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Qāytbāy´s Diplomatic Dilemma Concerning the Flight of Cem Sultan (1481–82)

In the spring of 1482, for the second time in as many years, the forces mustered in Anatolia by the Ottoman prince Cem Sultan proved inadequate to wrest the throne from his brother Bayezid. The defeated prince took to flight, eventually finding refuge with the Knights of St. John at Rhodes. His subsequent career as a pawn of European diplomacy, a cudgel with which various Christian potentates could threaten Bayezid into good behavior, is of course of great interest to those studying the dynamics of Ottoman-Latin relations and, indirectly, to the historian of the Mamluks. In the increasingly complex world of Eastern Mediterranean diplomacy, few events were of purely bilateral interest.

It is not Cem´s European career, however, that we shall concern ourselves with in this article, but rather the events of the preceding year. For in the events of fall 1481 through spring 1482 lay what may well have been the final, crowning insult in the steady deterioration of relations between Istanbul and Cairo—the refuge given by the Mamluk sultan Qāytbāy to Cem Sultan after his first defeat.

Contrary to the interpretation of historians such as Gaston Wiet,[1] relations had hardly been cordial in the immediately preceding years. Propinquity always seemed to strain relations, and as far back as the reign of Yıldırım Bayezid I (1389–1402), whose conquests in Anatolia brought the frontiers of the two states ever closer, Cairo had looked with some concern at the activities of their parvenu neighbor. The westward shift of the Ottoman frontier following Tamerlane´s invasion had contributed to a renewal of a distant cordiality, but in the third quarter of the fifteenth century relations were again showing signs of tension. Long gone was the fraternal good feeling that prevailed in the days of Murad II (1421–1451) and Jaqmaq. Although Sultan Īnāl sent a message of pious congratulation to Fâtih Mehmed II (1451–81) on the conquest of Constantinople, that very event can be seen as having marked the beginning of the renewed deterioration; the old power watched warily as Mehmed enjoyed continuing success, and the frontiers of the two states again drifted closer. Their mutual suspicion was played out in a struggle to establish influence over the Dulgadır, one of the last of the semi-independent

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[1]See, for example, his ″Deux princes ottomans à la cour d´Égypte,″ *Bulletin de l´Institute égyptien* 20 (1938): 138–39.

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buffer states. They did for some time cooperate on the matter of the Karamanids, whom each seemed to regard as a nuisance, but even this cooperation had evaporated, and the last Karamanid prince, Kasım Bey, was living in exile in İçel, on the western fringe of Mamluk-controlled Cilicia.[2]

We shall never be able to know with certainty the ultimate target of Mehmed's final campaign as he headed east into Anatolia in the spring of 1481. Perhaps he was renewing his assault on the Hospitallers at Rhodes, but his biographer Tursun Bey asserts that he had decided finally to deal with the Mamluks, and at least one modern biographer agrees.[3] On May 3, after a short illness, the Conqueror died at Gebze.

The lack of any clear guidance for political succession, let alone a principle of primogeniture in Islamic law, had contributed to chaos and civil war in Islamic polities since the murder of the caliph 'Uthmān in 656, and the similar lack of these principles in the Turkic tradition, combined with the practice of distributing territories to family members as appanage, only served to exacerbate the problem in Turco-Islamic lands. The Ottomans had, of course, established a practice of fratricide, by which the son who, upon the death of his father, first reached the capital and secured the support of key elements in the ruling elite would have all his brothers put to death without delay. The practice can be traced to Bayezid I, who had his brother Yakup murdered following his father's death at Kossovo; it was, however, Mehmed II who had it codified, making it not only permissible but praiseworthy or even obligatory as a means to avoid political unrest.[4]

The key to survival, then, if you were a royal prince, was to secure the support of the high military and administrative officers, preferably even before the old sultan died, and to bolster that position by being on the spot as quickly as possible after his death. Complicating the matter was that royal princes were routinely sent

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[2]The exact administrative status of the towns of the western end of Cilicia (Cilicia Trachea or Turk. İçel) at this time is ambiguous, but Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Sulṭān al-Ẓāhirī (*Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik wa-Bayān al-Ṭuruq wa-al-Masālik,* ed. P. Ravisse [1893; reprint, Cairo, 1988], 50) states clearly that Mersin and Tarsus at least were dependencies of Aleppo; Popper, however, seems to place Mersin outside Mamluk territory (see *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans, 1382–1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrî Birdî's Chronicles of Egypt*, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vols. 15–16 [Berkeley, 1955–57], 15:11, 17, 51, map 2, 18).

