

The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45



Colin Imber

CRUSADE

TEXTS IN

TRANSLATION

CRUSADE TEXTS IN TRANSLATION

About the volume:

The Crusade of Varna of 1443–45 was one of the decisive events of the late Middle Ages: it was Murad's victory at Varna that secured Ottoman domination of the Balkan Peninsula. This book presents the first English translation of three important works which provide eyewitness accounts of the dramatic events of 1443–45 from the Christian and the Muslim side: an anonymous Ottoman text on 'The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad'; a section of the 'Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre' by the Burgundian, Jehan de Wavrin, and a German ballad on the Crusade by Michel Beheim. These are supplemented by a series of shorter contemporary texts relating to the events of the crusade, an introduction and annotation.

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The crusading movement bequeathed to its future historians a legacy of sources unrivalled in their range and variety. *Crusades Texts in Translation* presents these sources document in fascinating detail as well as the motivations and viewpoints, military efforts and spiritual lives, of the participants in the crusades. They narrate the internal histories of the states and societies which crusaders established or supported in the many regions where they fought. Some sources have been translated in the past but the vast majority have been available only in their original language. *Crusades Texts in Translation* provides a wide ranging corpus of texts, most of them translated for the first time, which illuminate the history of the crusades and the crusader-states from every angle, including that of their principal adversaries, the Muslim powers of the Middle East.

About the translator:

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THE CRUSADE OF VARNA, 1443–45

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The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45

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My interest in the Crusade of Varna can be traced very precisely to a seminar on the development of Ottoman artillery given many years ago by Colin Heywood. Dr Heywood was the first to recognise the significance of this crusade in the evolution of Ottoman warfare, and pointed in particular to the importance of Jehan de Wavrin's *Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre* – a work which historians of the crusade had tended to overlook – not simply as a source for the events of the campaign, but very specifically for the detailed evidence which it provides of fifteenth-century warfare and of the transfer of military technology and tactics. This book, and in particular the translation of the *Anciennes Chroniques*, is a very belated but, I hope, positive result of the seminar which provided its inspiration.

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Map 1 The Kingdom of Hungary



Map 2 Greece and Albania



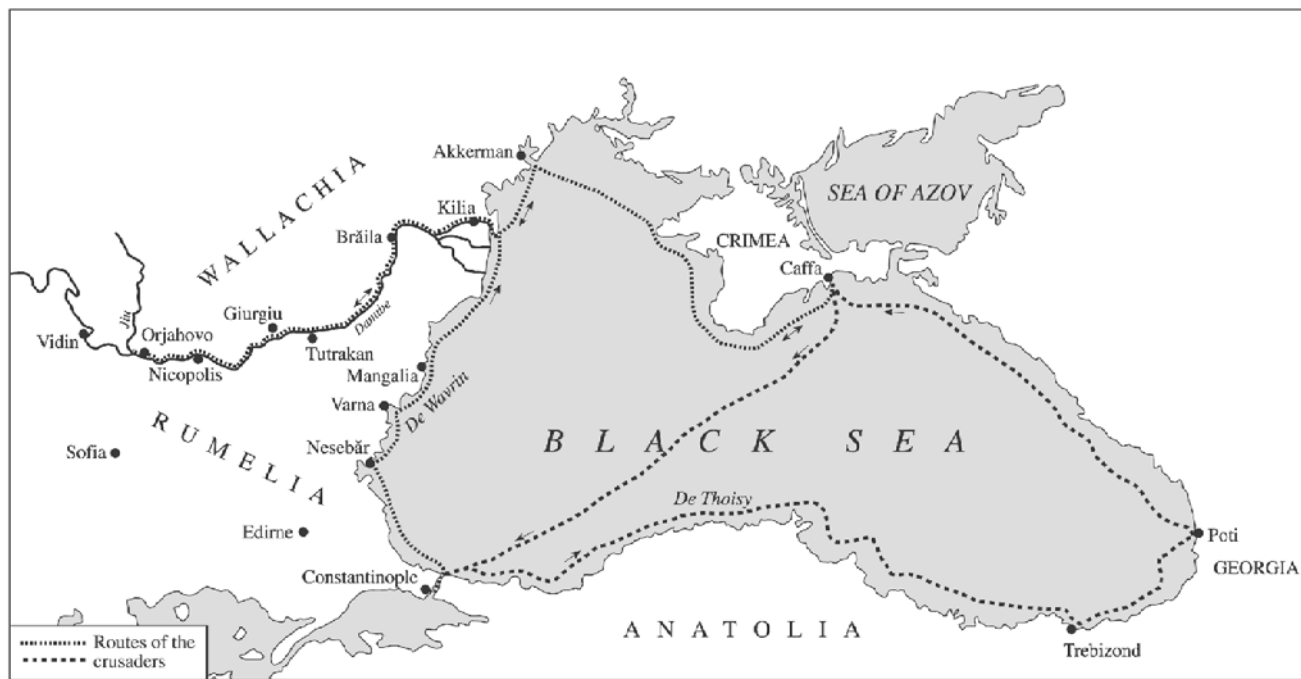
Map 3 Anatolia



Map 4 The Crusade of 1443



Map 5 The Crusade of 1444



Map 6 The Crusade of 1445

Introduction

Crusading and crusades

To understand the circumstances that gave rise to the Crusade of Varna it is useful to make a distinction between crusading as an ideology and crusades as discrete events. The idea of crusading as a continuing military struggle against the enemies of Christendom had formed in western Europe in the centuries following the First Crusade and the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. A crusade, within the framework of this ideal, came to be defined as a military campaign waged against the enemies of the western Church, and conducted – nominally at least – under the auspices of the Pope. The enemies in question might be Muslims, heretics, schismatics or pagans, but Islam was the archetypal enemy and the one that played the central role in the formation and sustenance of the crusading ideal. Furthermore, the notion of ‘liberating’ Jerusalem after the Muslim reconquest of the city in 1244 remained an inspirational chimera throughout the western Christian world. Nonetheless, however firmly established the idea of crusading may have become in the mindset of western Christendom after the First Crusade, it still required a particular set of circumstances to translate it from an ideology into an active undertaking.

