

CHAPTER 7: INTERREGNUM PERIOD (1403-1413), RESTORATION AND RECOVERY: MEHMED I (1413-1421)

Bayezid I's Sons

Bayezid I had many sons. In one of the battles with Qazi Ahmad Burhan Ad Din, the lord of Eretnids, the Ottomans were defeated and one of his sons, **Sehzade Ertugrul** was martyred. Another son **Yusuf**, converted to Christianity and changed his name to Demetrios. **Kasim** was sent as a hostage to Constantinople together with his sister, Fatma Hatun. The other five brothers disputed about the leadership of the Ottoman empire, leading to the Interregnum Period which lasted for 10 years.



Timeline of the Interregnum

- 1403: Two sons of Bayezid I (Musa and Mustafa) are captured, three sons escape: **Suleyman to Edirne, Isa to Aegean, Mehmet to Amasya** and start ruling there
- 1403-1411: Suleyman rules Rumelia from Edirne
- 1403-1406: **Isa gets support from Suleyman** to recapture Anatolia, gets defeated by Mehmed I; Some sources say he challenges Suleyman and is killed; **Suleyman takes west Anatolia**
- 1410-1411: **Musa is released**, with Mehmet's support he attacks Suleyman in Rumelia
- 1411: **Suleyman is killed by Musa** or by his own troops, Musa takes Rumelia
- 1413: **Musa starts challenging** Mehmed I, is executed. Mehmed I becomes the **Sultan**
- 1419: **Mustafa**, who is released by the Timurids becomes a potential rival, he is sent into exile by Mehmed I

About Mehmed I (1413-1421)

Mehmed I, who ruled from 1413 to 1421, earned the titles Celebi (cultured) and Kirisci (young master/archer with extraordinary strength). Known for his calm and determined character, he effectively controlled his anger and exhibited bravery in the front lines of battle. As a philanthropist, Mehmed undertook vast building projects in Bursa, including mosques, madrasahs, almshouses, and his own tomb. Notably, he treated his subjects, both Muslim and non-Muslim, with fairness and continued the tradition of *surre* processions, sending caravans of imperial donations to the Haramain. Mehmed's strategic brilliance ended the Ottoman interregnum, earning him recognition as the second founder of the Ottoman imperial state.

Restoring the Empire's Strength in Anatolia

In Anatolia, Mehmed I played a crucial role in restoring the empire's strength. Sent by his father in 1399, Mehmed governed the region encompassing Amasya, Tokat, and Sivas. Following the Battle of Ankara, he waged successful campaigns against Turkomans and defeated Cuneyd Bey in 1414. In 1415, Mehmed seized Konya and the Karamanids called for peace. Timur's son Shahrukh began preparations for a military campaign to Anatolia, and then Mehmed sought help from the Qara Qoyunlu and Mamluks. Mehmed's efforts helped to reestablish Ottoman dominance in western Anatolia.

Restoring the Empire's Strength in Rumelia

After eliminating threats from Isa (1406), Suleyman (1411), and Musa (1413), challenges still persisted in Rumelia. Mehmed I consolidated power, sent armies to Albania and Bosnia, and ensured peace and prosperity. Despite Mustafa's release and support from the Timurids and the Byzantines, Mehmed maintained stability. His efforts extended to the Balkans, including campaigns against Wallachia's Voivode Mihail I and King Sigismund of Croatia and Hungary. The Byzantine empire, Serbian Despotate, Principality of Wallachia and the Despotate of the Morea agreed to pay the Ottomans tribute.

Mehmed's Legacy

Mehmed's legacy includes military campaigns, territorial consolidation, administrative rebuilding, and diplomatic alliances. Mehmed's demise in 1421, at 34, resulted from the toll of civil wars and struggles for power. He fell off his horse, his wounds opened and he became bedridden.

To avoid infighting, his death remained a secret until Shehzade Murad II's arrival. Despite his short reign, Mehmed's achievements strengthened central authority and laid foundations for future successes.

Mehmed I's legacy endures in the Ottoman domain, characterized by his calm demeanor, martial prowess, and philanthropy. Over 40 wounds bore witness to the battles he fought, emphasizing his dedication to fortifying the empire. His building projects, including the Eskicami in Edirne and the Yesil Mosque in Bursa, stand as lasting symbols of Mehmed's contributions to Ottoman history.

Timeline of Mehmed I's Reign

- 1413: Mehmed I becomes the **Sultan**
- 1414-1415: Mehmed **defeats Cuneyd Bey and seizes Konya** from the Karamanids
- 1419: Mehmed launches a **campaign against Voivode Mihail I of Wallachia** and captures the city of Drobeta-Turnu Severin from the Hungarians.
- 1419: **Mustafa, a potential rival**, is sent into exile by Mehmed I
- 1419: The **Byzantine Empire**, **Serbian Despotate**, **Principality of Wallachia**, and **Despotate of the Morea** agree to pay tribute to the Ottomans.
- 1421: Mehmed I falls off his horse, succumbs to his wounds, and **dies at the age of 34**.

What was Happening Elsewhere (1400-1421)

- 1401: Tamerlane sacks **Baghdad**, killing tens of thousands and devastating the region.
- 1402: The **Mali Empire**, one of the richest and largest empires in Africa, reaches its zenith under Emperor Mansa Musa.
- 1405: **Death of Tamerlane**.
- 1405-1433: The Chinese explorer **Zheng He** embarks on a series of voyages to Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East, and Africa, known as the Treasure Voyages, to demonstrate Chinese power and establish diplomatic relations.
- 1415: The **Portuguese capture the Moroccan city of Ceuta**, marking the beginning of European exploration of Africa.
- 1415: The **Hundred Years' War continues**, with the English capturing the French city of Harfleur and **King Henry V's** victory at the Battle of Agincourt.
- 1417: The **Council of Constance** ends the Western Schism by deposing all rival claimants to the papacy and electing **Pope Martin V**, restoring unity to the **Catholic Church**.
- 1431: The Khmer Empire's capital, Angkor, is captured by the Thai Ayutthaya