[3]*The History of Mehmed the Conqueror,* edited and translated by Halil İnalcık and Rhoads Murphey, American Research Institute in Turkey Monograph Series, no. 1 (Minneapolis and Chicago, 1978), 156b; Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and His Time,* translated by Ralph Manheim (Princeton, 1978), 402–3.

[4]See Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 65–66, and A. D. Alderson, *The Structure of the Ottoman Dynasty* (Oxford, 1956), 25–26, who says that Mehmed's ″Law of Fratricide″ was ″supported by references to the Koran and the authority of the ulema.″

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out, from adolescence on, to learn the business of government by serving as provincial governors. It was, in consequence, advantageous to have a gubernatorial assignment fairly close to the capital.

Mehmed´s death, as we have seen, was rather sudden. Barely fifty, he was apparently well enough to set out on campaign, only to fall ill and die soon after his departure. His two surviving sons, Bayezid and Cem, had been assigned to Amasya and Karaman respectively. Upon the sultan´s death, a revolt at Istanbul among the janissaries was capped by the murder of the grand vizier Karamanî Mehmed, a partisan of Cem; the janissaries, who were mostly supporters of Bayezid, clamored for calling their favorite in from Amasya. The acting grand vizier, no doubt eager to avoid the fate of his predecessor, did everything to expedite Bayezid´s return; in the meantime, Bayezid´s son Korkud was temporarily placed on the throne. With this support, Bayezid arrived and took the throne, probably around 27 Rabī'I/26 May; his brother Cem, who had considerable support among the old Turkish element, was still well out of the way, in Karaman.

If Cem´s posting had made it impossible to secure his position at Istanbul upon Mehmed´s death, it also afforded him a natural base of power from which to contend with his brother for the throne. He had apparently proposed to Bayezid that they divide the empire between them.[5] This proposal Bayezid not unexpectedly rejected, and Cem must have known what to expect, for his father´s ″fratricide″ decree was quite explicit. He was clearly not prepared to calmly await the summons to the capital and the inevitable bowstring, and he seems to have had the support of both Ottoman and Karamanid elements. What happened next has been the subject of much embellishment and controversy. One early account, short on detail but also relatively free of later accretion, is that of the historian Oruç:

> After [Mehmed´s death and the rioting of the janissaries], Bayezid took the throne on Saturday, 19 Rabī'I 886 [18 May 1481]. He sat for a few days and then sent the Beylerbeg of Rumelia to Sofia.
>
> On his side, Cem Sultan, having seated himself on the throne of Karaman and having listened to the advice of some political intriguers *(bir kaç müfsidler sözüne uyup),* set out with his army. He reached Bursa, seized the treasury there, and settled in. Bayezid heard this news, ordered Gedik Ahmed Paşa in from Apulia [where he had been campaigning], and gathered the army. With the janissaries and the *kapıkulları* he set out from Istanbul, and [the two armies] met at Yenişehir. There was a battle and many men died. In the end Cem Sultan´s army fled to Bursa, and Cem himself

[5]Halil İnalcık, ″Djem,″ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:529.

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> went back to Karaman. Sultan Bayezid came after him. Cem abandoned Karaman and fled to Egypt. From there he went to the Hejaz.
>
> Sultan Bayezid brought the army back to Gedik Ahmed, and sent him to Karaman. . . . Gedik Ahmed conquered the section of Karaman of the Dış Varsak.
>
> For his part, Cem Sultan, returning from the Hejaz, again arrived in Karaman. With the agreement of the Varsak and Turgut tribes, and [some] tribal chieftains, he again fought with Sultan Bayezid. Cem was unable to stand up to Bayezid and was defeated. He fled, taking to the sea. He reached the land of the Franks.[6]

While there are the usual slight discrepancies concerning the chronology, the battle of Yenişehir took place on or about 22 Rabī'II/20 June.[7] After the battle the victorious Bayezid returned to Istanbul to reassume the throne, which had temporarily been assigned to Korkud as regent until a clear victor should emerge.[8]

Cem, for his part, fled first to Konya, where he gathered up his family, and then fled south. (Indeed, Cem brought his mother with him; she remained at Cairo when he embarked on his further adventures, and died there in 1498, surviving her son by some four years.)[9] Most sources that mention his route at all speak of him going from Konya to Tarsus, which would involve passing either by way of Gülek or Mut-Silifke. The former seems to be suggested by the *Vaki'at-i Sultan Cem*, which speaks of him crossing the Bolkar Range of the Taurus.[10] At Tarsus he was greeted by Kasım Bey, and thence proceeded to Adana and Antioch.