What was essential in the first place was that the crusade should serve the secular interests of the participants. Viewed from this perspective, the Crusade of Varna was simply one episode in a series of conflicts arising from Ottoman expansion into the Balkan peninsula, which pre-dated 1443 and were to continue long afterwards. Furthermore, the crusades of 1443–45 were not simply wars between Muslims and Christians: the Muslim Ibrahim of Karaman shared the anti-Ottoman interests of Byzantium and Hungary and was an ally of the crusaders. The Christian Genoese, on the other hand, were allies of the Ottomans, while the Christian Duke of Athens sought Ottoman protection against the equally Christian Despot of Mistra, Constantine Dragases, who was a keen advocate of the crusade. What transformed the wars of 1443–45 from a secular conflict into a crusade was the involvement of the Pope. One of Eugenius IV’s motives in organising the enterprise was no doubt simply to restore and extend his own authority at a time of crisis in the papacy, but it was his involvement as head of the Church that activated the crusading ideology, and this had important consequences. In the first place, the worldly aims of the participants in the Crusade of Varna were disparate and sometimes conflicting: the notion that the campaign was a crusade provided a unifying idea to which all the participants could subscribe, whether princes and prelates or common soldiers and sailors. Furthermore, it could also inspire princes and commoners with no apparent material interests in its outcome to join the campaign. Nevertheless, despite the shared faith of most of the

participants, the success of a crusade in the face of numerous obstacles required in its leaders a combination of diplomatic skill and a true, not to say fanatical, belief in the undertaking and its religious ideology. This is what the papal legate to the crusade, Cardinal Julian Cesarini, provided. His determination is evident especially in his skill in presenting the disastrous campaign in the autumn and winter of 1443–44 as a Christian triumph and in his successful manoeuvring to break a treaty concluded with the Ottomans on favourable terms and sworn on oath. Without Cesarini, the Crusade of Varna would probably never have happened.

The historical context of the Crusade of Varna: the Ottomans in the Balkans and the Crusade of Nicopolis

The Ottoman Empire emerged as a small principality in the early fourteenth century in north-west Anatolia. It was still an insignificant power when Ottoman troops and raiders first appeared in Europe as allies of the Byzantine pretender and later Emperor, John Kantakouzenos (1347–54). In the following decades, the Ottoman rulers combined their growing military strength with astute dynastic politics to expand their territory eastwards into Anatolia and westwards into the Balkan peninsula. In 1387, Murad I (1362–89) conquered Thessaloniki. In the early 1390s, his successor Bayezid I (1389–1402) established his suzerainty over Stephen Lazarević of Serbia. In 1395, he invaded Wallachia to the north of the Danube in an effort, presumably, to bring its ruler Mircea (1386–1418) under his overlordship. In the same year, he executed the Bulgarian Tsar, appointing an Ottoman governor in his stead. An inevitable result of the expansion of Bayezid's realms was a conflict with King Sigismund of Hungary (1387–1437) who, like Bayezid, sought to exert his suzerainty over Serbia and Wallachia, and whose territory to the north of the Danube had begun to suffer from Ottoman raids. Hitherto an expansionary power in the Balkans, the Kingdom of Hungary found itself for the first time on the defensive.¹ However, it was not only Hungary that Bayezid threatened. Venetian records from the 1390s record the assaults of Ottoman raiders on Venetian territories in the Peloponnesos, while an Ottoman fleet based at Gallipoli harried Venetian-held islands in the Aegean. In 1394, Bayezid brought the city of Constantinople under siege.

These were the circumstances that provoked the first anti-Ottoman crusade. In the early 1390s Sigismund was already discussing the possibility of an anti-Ottoman league with Venice. By 1396, with the urgent need to defend his city, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II (1391–1425) had joined the negotiations with the pledge to add a fleet of ten galleys to the four promised by the Venetians. It was the threat from

¹ For Hungary during the period under discussion, see Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, ed. Andrew Ayton (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001). For a conspectus of Ottoman–Hungarian warfare, see F. Szakály, 'Phases of Turco-Hungarian warfare before the battle of Mohács', *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XXXIII (1979), 65–111. For the Ottoman Empire during this period, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990).

Bayezid that had triggered this alliance, but it was Sigismund's appeal to the wider Catholic world that gave the undertaking the character of a crusade. In 1395, the marriage between Richard II of England and Isabella, the daughter of Charles VI of France, formalised a truce between France and England, releasing the knights of France, England and Burgundy for adventures elsewhere. It was the men of France and Burgundy in particular, together with smaller contingents from other parts of Europe, who answered Sigismund's appeal to join his campaign against Bayezid. The purpose of Sigismund, Venice and the Byzantine Emperor in seeking allies to join their coalition was simply to defend their territories from attack and even, in the case of the Emperor, from extinction. What, however, allowed them to make an appeal beyond their own borders and to give the coalition a unity of purpose was the fact the enemy was Muslim. This made it possible to present the undertaking as a crusade and, if the chronicler Froissart is to be believed, it was as crusaders that the Franco-Burgundian contingent under John of Nevers, the son of the Duke of Burgundy, set out for Hungary. 'It was published in Paris and elsewhere,' he wrote, that John of Nevers would lead the expedition against the Ottoman Sultan and then 'advance to Constantinople, cross the Hellespont, enter Syria, gain the Holy Land and deliver Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the infidels.' This was a fantasy. What had provoked the campaign was Ottoman–Hungarian rivalry combined with the Ottoman threat to Byzantium and to the Venetian colonies in Greece and the Aegean. It had nothing to do with Jerusalem or the Holy Sepulchre. It was, however, a fantasy that gave the campaign both a political coherence and a religious purpose: the crusading ideology had transformed a secular conflict into a religious war. The same combination of *Realpolitik* and idealism was to provide the motivating force for the later Crusade of Varna.

