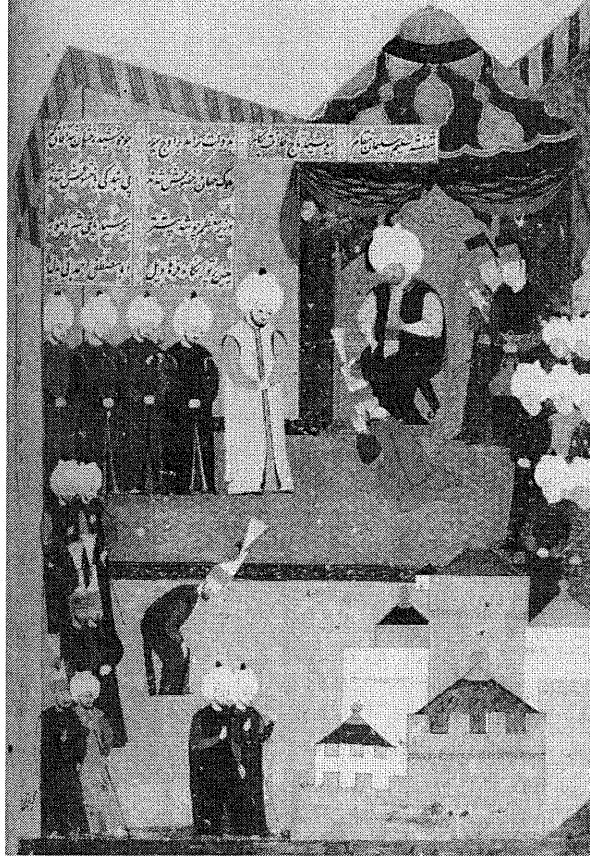
3. Accession ceremony of Süleyman I, Lokman, *Hünernâme* vol. 2, TSK H. 1524, fols. 25b, 26a. (reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 58).



4. Accession ceremony of Süleyman I, *Süleymannâme*, TSK, H. 1517, fols. 17b, 18a.
(reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 42).



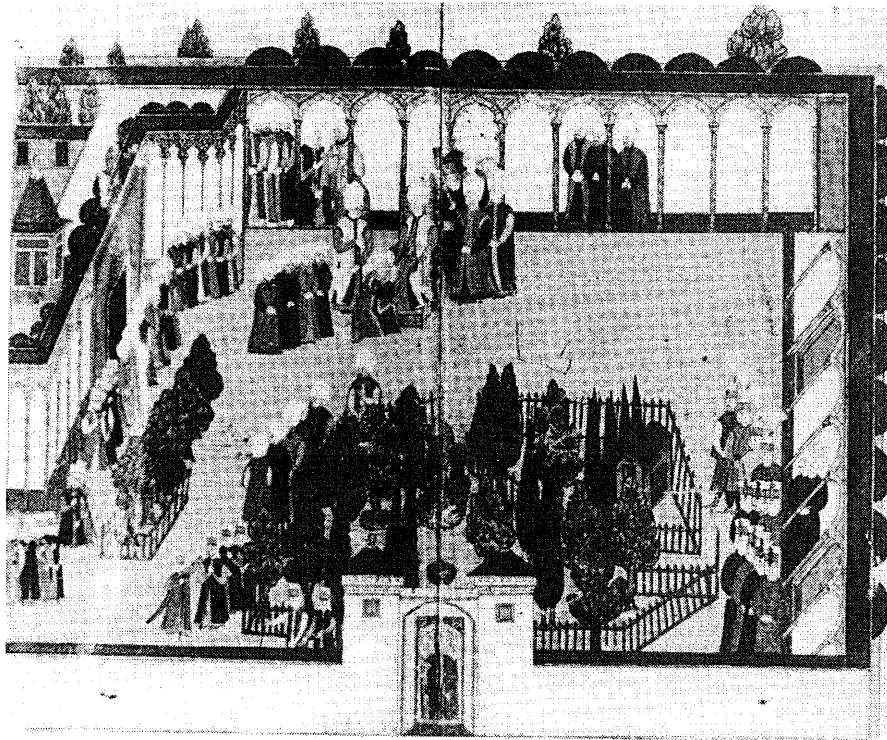
5. Accession ceremony of Selim II, Feridun Beg, *Nüzhetü'l Esrar*, TSK H. 1339, fols. 110b, 111a. (reproduced from Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde Cülus ve Cenaze Törenleri* pp. 66, 67)



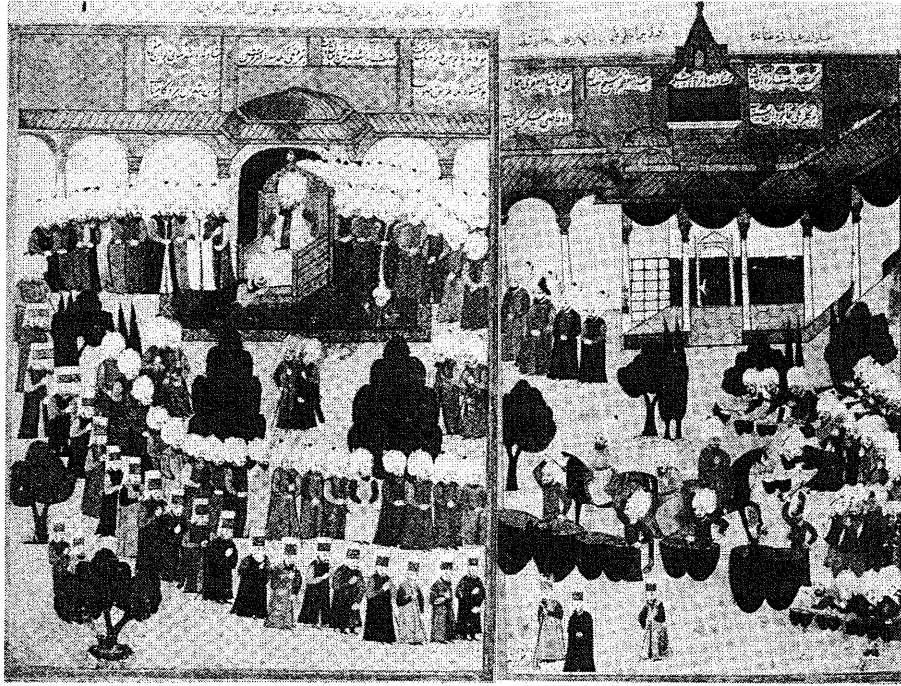
6. Accession ceremony of Selim II Lokman, *Şehnâme-i Selim Han*, TSK A. 3595 fol. 26b. (reproduced from Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde Cülus ve Cenaze Törenleri* p. 69).



7. Accession ceremony of Murad III, Lokman, *Şehinşahnâme*, vol. 1, İÜK F. 1404, fols. 11b, 12. (reproduced from Ertuğ, *XVI. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Devletinde...*, pp. 74, 75).



8. Accession ceremony of Ahmed I, *Terceme-i Miftâh-ı Cifru'l-Câmi*, İÜK, MS T. 6624, fols. 1b-2a. (reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, p. 69).



9. Grand Vizier Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha kissing the sultan's skirt during the holiday ceremonies, *Şehinşahnâme* II, TSK, B. 200, fols. 159b, 160a. (reproduced from Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, p. 59).

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