The fugitive prince and the Mamluk sultan now entered into negotiations, probably with the atabeg of Aleppo, Özbeg, acting as an intermediary. Again, establishing a chronology is a bit difficult. The date given by Wiet, April 1481,[11] is obviously wrong. The Damascene Ibn Ṭūlūn reports that by 22 Jumādá I/19 July Cem had received permission the cross the frontier and was already at

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[6]Oruç, *Die frühosmanischen Jahrbücher des Urudsch,* ed. Franz Babinger, Quellenwerke des Islamischen Schrifttums, vol. 2 (Hannover, 1925), 131–32; *Oruç Beg tarihi,* prepared by Nihal Atsız, Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, vol. 5 ([Istanbul], 1972), 129–30.

[7]*Vaki'at-i Sultan Cem*, ed. Mehmed Arif ([Istanbul], 1330/[1914]), 2.

[8]Sydney Nettleton Fisher, *Foreign Relations of Turkey: 1481–1512*, Illinois Studies on the Social Sciences, vol. 1, no. 1 (Urbana, Illinois, 1948), 17–19.

[9]Gaston Wiet, ″Refugiés politiques ottomans en Égypte,″ *Arabica* 1 (1954): 261.

[10]*Vaki'at-i Sultan Cem*, 3. This would seem to be an odd choice, since it involved a much longer journey before he crossed the mountains and got out of reach of his pursuers.

[11]Wiet, ″Deux princes ottomans,″ 139.

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Damascus.[12] Ibn Iyās, on the other hand, tells us that only in Jumādá II, that is to say 28 July at the earliest, did word of the battle of Yenişehir and of Cem´s arrival at the frontier even reach Cairo.[13] While this might at first seem an improbably long delay, it is in part corroborated by what we learn from the *Vakí´at,* which reports that Cem reached Aleppo on 22 Jumādá I (19 July), where he met with Özbeg.[14] The latter, we may gather from Ibn Iyās, then reported to Cairo.

It would have been interesting to be privy to the deliberations that summer among Qāytbāy and his amirs, for the situation was delicate, and called for the nicest sort of political judgment. To admit Cem would almost certainly offend Bayezid and provide him, if he wanted one, with a *casus belli.* There had been trouble before over fugitives, and Cem was no paltry rebellious governor or amir, but rather a pretender who was a direct threat to Bayezid´s throne and life. How should such a fugitive, or any fugitive, be treated?

Within the context of contemporary political theory there is some guidance on the matter. In his short treatise on geography and administration, al-Ẓāhirī devotes some space to how the Muslim sovereign should deal with fugitives:

> The sovereign should not allow a fugitive from a neighboring monarch to become an intimate, and should not disclose confidential matters to him, but rather should honor him and keep him at a distance.
>
> If the fugitive comes from a monarch in a state of enmity with the sovereign, one of two possibilities is true: either the fugitive is lacking in loyalty, having not perceived the loyalty he owed to his master; or there is some deception, so that he might obtain information about the kingdom, and communicate it to the monarch he supposedly fled; perhaps, indeed, he will sow dissatisfaction among the troops.
>
> If the fugitive comes from a monarch friendly with the sovereign, he should be kept at a distance out of concern for the sensibilities of the monarch from whom he has fled. If the fugitive has a death sentence hanging over him when he seeks refuge, the words of the commander of the faithful come forward: ″Beware that you not obstruct the punishments of God.″ And if he has committed some [other, lesser] crime, and has asked forgiveness for it, it is fitting

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[12]*Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Cairo, 1962), 1:43.

[13]Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Cairo and Wiesbaden, 1982–84), 3:183.

[14]*Vakí´at-i Sultan Cem,* 4.

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> that the sovereign should intercede and seek to return him to his master.[15]

The gist of this curious and paradoxical advice is that while it is a mistake for the sovereign to associate too closely with any fugitive, it is the fugitive from a friendly neighbor who perhaps merits favor. Cem certainly had a death sentence hanging over him, but one that derived not from any rigid principle of Holy Law, but from a peculiarity of Ottoman dynastic tradition, codified by Mehmed (and confirmed by *fatwá* from the Ottoman ulama, whose authority the Mamluk sultan was hardly obliged to accept). In such a case, Qāytbāy was under some obligation to intercede on the fugitive´s behalf, to attempt to effect some sort of reconciliation.