Sigismund's undertaking ended with the rout of the crusading army at Nicopolis in 1396, and it was probably in part to seek vengeance for this defeat that the Burgundians participated in the Varna crusade. The memory of the battle certainly lingered. Jehan de Wavrin records, in his account of the Burgundian campaign on the Danube in 1445, how his nephew asked to be shown the site of the battle (II). For the six years after 1396, Ottoman raids across the Danube into Hungarian territory and against Venetian colonies intensified, and Constantinople remained under siege. Bayezid, however, left Europe and, in 1397, annexed the emirate of Karaman, the main rival to Ottoman power in Anatolia. In the end, his downfall came about not through the efforts of crusaders, but through his defeat and captivity at the hands of Timur – or Tamerlane – at the battle of Ankara in 1402.

The Crusade of Varna: antecedents

After his victory and before leaving Anatolia, Timur re-established the Emirate of Karaman and other formerly independent territories in western Turkey. In the Balkan peninsula, by the terms of the Treaty of Gallipoli concluded in 1403 between Bayezid's eldest son Süleyman, Byzantium, and the maritime powers of the Aegean,

the Emperor Manuel II recovered Thessaloniki, and Süleyman accepted restrictions on the movements of his ships at Gallipoli. The Venetian senate, meanwhile, discussed but rejected the possibility of occupying Gallipoli itself. For ten years after 1403, civil war between the sons of Bayezid reduced the threat which the Ottomans posed to neighbouring powers. Constantinople was no longer under siege; raids in southern Greece continued, but with less ferocity than before 1402; and Sigismund restored security to the southern border of Hungary. From 1403, Bayezid's former vassal, Stephen Lazarević of Serbia, accepted *de facto* Sigismund's overlordship. In 1408 he became a founding member of the Hungarian chivalric Order of the Dragon and, from 1411, Sigismund reinforced his loyalty by bestowing on him vast estates within the Kingdom of Hungary itself. The King similarly awarded Mircea of Wallachia, whose lands adjoined the southern border of Transylvania, with estates in southern Transylvania. The loyalty of these principalities for a while provided Hungary with a buffer against Ottoman incursions.

The Ottoman civil war ended in 1413, with the victory of Mehmed I (1413–21), but the unrest that it had brought to the Balkans was still apparent in the uncertain loyalties of the Ottoman marcher lords at the time of the Varna crusade. In 1414, Manuel II and Mircea attempted to reignite the Ottoman civil war by sponsoring an Ottoman prince of uncertain lineage as a claimant to the Ottoman throne. The prince's attempt to seize power failed, but the appearance of Mehmed's brother Mustafa² offered his sponsors a second opportunity. In 1416, Mircea and Manuel materially supported his invasion of Ottoman Rumelia, to coincide with a Karamanid attack on Ottoman territory in Anatolia. This enterprise too ended with the defeat of the Karamanids and Mustafa's flight to the safety of the Byzantine city of Thessaloniki. While sponsoring rival claimants to the Ottoman throne, Manuel tried at the same time to construct an anti-Ottoman league. Ottoman raids on Byzantine and Venetian territories in the Peloponnesos had intensified since the end of the civil war and, furthermore, Ottoman intervention on behalf of an anti-Hungarian faction in Bosnia and the subsequent defection of the Bosnian King Stephen Ostoja in 1415 from Hungarian to Ottoman allegiance led to a severe weakening of the Hungarian defensive system. As the Byzantine Emperor's envoy tried to negotiate a conclusion to the longstanding war between Venice and Hungary early in 1416, a league of these threatened powers seemed to be a possibility. However, the opportunity soon passed. Following a Venetian naval victory over the Ottomans in April 1416, Venice's interest in the proposal evaporated.

However, the Ottomans continued to threaten all three powers. As a reprisal for the Emperor's support of Mustafa, Mehmed had laid siege to Thessaloniki. In Albania between 1417 and 1418, he occupied the port of Vlorë (Valona) and Gjirokastrë (Argyrokastron), presenting an immediate threat to Venetian colonies and interests in the region. The same years, too, saw a weakening of Hungarian defences. In 1417, a year before Mircea's death, Mehmed I captured the Danubian fortresses of Isaccea,

2 On this prince, see C. J. Heywood, 'Mustafa Çelebi, Düzme', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition), VII (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

Giurgiu, Novo Selo and Turnu Severin which guarded the passage of the river into Wallachia and Transylvania. At the same time, he took three of Mircea's sons to his court as hostages. In 1419, Sigismund retook Turnu Severin and fortified the frontier between there and Golubac, but with Mircea dead and the Ottoman Sultan in control of the Danube crossings to the east of Turnu Severin the frontier, and especially the passage through Wallachia into Transylvania, were no longer secure.

The death of Mehmed I in 1421 offered the Byzantine Emperor the opportunity to undermine Ottoman power, once again by fomenting strife within the dynasty. Mehmed's successor was his eldest son, Murad II (1421–51). Shortly after Murad had ascended the throne, Manuel released from captivity his uncle Mustafa, with the agreement that when he had seized power, Mustafa would surrender Gallipoli and other territories to Byzantium. Despite Mustafa's initial success in securing the loyalty of the Ottoman lords of Rumelia and crossing the straits into Anatolia, Murad drove him back, took him prisoner, and hanged him as a common criminal from the city walls of Edirne. Murad owed this victory – as he was to owe his victory in 1444 – to a Genoese ally. When Mustafa had fled back across the straits to Gallipoli, he had drawn the ships in the port up on land, depriving Murad of transport across the water. It was the Genoese governor of New Phokaia who not only ferried Murad's men across the straits but also provided crossbowmen for his army. The Genoese colonists in the Aegean had, as a result perhaps of their mutual enmity with Venice, been allies of the Ottomans since the mid-fourteenth century.

Manuel II's attempt to use Mustafa to overthrow Murad invited reprisals and, in 1422, the Sultan laid siege to both Constantinople and Thessaloniki. The appearance of Murad's younger brother as a finally unsuccessful claimant to the Ottoman throne saved Constantinople, but Thessaloniki remained under siege. Its defence was beyond the Emperor's means and, in 1423, he ceded the city to Venice. This involved the Venetians in a war with the Ottomans, which they could not hope to sustain alone. Apart from sponsoring a series of pretenders, claiming to be Murad's uncle Mustafa, they looked for allies among the Turkish rulers of western Anatolia whose principalities Timur had restored in 1402. However, by the end of the decade, Murad had eliminated the rival dynasties in western Anatolia, leaving only Karaman as a threat to his territory in Anatolia. One of the Turkish rulers whose assistance Venice had tried to enlist was Cüneyd, the Emir of the Aegean principality of Aydın, whom Murad had defeated and killed in 1425 with Genoese assistance. With Cüneyd's demise, Venice looked for other allies and began negotiations with Sigismund, offering to support a Hungarian invasion of Ottoman territory by cutting Ottoman communications at the straits. Nothing came of this plan and, in 1430, Thessaloniki fell to an Ottoman assault on its land walls. The recovery of the city was a Venetian goal during the Crusade of Varna.

Although the Venetians failed to engage Sigismund in a joint action against Murad, their approach came at a time of renewed Ottoman–Hungarian conflict over the old issue of which power was to dominate Wallachia and Serbia. In Wallachia, the Ottomans provided military support for the claims of the Voevode Radu against the Hungarian-backed Dan II, leading Sigismund to intervene personally and to win

a clear victory over Radu in the winter of 1426–27. However, the death of Dan in 1432 led to renewed conflict and Ottoman raids into Transylvania. It was only in 1436 that Sigismund was able to restore his authority over the principality by installing Vlad Drakul as Voevode. Vlad had received his education at the Hungarian court and, as his sobriquet implies, was a member of the Order of the Dragon. He was to fight in the crusading army in 1444.

The second area of Hungarian conflict with the Ottomans was Serbia. In 1427, Stephen Lazarević died, bequeathing his lands to his nephew George Branković. In the year before his death, he had also agreed that the fortresses of Belgrade and Golubac on the Danube should pass to Sigismund of Hungary, giving the King control of the passage of the Danube between Serbia and Hungary. In 1427, Sigismund took possession of Belgrade, but Golubac to the east of Belgrade passed to the Ottomans, and Sigismund failed to wrest it from them in 1428. To compensate for the loss of these fortresses, in 1435 Branković completed the construction of the castle of Smederovo on the Danube between Golubac and Belgrade. The possession of Smederovo and Golubac was to be a central issue in the negotiations between Murad, Branković and the Hungarians in 1444 (V.8). Sigismund's alarm at having the Ottomans as Hungary's immediate neighbour across the Danube and the increasing frequency of Turkish raids into the Kingdom is evident from the defensive measures which he took in the 1420s. The decade saw the construction of fourteen new castles between Turnu Severin and Belgrade, including Szentlászló, constructed in 1428 directly opposite Golubac. In the following year, and at great expense, Sigismund handed over the defence of this section of the Danube frontier to the Teutonic Knights. The arrangement lasted until an Ottoman force overwhelmed the Knights in 1432.

The appearance of Ottoman forces on the Danube frontier with Hungary was to be the major source of friction that was to spark the Varna crusade. The same years following the death of Stephen Lazarević also saw the extension of Ottoman control in Albania. In 1432, Arianit, lord of the lands around Berat, won a victory over the Ottoman occupiers of his territory, encouraging the leaders of the Zenevis and Kastriote clans in southern and central Albania to unite against the Sultan. By 1433, however, the Ottoman lord of Thessaly Turahan – whom Murad was to imprison for his failings during the Hungarian invasion of 1443 – had violently suppressed the uprising, reoccupying the territory of the Zenevis around Gjirokastër and reducing John Kastriote of Krujë to vassalage. His son George, better remembered as Iskender Bey or Scanderbeg, became a hostage at the Ottoman court. In 1438 Murad appointed him governor of the ancestral Kastriote territory, and it was from here, during the Crusade of Varna, that he launched his rebellion against the Sultan. The re-establishment of Ottoman power in Albania thoroughly alarmed the Venetians whose Albanian colonies the Ottoman occupation seemed to threaten.

The other neighbours of the Ottomans had equal cause for alarm. During the 1430s, the system of buffer principalities which protected the southern border of Hungary collapsed. In 1434 or 1435, Murad sent raids into Hungary, forcing the Despot George Branković to pay tribute. In 1435, he demanded Branković's daughter in marriage, so formalising her father's status as an Ottoman tributary and at the same

time undermining Serbia's role as Hungary's first line of defence against Ottoman attack. In Anatolia Karaman occupied a position somewhat similar to that of Serbia, as a buffer between Ottoman territory and the territory of the Mamluk Sultan and his vassals to the east and south-east, and it was a dispute between Ibrahim of Karaman and a Mamluk vassal that triggered the threat of Mamluk intervention. It was to counter this danger that Murad invaded Ibrahim's territory early in 1437, forcing the Emir to cede the two towns of Beyşehir and Akşehir on the western border of the principality. Ibrahim was to recover these and other possessions in 1444 (IV.4).