In the end it was decided to allow Cem to cross the frontier (which technically he had already done) and to be brought to Cairo ″with a few of his men″ *(fī qalīl min ʻaskarih),*[16] although these ″few″ may have amounted to about one hundred men.[17] Qāytbāy clearly did not want to be seen giving refuge within his frontiers to a whole rebel army, merely, as was fitting, to an Ottoman prince. Meanwhile, preparations were begun at Cairo for Cem´s arrival.

The pace of Cem´s entourage south through Syria was a leisurely one; either Cem himself felt no urgent need to get to his audience with Qāytbāy, or Cairo had arranged that his trip be a slow one to allow time to prepare his reception and, no doubt, to define their policies further. Between his arrival at Aleppo and his arrival at Damascus a full month had elapsed, although in part this delay may be owing to the fact that he and many of his entourage had fallen ill. Arriving in Damascus 25 Jumādá II/21 August, he tarried there at least a week, but probably more. Everywhere he went the local officials greeted him warmly and honored him in various ceremonies. He left Damascus around 3 Rajab/28 August, reaching Jerusalem 13 Rajab/7 September.[18] Traveling thence via Gaza, he finally arrived at Cairo in Shaʻbān (i.e., the last week of September at the earliest).[19]

Even upon his arrival at Cairo Cem did not immediately meet with the sultan. First came more receptions and feasts with the various Mamluk amirs. Finally, in a lavish procession he was led up to the citadel. There in the courtyard he finally met with Qāytbāy. The sultan greeted his guest warmly, and showered him with a variety of gifts, including a lavish robe, but pointedly did not stand when receiving

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[15]Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdah,* 60–61.

[16]Oruç, *Jahrbücher,* 131–32; İnalcık, ″Djem,″ 529.

[17]Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān,* 1:43.

[18]Wiet, ″Deux princes ottomans,″ 139–41; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *.Mufākahat al-Khillān,* 1:43; *Vakiʻat-i Sultan Cem,* 4.

[19]Ibn Iyās, *Badāʼiʻ al-Zuhūr,* 3:185; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *.Mufākahat al-Khillān,* 1:47; *Vakiʻat-i Sultan Cem*, 4.

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him. This was a marked breach of protocol, but Qāytbāy clearly had no intention of further antagonizing Bayezid by treating his wayward brother as he would a fellow sovereign.[20] At least at this juncture Qāytbāy seems not to have decided to back Cem´s claims to the Ottoman throne.

Cem was lodged at the house of Ibn Julūd, the *kātib al-mamālīk* (a civilian official, not one of the Mamluk military aristocracy). In the following two months he attended a round of social functions (he was an honored guest when the *kātib al-sirr*—the ″confidential secretary,″ another civilian official—celebrated the circumcision of his sons), culminating with the *ʿīd* celebration marking the end of the Ramaḍān fast (23 November 1481), which he observed with Qāytbāy at the citadel in the company of the great amirs.[21]

Shortly thereafter Cem asked for the sultan´s leave to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Cities. Not only did Qāytbāy give his permission for the trip, but he gave Cem and his entourage a lavish send-off as well, and provided him with funds for his pious journey.[22] Cem´s departure for the Hejaz must actually have been a bit of a relief for Qāytbāy. It gave him and his amirs more time to consider the situation and what needed to be done next with their awkward guest.[23] Now no decision had to be made immediately: Cem was, after all, not a fugitive at all, but rather a Muslim prince whom they received as he passed through their lands in fulfillment of a religious duty. Who was Qāytbāy to interfere with such a mission? The hard decisions could be put off until later.

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[20]Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr,* 3:185. Ibn Iyās´s account is not quite consistant with that of the *Vakiʿat-i Sultan Cem,* where we are told that there was ″handshaking and embracing″ between the two (musafaha ve muʿanaka idüb); but Qāytbāy does seem to stop short of recognizing Cem as a fellow sovereign, referring to him as ″my son″ *(oğlum)* rather than ″my brother.″

[21] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr,* 3:185–87, 189; *Vakiʿat-i Sultan Cem*, 4. On the status of the *kātib al-mamālīk* and the *kātib al-sirr*, see Popper, *Notes to Ibn Taghrî Birdîʿs Chronicles*, 15:97, 100.

[22]Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr,* 3:190.