The Crusade of Varna: preliminaries

The issues, therefore, which led to the Crusade of Varna were longstanding. The first of these was the Ottoman threat to the continued existence of Byzantium, both the city of Constantinople itself and the remaining Byzantine territories in the Peloponnesos. The Emperor could not defeat the Ottomans on his own, but had necessarily to rely for his survival either on creating strife within the Ottoman dynasty, or on forging alliances with the Latin powers of the west or with the Muslim powers in the East. The second issue was the struggle between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire for dominance in the Balkan peninsula, and in particular the competition for control of Serbia and Wallachia which lay between the two powers. The third issue was the commercial and colonial rivalry between Venice and Genoa. While the Venetians needed to adapt their commercial and colonial policies to accommodate the Ottoman presence, their attitude to the Ottomans, although always realistic, was essentially hostile. When they felt their interests threatened and could find suitable allies, they were ready to go to war. The Genoese, by contrast, had remained on good terms with the Ottoman Sultans since the mid-fourteenth century, and Murad II in particular seems to have maintained personal friendships with the Genoese dynasts of the Levant. Ciriaco of Ancona reports how, when he was in retirement at Manisa in 1446, Murad invited the Genoese Francesco di Drapieri not simply to his residence but into 'a separate, private, inner chamber, where no outsider may so much as step on the threshold.'³ The last issue was the permanent rivalry between the Ottomans and the Karamanids in Anatolia which, in the Karamanids, provided the western powers with a willing anti-Ottoman ally.

In its essentials, therefore, the Crusade of Varna was no more than the continuation of the struggle between these powers, using means that had been proposed or even put into effect on more than one occasion before. The plan to use a Karamanid attack to lure the Sultan into Anatolia while the Hungarians invaded from the west was not new. Nor was the idea of blocking the straits to prevent the Sultan's army returning from Anatolia to fight the Hungarians in Europe. Nor was the idea of releasing an Ottoman pretender in order to stir up disaffection among the Sultan's subjects.

3 *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels*, ed. and trans. Edward W. Bodnar (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 247.

The problem which the anti-Ottoman powers faced was that, apart from a desire to defeat or at least weaken the Ottomans, they had no aims in common, making co-operation and the formation of effective alliances difficult. The idea of a crusade, on the other hand, provided a coherence among the Christian powers that was usually lacking and also had the potential to attract allies who had no special interests in the Levant. However, a crusade required the leadership of the Pope, and a pope would involve himself in such an undertaking only when it suited the political ends of the papacy. Precisely such circumstances arose during the 1430s.

In 1431, the Venetian Gabriele Condulmer became Pope as Eugenius IV. In the same year a General Council of the Church assembled in Basel under the presidency of Cardinal Julian Cesarini to discuss ecclesiastical reform, and since the reforms that the Council proposed would limit both the power and the income of the Pope, Eugenius opposed it from the outset. One of the issues at stake between Pope and Council was the union of the Latin and Greek Churches. The previous Pope, Martin V, had already reached an agreement with the Byzantine Emperor to begin discussions, and the question of whether the proposed meeting between Greeks and Latins should be held at Basel or in Italy became a matter of dispute between Pope and Council. When in 1437 two-thirds of the prelates on the Council voted that it should be held at Basel, the Pope endorsed the minority view and called a council at Ferrara in Italy. It was at this stage that Cesarini – a key figure in the Crusade of Varna – abandoned the Council of Basel for the Pope.

The decision of the Greeks, on the advice of the Doge of Venice, to attend the Pope's Council at Ferrara in 1438 and its continuation at Florence in 1439 represented a coup for the Pope against his rivals at Basel. His victory was complete when Cesarini publicly proclaimed the Latin text of the Decree of Union in Florence in 1439. This settled the theological issues of purgatory, the eucharist and the *filioque* that had divided the Churches and, in its final clause, gave unequivocal recognition to the primacy of the Pope (IV.1).⁴ Only a minority of Latin bishops and of Greek clergy had attended the Council, and of the secular rulers, only the Angevins and – significantly for the Crusade of Varna – the Duke of Burgundy had sent representatives. In the same year as the Decree of Union, the Council of Basel had elected a rival Pope. Nonetheless, the Council of Ferrara and Florence was a triumph for Eugenius against the prelates at Basel and the first step in the organisation of the Crusade of Varna, as the anonymous author of the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad son of Sultan Mehmed Khan* clearly understood (I).

The Greek Emperor's motive in attending the Council of Florence and Ferrara had not been simply to discuss theology, but rather to solicit the Pope's help against the Ottomans. The Greek concessions on the theological issues and the unwelcome recognition of the Pope as head of the reunited Churches was the price that John VIII was forced to pay for military aid. This the Pope had promised in June 1439,

4 For an outline of the dispute between Eugenius IV and the Council of Basel, see Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (eds), *History of the Church*, vol.IV (London: Burns and Oates, 1980), 474–84.

before the promulgation of the Decree of Union, and the Greeks had good reason to expect that he would keep his side of the bargain. Eugenius' success in negotiating the union undoubtedly increased his authority against the claims of the Council of Basel. If in the wake of the union, he could rescue Byzantium by sponsoring a successful crusade, he could more easily enforce the Decree of Union, his role as head of the reunited Church would be reinforced, and his authority against the claims of the Council of Basel undisputed. Furthermore, the defection of Cardinal Cesarini from Council to Pope improved the prospect for such a venture. In confronting the Hussites in Bohemia, Cesarini had shown himself to be an enemy of negotiations with heretics, and in 1429 Eugenius IV's predecessor had appointed him papal legate to the fifth crusade against the Hussites. The rout of his forces at Domažlice in 1431⁵ did not apparently diminish his enthusiasm for crusading, and his presence in the entourage of the Pope provided the impetus for a campaign against the Ottomans.

However, in the years immediately following the Decree of Union, circumstances did not favour a crusade. While the affairs of Italy diverted the Pope's attention, the Greek response to the union showed that, in practice, it amounted to no more than a private agreement between Pope and Emperor. The Greek chronicle of Doukas invents a dramatic scene where the prelates returning from the Council of Ferrara–Florence denounce their own actions with the words: 'We have betrayed our faith. We have exchanged piety for impiety. We have renounced the pure sacrifice and become azymites.'⁶ Meanwhile, the Orthodox Patriarch of Russia, Isidore of Kiev, whom Eugenius had appointed as legate to enforce the union in Russia, was driven from Kiev and imprisoned in Moscow as a heretic. The problems in Byzantium were not, however, simply ecclesiastical. The apparent failure of the union coincided with dynastic quarrels within the Byzantine imperial family. John VIII's brother Demetrios claimed the imperial title for himself and, as was the practice in such disputes, called on the Ottoman Sultan for assistance. In the spring of 1442, Murad II's forces attacked Constantinople on Demetrios' behalf, and then, in the summer, Murad provided ships to besiege John and his other brother, Constantine, on the island of Limni. However, by the autumn of 1442, the Byzantine civil war had ended. Its conclusion came at a moment when the prospects for a crusade seemed at last to be realistic.

Hungary was the key to any crusade against the Ottomans but, in the five years since Sigismund's death in 1437, the Kingdom had suffered persistent internal problems. Sigismund's successor was his son-in-law Albert, Duke of Austria. On his succession the Hungarian nobility coerced him into signing a law to 'restore the ancient laws and customs of the realm', meaning in effect that he could not

5 Thomas A. Fudge, *The Crusade against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418–1437* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 262–340.

6 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, transl. J. A. Magoulias (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 181. The azymite controversy was one of the theological issues settled in the Decree of Union.

take political decisions without the participation of the landed nobility of the realm,⁷ an arrangement that was to add to the complications and misunderstandings over the negotiations with Murad II in 1444 (V). Furthermore, Albert's main foreign interest was not in a crusade, but rather in a war with King Vladislav of Poland over the Kingdom of Bohemia. Seeing this as a hindrance to the crusade project, Pope Eugenius proposed a conference at Wrocław to settle the matter. The parties met in the presence of a papal envoy early in 1439, but without ending the dispute.⁸ In the meantime, the Ottoman threat to Hungary's southern frontier increased.

Doukas attributes this to Murad II's appointment to the vizierate of Hekim Fazlullah, whom he describes as an inveterate foe of Christianity. The first assault came in 1438, when Murad, using Vlad Drakul as a guide, led an army across the Danube at Turnu Severin and, without meeting any resistance from King Albert, devastated the towns of Transylvania.⁹ The raid seems to have been the first stage of a planned conquest of Hungary. The next Ottoman attack was on Serbia, the Despot's position as the Sultan's father-in-law offering him no protection. The Ottoman chronicler Aşıkpaşazade claims that it was the Ottoman marcher lord and Aşıkpaşazade's own patron, Ishak Pasha of Skopje, who persuaded the Sultan to begin the war. Ishak Pasha, in this account, claimed that Hungary and Karaman – who were to be allies during the Crusade of Varna – were in league with one another, and would not submit to Murad so long as the Despot Branković occupied Smederovo. By this account, too, it was Ishak Pasha who convinced the Sultan that Vlad Drakul was unreliable and persuaded him to imprison him at Gallipoli and to detain his two sons. It is with this incident that Jehan de Wavrin (II) begins his account of the crusade.

The campaign against Serbia itself began with the occupation of Borač in 1438. Zvornik and Srebrenica fell in 1439. The campaign ended with the capitulation of Smederovo at the end of the same year. George Branković fled to Hungary where he had large estates. During the siege, King Albert had come with his army to Tüdőrev at the confluence of the Danube and the Tisza, but had made no attempt to encounter the besiegers.¹⁰ He died soon after the withdrawal of his army.

The Ottoman occupation of Serbia and the forced subjugation of Vlad Drakul removed all protection from Hungary's southern border, at a time when the death of Albert had weakened the Kingdom's ability to resist invasion. In 1440 Murad clearly intended to defeat and occupy Hungary itself. In 1439, he had sent to King Vladislav of Poland an embassy which had offered the King help in his war with Albert over Bohemia. Albert's death deprived Murad of this weapon against Hungary, but in

⁷ Engel, *The Realm*, 279–80.

⁸ Maurice Michael, *The Annals of Jan Długosz* (Chichester: IM Publications, 1997), 472–7.

⁹ For a captive's account of the campaign, see Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus, Conditionibus et Nequicia Turcorum*, ed. Reinhard Klockow (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), 151–7.

¹⁰ János Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, transl. Frank Mantello (Bloomington, Indiana: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1991), 102–3.

1440 he laid siege of Belgrade, the most important Hungarian bastion against an Ottoman invasion. The defenders, under the command of John Tallóci, Prior of the Hospitallers in Hungary, successfully resisted, but throughout the months of the siege they received no help from elsewhere in the Kingdom, since by this time Hungary was engulfed in a civil war.

It was the death of King Albert that had precipitated the conflict. At the time of his death in October 1439, his widow, King Sigismund's daughter Elizabeth, was five months pregnant. The Hungarian Estates were unwilling to entrust the Kingdom to the rule of Elizabeth or, should she give birth to a son, to accept an infant as king, with the boy's mother as regent. Their solution to the crisis was to invite the sixteen-year-old King Vladislav III of Poland to accept the crown as Vladislav I of Hungary. Murad was clearly aware of this development, as his envoys, Długosz tells us, were present at the solemn mass in Cracow cathedral where Bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki urged the King to accept the offer.¹¹ In February 1440, when the Hungarian envoys were still in Poland, the Queen gave birth to a son, Ladislaus, and when Vladislav arrived in Buda in May, she refused to accept him as king. Instead, she instructed her lady-in-waiting, Helene Kottanner, to steal the Holy Crown from safe-keeping at Visegrád.¹² On 15 May, the Archbishop of Esztergom, Denis Szécsi, used it to crown the infant Ladislaus at Székesfehérvár, a ceremony which by tradition made Ladislaus legitimate King of Hungary. In June, however, the partisans of Vladislav declared the coronation invalid by invoking an entirely new 'tradition': 'The crowning of kings is always dependent on the will of the kingdom's inhabitants, in whose consent both the effectiveness and the force of the crown reside.'¹³ They were, in effect, declaring the legitimacy of the King to be dependent on the will of the nobility. This was to erode further an already fragmented royal authority, with consequences that were to become evident in later negotiations with Murad II.