[23]Although Ibn Iyās says somewhat enigmatically that Qāytbāy had ″made up his mind about Cem″ (ʿazima al-sulṭān ʿalá al-Jumjumah). *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr,* 3:187.

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Up to this point, there is little disagreement among our sources about what happened, although many of the major Ottoman sources gloss over or fail entirely to mention Cem´s initial stay in Egypt.[24] While in the Hejaz he seems to have devoted himself to the usual activities of a pilgrim.

Shortly after his return from the hajj in Muḥarram 887/February-March 1482 Cem began to make it clear that he was determined to return to Anatolia to make another bid for the throne. This decision he discussed at a meeting, or several meetings, with Qāytbāy and his inner circle.[25] Ibn Iyās is vague about what had brought about this new resolve; he merely tells us that ″Cem grew restless with his stay at Cairo and sought to return to his country to make war on his brother.″[26] On this point the Ottoman sources, with the exception of Oruç and the Anonymous *Tevarih*, tell us more, and both the *Vaki´at* and the broader chronicles are in agreement. The entreaties of some Anatolian beys, especially of Karamanoğlu Kasım Bey from his own place of exile in İçel, seem to have convinced Cem that he had sufficient support for such a gamble.[27]

These audiences were to affect in the most serious fashion Mamluk relations with Bayezid and his successor, and it is, naturally, over the question of what happened as Cem pleaded his case before Qāytbāy that our sources diverge wildly and significantly. The Mamluk sultan had several possible courses of action:

> *a*. he could have Cem seized and returned to Istanbul, where the bowstring almost certainly awaited him. Such an action would surely please Bayezid, and probably would have resulted in a temporary improvement in relations; perhaps it would have forestalled the war that was to come. The long-term effects are

[24]Of the two manuscripts of Neşri reproduced in facsimile by Taeschner, one, the cod. Manzel, merely says that Cem went to Egypt and thence towards Mecca; the other, the cod. Manisa, omits mention of an initial visit to Egypt at all (*Ğihannümā, die altosmanische Chronik des Mevlana Meḥemmed Neschri,* ed. Franz Taeschner [Leipzig, 1951], 1:221, 2:312), as does Aşıkpaşazade (*Die altosmanische Chronik des Ašıkpašazade,* ed. Friedrich Giese [Leipzig, 1929], 184). The anonymous Ottoman chronicle (*Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken ″Tevārīḫ-i Āl-i ʻOs̱mān,″* ed. and trans. Friedrich Giese [Breslau and Leipzig, 1922–25], 1:116–17, translation 2:154–55) makes no mention at all of what Cem did between being driven off in 1481 and the renewal of his campaign in 1482, while Oruç merely says that Cem ″left Karaman and went to Egypt. From there he reached the Hejaz.″ A detailed account of Cem´s pilgrimage does appear in *Vaki´at-i Sultan Cem*, 4–5.

[25]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i‘ al-Zuhūr,* 3:187.

[26]″Wa-fīhi [Muḥarram 887] taqallaqa Jumjumah ibn ʻUthmān min iqāmatihi bi-Miṣr, wa-ṭalaba al-tawajjuh ilá bilādihi li-yuḥāriba akhīhi [*sic*].″ *Badā'i‘ al-Zuhūr,* 3:192.

[27]*Vaki´at-i Sultan Cem,* 5; Aşıkpaşazade, *Chronik*, 185; Neşri, *Ğihannümā,* 1:121, 2:313. Also see Fisher, *Foreign Relations,* 25–26.

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harder to surmise: in the ″what have you done for us lately?″ atmosphere of international politics, favors (though not offenses) are often soon forgotten.

b. he could keep Cem as his more or less permanent guest, under house arrest. This would have given Qāytbāy a tool in future dealings with the Ottomans. The implicit threat of unleashing Cem at the head of an army might have allowed Qāytbāy to get Bayezid to do Cairo′s bidding in affairs of common concern, and later Latin Christendom would, quite effectively, use Cem in such a fashion when he subsequently became their prisoner. But again the short-term benefits are few, and are offset by the potential of bitter retribution once assassination or natural causes deprived them of their pawn.

c. he could step back and let Cem do as he pleased. Such a course would perhaps have been most in keeping with a policy of neutrality. Neutrality, however, is seldom appreciated by either antagonist.

d. he could, as Cem was certainly urging him to do, send back the fugitive with material support to help him claim the throne. This would be the riskiest policy with a very substantial possible reward: an Ottoman sovereign who owed them his throne. But again, as with the first option, the life-expectancy of the memory of such favors is notoriously short.