On 17 July, Vladislav was crowned at Székesfehérvár, using a crown removed from the reliquary of St Stephen: Elizabeth had stolen the Holy Crown of Hungary, which she was to deliver, together with her son Ladislaus, to the safekeeping of Ladislaus' second cousin, Frederick III, the Duke of Styria and King of Germany. Then, as the Ottomans laid siege to Belgrade, the civil war began. The majority of the Hungarian nobility were partisans of Vladislav, but Elizabeth had the support of the towns and some of the most powerful magnates of the Kingdom, including the Archbishop of Esztergom and the exiled Despot of Serbia, George Branković. Above all she had the support of the Bohemian warlord John Jiškra, who controlled much of the northern part of the Kingdom on her behalf. The King, meanwhile, enjoyed the support of Nicholas Újlaki, Ban of Mačva and John Hunyadi, Ban of Severin, who routed the Queen's forces during the winter war early in 1441, bringing much of southern Hungary under Vladislav's control. In recognition of their success,

11 Michael, *The Annals*, 478.

12 Helene Kottaner, *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner* intro. and transl. Maya Bijvoet Williamson (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998).

13 Quoted from Engel, *The Realm*, 281.

Vladislav appointed them jointly as Voevodes of Transylvania, Counts of Székely and castellans of Timișoara, Belgrade and the fortresses along the Danube border. The two men divided their responsibilities, with Újlaki conducting the King's war in the western part of the Kingdom, while Hunyadi took over operations east of the River Tisza. By April 1441, he had pacified the eastern counties, forcing George Branković and other powerful supporters of Elizabeth to recognise the King. Hunyadi's victories allowed him to seize from the defeated partisans of Elizabeth their castles and possessions in Transylvania, and to add them to the substantial estates which he had already received from Vladislav. He was by this time not only one of the most powerful men in the Kingdom, but also, as master of Transylvania, responsible for protecting Hungary's southern border against Ottoman raids. His pre-eminent position in the Kingdom, together with his experience of warfare against the Ottomans, were to ensure that he played a leading role in the crusade.

Although by 1442 Vladislav's party controlled much of the Kingdom, the north and parts of the west remained faithful to Elizabeth. By the end of the year, however, the civil war was over. It was above all the strife in Hungary that had thwarted Eugenius IV's plans for a crusade, and it was to negotiate an end to the war that he sent Julian Cesarini to Buda in the summer of 1442. Cesarini's numerous journeys between the Queen in Győr and the King in Buda finally produced a settlement between the two. What, however, brought the civil war, if not the uncertainties over the Hungarian crown, to a definitive end was the death of Elizabeth in December 1442.¹⁴ Certainly, at the end of 1442, Vladislav felt secure enough in his kingdom to reject a proposal from the Sultan's envoys, made in Cesarini's presence, of peace in exchange for the surrender of Belgrade.¹⁵ With the civil war in Byzantium having ended about two months earlier, the prospects for a crusade suddenly seemed to be realistic.

The Crusade of Varna: preparations

In 1442, when the majority of Orthodox clergy had rejected the Decree of Union and civil wars affected both Hungary and Byzantium, the outlook for a crusade seemed bleak. Nonetheless, diplomatic efforts continued. In February 1442, the Byzantine ambassador Ianakis Torcello stopped in Venice on his journey from Hungary to Rome. He reported despairingly on the state of affairs in Hungary and, at the same time, sought Venice's assistance against the Turks. The senators prevaricated. They needed to know what the German Emperor intended to do and promised Torcello an answer on his return journey.¹⁶ Two months later, when Cardinal Cesarini lodged in Venice, clearly on his way to Austria and then Hungary, he too must have discussed

14 Michael, *The Annals*, 487–8.

15 Michael, *The Annals*, 488.

16 N. Jorga, *Notes et Extraits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XV^e Siècle*, vol. II, 3e série (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1902), 83.

the proposed campaign.¹⁷ In March, in the meantime, the Pope's accounts show payments to the Bishop of Coron 'for going to Hungary',¹⁸ presumably in an effort to end the civil war there. In August, when Cesarini's negotiations were underway, he despatched a Matthew of Hungary to him as an envoy.¹⁹ Finally, at the end of December 1442, he authorised payments of Cesarini's expenses up until March 1443,²⁰ clearly intending him to stay in Hungary after the end of the civil war to make preparations for the crusade.

The Emperor John VIII had also sent an ambassador, Theodore Karystinos, to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, whose representative had attended the Council of Ferrara–Florence and with whose 'companion' John Cocq the Pope had held discussions in March 1442.²¹ Jehan de Wavrin describes Karystinos' arrival in late June or early July 1442, and the successful accomplishment of his mission (II), with the Duke promising to supply seven galleys, a transport vessel and a caravel, provided Venice, the Pope and other princes did likewise.²² The Duke of Burgundy had no obvious material interest in the proposed crusade, but crusading as an ideology was part of the literary and chivalric culture of the Burgundian court. The Burgundians had participated, with disastrous consequences, in the Crusade of Nicopolis in 1396, and the Duke undoubtedly sought revenge for this defeat. Later, in 1431, Philip had gone so far as to make preparations to participate in the Domažlice crusade against the Hussites, and in the early 1430s he had despatched his courtier Bertrandon de la Broquière to the Holy Land to report on the enemy and the terrain in advance of a planned crusade.²³ In 1441, the Burgundian Geoffroy de Thoisy had led a flotilla that had sailed from Villefranche-en-Provence to assist in the defence of Rhodes against the Mamluks. Furthermore, quite apart from idealistic considerations, a crusade would raise the Duke's own status. Legally, he ruled his lands as a vassal of the King of France. Participation in a victorious crusade would open the possibility of receiving a royal crown from the Pope.²⁴

At the same time as he sent ambassadors to Hungary, Rome, Venice and Burgundy, John VIII must also, as the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad* (I) informs us, have sent an envoy to the crusaders' Muslim ally, Ibrahim of Karaman. By the end of 1442, therefore, the crusade was under negotiation. However, to turn negotiations into action required a real prospect of success and this John Hunyadi had provided. As commander of the southern marches, the defence of Hungary against Turkish raids was primarily his responsibility. Thuróczy reports his success in 1441 against a raid under Ishak Pasha from Smederovo,²⁵ but it was his victories in 1442 that made his heroic reputation. On 22 March, he almost annihilated an army under Mezid

17 Ibid., 88.

18 N. Jorga, *Notes et Extraits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XV^e Siècle*, vol. II, 2e série (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 20.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 21.