In short, Cem had placed Qāytbāy in a quandary. No course of action promised long-term rewards, and some presented definite immediate and long-term hazards.

Some modern scholarship tends towards the belief that Qāytbāy threw his backing behind Cem. Qāytbāy, we are told, not only gave Cem 40,000 ducats for expenses, but furnished him as well with several thousand soldiers. He further sent orders to the governors of Aleppo and Damascus that they should offer Cem similar assistance.[28] The modern source of this story would seem to be Louis Thuasne′s biography of Cem.[29]

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[28]Fisher, *Foreign Relations*, 26; Halil Edhem, ″Hersekoğlu Ahmed Paşa′nın esaretine dair Kahire′de bir kitabe,″ *Tarih-i osmani encümen-i mecmuası* 5 (1914): 204.

[29]″. . . il y fut encouragé par Qaitbay qui voyait avec plaisir les dissensions intestines affaiblir un puissant Etat voisin du sien; aussi engagea-t-il le prétendant à marcher ′où la gloire l′appelait,′ et lui fournait de l′argent et des troupes. Il lui donna quarante mille ducats, deux mille esclaves et quelques places fortes sur les confins du pays de Karamanie. Suivant l′example de leur maître, les gouverneurs de Damas et d′Alep lui remirent chacun dix mille ducats, ainsi qu′une solde à tous ceux qui s′engageaient à servir sous lui.″ *Djem-Sultan: Étude sur la question d′Orient à la fin du XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1892), 51–52.

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Such an interpretation seems in part to be corroborated by contemporary Mamluk historians. Qāytbāy, we are told by the Damascene Ibn Ṭūlūn, equipped Cem and gave him material support against his brother, so that he might wrest the throne from him. He later amends this, however, to say that while Qāytbāy bestowed gifts on Cem and gave him what was appropriate for monarchs, it was said that he was actually trying to act as an intermediary of peace between Cem and Bayezid.[30]

While there is little doubt that Thuasne was true to his sources, it is curious that contemporary Ottoman sources—those written in the time of and for Bayezid, sources with little incentive to gloss over the transgressions and provocations of the Mamluks—make no mention of either the meeting or of the supposed aid offered by Qāytbāy. Both Neşri and Aşıkpaşazade merely tell us that, leaving his mother at Cairo, Cem went north to Adana.[31] Oruç, as mentioned above, again makes no mention of Qāytbāy's attitudes or actions, and simply says that Cem "came back from Egypt and went again to Karaman."[32] Those who believe in Qāytbāy's complicity might argue that the brevity of these works would dictate omission of such detail. But the complicity of the most powerful ruler in the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean could hardly be viewed as trivial and unworthy of comment, especially by those who, as I have said, had every reason to point out outrageous conduct by the Mamluk sultan. There is even an alternate tradition, passed on in some manuscripts of Aşıkpaşazade, which says that when Cem went to Egypt the Mamluk sultan "showed him no regard," and that Bayezid later complained "How strange that the Egyptian showed no friendship with my father, has begun to show hostility towards me, and above all because of them my brother has become prisoner of the infidel!"[33]

Those who would claim some sort of complicity on Qāytbāy's part need furthermore to get around the account of Ibn Iyās, the one chronicler who doubtless had first-hand knowledge of the events at court.[34] Not only is Qāytbāy's conduct blameless in his account, it seems quite laudable:

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[30]Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān,* 1:47, 53.

[31]Neşri, *Ğihannümā,* 1:222, 2:313; Aşıkpaşazade, *Chronik*, 185.

[32]Oruç, *Jahrbücher*, 130–31; *Oruç Beg tarihi*, 129–30.

[33]"Ol vakıt sultan al-mücahidîn Sultan Mehmed Khan Gazi Allah rahmetine kostu oğlu Bayezid Khan padişah oldu karındaşı Cem Sultan kaçtı Mısır'a vardı Mısır sultanı itibar etmedi Mekke'ye gitti Mısırlı Ka'ba'da oturmağa komadı Mısır'a getirdi Mısır'da dahi komadılar Cem dahi başını aldı kâfir vilayetine girdi. Sultan Bayezid eder: Ne aceb bu Mısırlı babamla dostluk etmediler benimle dahi adavete başladılar hususa ki onların sebebinden karındaşım kâfire esir oldu dedi." Aşıkpaşazade, *Chronik*, 225.

[34]Ibn Iyās was in his mid-thirties at the time, and was very close to many high-ranking amirs. See W. Brinner, "Ibn Iyās," in *EI*^{2}, 3:812–13. Even if he was not an eyewitness to the meeting, his sources of information concerning the proceedings should have been very good indeed.

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> In [Muḥarram 887/February-March 1482] Cem grew restless of his stay in Cairo, and sought permission [to return] to his own country to war against his brother. Qāytbāy gathered the amirs to consult them on the matter; then he had Cem brought in to speak at length with the amirs. The atabeg Özbeg verbally abused Cem, but Cem would not abandon his wish to return home. After the matter was discussed at great length between Cem and the amirs, Qāytbāy adjourned the meeting, having only grudgingly *('alá karh minhā)* given Cem permission to depart.[35]

From Ibn Iyās´s account, not only had Qāytbāy not decided to throw his support behind Cem´s bid to claim the Ottoman throne, but he had in fact tried to dissuade him from this course. Nor do his commanders and his advisers show any approval. The only one Ibn Iyās mentions specifically, Özbeg (who would, ironically, play a major role in the coming war against the Ottomans), speaks to the Ottoman pretender with rude impertinence. If the sultan or his advisers had any sympathy with Cem´s plans or saw any future advantage in them, Ibn Iyās makes no mention of it.

But is this account credible? Certainly Ibn Iyās was in Cairo and the closest of all our sources to the deliberations that winter. Such proximity, however, might also lead him to fabricate an account favorable to his patrons and associates at court. Such is indeed the habit of medieval chroniclers, and caution must rule our judgments. Ibn Iyās was, at the same time, no more to be suspected of such fiddling than his contemporaries among Ottoman historians. They, in fact, were recording not merely the political history of a state, but rather of a dynasty, and hence not just about their patrons´ predecessors, but of the ancestors, and hence had greater incentive to protect the reputations of earlier sultans of the house. The biological discontinuity of the Mamluk regime, particularly in its later years,[36] made it less hazardous for the chronicler to criticize the dead. Far from ignoring or excusing the faults of previous sultans, Ibn Iyās often points to them with relish.[37]

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[35]*Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 3:192.

[36]During the earlier phase of the Mamluk state many of the more prominent sultans were themselves the offspring of sultans; by the fifteenth century, however, this was more the exception than the rule. Since Barqūq, the only sultan of note who was the biological offspring of a sultan was Barqūq´s own son Faraj.

[37]It should be noted, however, that Ibn Iyās was writing this section during the reign of Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (see *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 3:207), who was one of Qāytbāy´s mamluks and, one would presume, loyal to the memory of his master. Even so, in a later section Ibn Iyās is highly critical of

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Furthermore, the account given in the *Vaki'at-i Sultan Cem,* the author of which was no mere chronicler but a close companion of Cem throughout his life,[38] in large part corroborates that of Ibn Iyās. It relates that at a contentious meeting at which permission was at first refused, Qāytbāy ultimately and grudgingly relents, in effect washing his hands of the matter with the words, "Someone wishes to come of his own volition, perform the pilgrimage and depart again; how should we prevent him from doing so?"[39]

Setting aside for the moment the question of the reliability of our various sources, we can approach the question of what is likely, knowing what we do of the people involved. Qāytbāy would certainly have liked to see a friend, or at least a debtor, on the Ottoman throne, but such a goal could as easily have been effected by returning the rebel prince to his brother's justice. None of the sources that claim he helped Cem attribute any credible motive for the preference, although Thuasne speculates that he wished to provoke continued chaos among the Ottomans. The only reason why Cem would be friendlier than Bayezid towards the Mamluks was the strictly after-the-fact one that Qāytbāy had helped him. To assume otherwise would be to propose some sort of trans-Taurine conspiracy between Cem acting as his father's governor at Karaman and the Mamluks. Such a conspiracy is not wholly out of the question, especially with the mischievous Kasım Bey acting as intermediary, but was it likely? Since no evidence for such a conspiracy exists, we are forced back on the notion that the sole connection between Cem and Qāytbāy would be that Qāytbāy had given Cem help.

Qāytbāy was a skillful politician; he would know that gratitude was a poor basis for international friendship. Nor would he be likely to overestimate Cem's chances of success, with or without Mamluk support. All in all, the gains to be had if Cem succeeded hardly seem worth the risk of the consequences if he failed—the certain enmity of Bayezid. It would not have been a wise move, and Qāytbāy, as I have pointed out, was no fool.

Qāytbāy would, of course, have given Cem certain provisions. It was only natural to bestow gifts on so august a person, or to provide an impoverished prince with sustenance while he was a guest; and certainly, once Cem had resolved to return to Anatolia, it was not at all inappropriate to give him provisions and an escort for his trip through Syria. But is there any evidence that Qāytbāy, as we are told, furnished Cem with forty thousand ducats and several thousand soldiers, and ordered the governors of Damascus and Aleppo to add to the levy? Such a

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al-Ghawrī himself. See Brinner, "Ibn Iyās," 813.

[38]See İnalcık, "Djem," 530.

[39]"Bir kişi kendü ihtiyariyle gelüb hac idüb gine gitmek ister biz ne vechiyle men eyleyelim?" *Vaki'at-i Sultan Cem*, 5.

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commitment to direct involvement would have been a bald act of war. The money, of course, might leave no trail, but if several thousand Mamluks accompanied Cem into Ottoman territory, what became of them? There is no mention, anywhere, of Mamluk survivors from Cem´s subsequent defeat straggling back to Syria, nor mention in any Ottoman sources of Mamluk prisoners in Ottoman hands.[40]

But even if Qāytbāy´s culpability rested only in washing his hands of the affair and allowing Cem to do as he would, this was bad enough. Ibn Iyās says that Qāytbāy, when he heard of the failure of Cem´s second expedition, regretted having let him go in the first place, and the same author later adds that Cem´s departure was ″a capital mistake.″[41] Letting Cem loose, and perhaps even not preventing him, on his way north to Anatolia, from recruiting disaffected Turcomans to his cause, was bound to offend the Ottoman sultan. The matter was made all the more serious when Cem reached Adana. There, we are told by our Ottoman sources, he met with Karamanoğlu Kasım Bey and, shortly later, they were joined by Mehmed Bey, the rebellious *sancakbey* of Ankara.[42] Adana, although nominally the realm of the Ramazanoğulları, was clearly considered Mamluk territory: al-Ẓāhirī lists it as a dependency of Aleppo.[43] There is no evidence that Qāytbāy, or his governor of Aleppo, did anything to stop the conspirators from using Mamluk territory as a staging ground for their campaign against Bayezid. Even if Qāytbāy´s actions can be portrayed as having conformed to some standard of accepted practice, they were, by omission if not by commission, not well-considered. No partisan of any cause appreciates neutrality.

Such was Cem´s subsequent career, moreover, that Bayezid would hardly have been well-disposed towards anyone that had facilitated his brother´s return. Not that Cem had much of a chance of winning on the field: he had little support at court, and his combined army of Turcomans had little chance against his brother´s forces. Having crossed back into Anatolia in the spring of 1482, he was again beaten. He fled now, not back to Egypt, but to the Knights of St. John of the Hospital at Rhodes.

We can only imagine the delight of the Grand Master of the Order when Bayezid arrived. Only two years earlier the Hospitallers had been beleaguered in their island fortress by Mehmed´s troops. Here now was a tool which, if used properly, would ensure their security, and few scruples about offending Bayezid

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[40]Ibn Iyās regularly reports the return of survivors of military disasters. See, for example, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:241–43, 341, 3:34–36.

[41]Ibid., 3:195–96.

[42]Aşıkpaşazade, *Chronik*, 185; Neşri, *Ğihannümā,* 1:122, 2:313. The *Vaki´at* makes the offense even more serious—Mehmed Bey and Cem met initially not at Adana, but at Aleppo, and thence proceeded to Adana and their meeting with Kasım Bey.

[43]Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdah,* 50–51.

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restrained them. They did allow themselves to be convinced—for a price—by Bayezid´s envoys to remove Cem to Europe. There he was passed among European princes, the carefully-watched house guest of several courts, until his death in 1495. For Christendom, he was a guarantee of Bayezid´s good behavior; as long as the threat existed that he could be put at the head of an army and sent east to claim his throne, Bayezid dared not raise his hand against the West. For the next twelve years the Ottoman advance against Christendom was halted.[44] With any serious campaigning in Europe precluded, Bayezid had not only the time but now the predisposition to direct his attention against the Mamluks.

[44]It is in fact the contention of many historians, most notably Fisher (*Foreign Relations*, 27–35), that Cem´s European exile was the primary factor in determining Bayezid´s relations with Western Christendom. Bayezid was, certainly, accommodating until after 1495.

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