21 Ibid., 20.

22 H. Taparel, 'Une épisode de la politique orientale de Philippe le Bon: Les Bourguignons en Mer Noire (1440–1446)', *Annales de Bourgogne*, LV (1983), 5–29.

23 See Bertrandon de la Broquière, *The Voyage d'Outremer of Bertrandon de la Broquière*, ed. and transl. Galen R. Kline (New York: Peter Lang, 1988).

24 On Philip the Good, see Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002).

25 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 124–6.

Bey that was harrying Transylvania. Then in September, in the Ialomița valley, he routed a second army under the governor-general of Rumelia, Şihabeddin Pasha, whom the Sultan had sent into Wallachia to avenge the earlier defeat (IV.2). Hunyadi had in reality overcome large-scale raids rather than full-scale invasions, but in the midst of civil war and against the apparent invincibility of the Ottomans, his victories seemed like miracles. The news of them immediately spread. When the senate in Venice heard from the King himself and from other sources about ‘the most felicitous and triumphant victory’ won against the Turks ‘in the lands of Hungary’, it ordered a celebratory procession in St Mark’s Square for 4 November.²⁶ On 21 December, the Pope paid ten florins to Matthew of Hungary ‘for the good news of the victory over the Turks, which Matthew himself had brought.’²⁷ Jehan de Wavrin prefaces his account of the Crusade of Varna with a report of these events (II).

Hunyadi’s victories gave the crusade the impetus that it required, and on New Year’s Day 1443 Eugenius IV published a crusading Bull. The chief propagandists for the crusade clearly wished to keep up the momentum. Early in April, Cesarini wrote from Hungary to the Duke of Burgundy and to Venice reporting that ‘the people of these regions’ were enthusiastically preparing to repel the Turks. Clearly convinced by his report, the Venetian senate forwarded his letter to the Pope, urging him to end discord in Italy since there was no better time for the proposed crusade. Early in May, the Byzantine ambassador, Theodore Karystinos, maintained the enthusiasm when, arriving in Venice on his way to Rome, he reported, with reference presumably to the current war between the Ottomans and the Karamanids (IV.3), that the Turks were in a bad state and that it would be easy to expel them from Europe.²⁸

However, the Emperor’s specific purpose in sending Karystinos to Venice was to discuss the construction of the fleet that was to block the straits. The senate could reassure him that the Pope had already requested the Republic to provide ten galleys and that Cesarini was asking him to arm these vessels. To expedite matters, the senators advised the ambassador to go directly to the Pope and to write to the Duke of Burgundy. If time and resources allowed, he should even visit him personally.²⁹ In the meantime, the Cardinal of Thérouanne had arrived in Rome to discuss the fleet on the Duke’s behalf.³⁰ As legate to the fleet, the Pope appointed his nephew and Apostolic Vice-Chancellor, Cardinal Condulmer,³¹ who was to accompany the Burgundian fleet on its crusade on the Danube in 1445 (II).

By May 1443, therefore, the allies had demonstrated their serious intent to construct a fleet to block Murad’s passage of the straits. The Duke of Burgundy, in the meantime, had secured from his relative Louis I of Savoy the continuing use of Villefranche and also of the neighbouring port of Nice for the refurbishment and construction of the ships and despatched Geoffroy de Thoisy to oversee these operations. In July 1443, the Doge of Genoa permitted the export of sails, oars,

²⁶ Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 105–6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 121–3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 122–3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

armour and other necessities to Villefranche and Nice. By the beginning of 1444, the flotilla was ready. De Thoisy raised oarsmen by impressing 'idle persons and vagabonds', and sailors by hiring Provençal and Italian seamen. Some of the costs he defrayed by renting space to merchants and their goods bound for Constantinople. The commander of the flotilla was Geoffroy de Thoisy, supported by the Hospitaller Regnault de Confide.³²

In Venice, however, where the Pope's flotilla and most of the Burgundian vessels were to be constructed, progress was less rapid. The main factor hindering progress was lack of money. The Venetian senate complained that the Pope was asking Venice to take full responsibility for his ten galleys, whereas the Venetians were offering only the hulls and rigging. The ships' armament was the responsibility of the Pope. Furthermore, the Pope was proposing to raise the money by a tithe on the clergy of Venice and Florence, while the Venetians considered that he should raise the money from other states.³³ On 26 May, the senate expressed surprise that the Pope was now talking of providing six galleys only, when at least ten would be required to make up the fleet of sixteen to twenty needed to guard the straits. At the same time, they urged him to raise money by means other than the tithe.³⁴ This he evidently tried to do since, on 12 June, the Doge of Genoa reported that 'certain persons' had invited him in the name of the Holy See to contribute to the crusade. However, his acknowledgement that this was 'a divine undertaking' and his promise that he would do whatever he could if 'certain turbulent affairs' – a reference to civil war in Genoa – 'did not shackle him' amounted to a refusal.³⁵ Both the Venetian ambassador to Rome and Cardinal Condulmer had in the meantime expressed their view that no money would be forthcoming from the Pope.³⁶ When, at the beginning of August 1443, Cardinal Condulmer finally sought permission to come to Venice to begin collecting the tithe, the senate consented only grudgingly, on condition that Venice supervise the operation very closely and on the understanding that granting consent did not condone the Pope's unjust treatment of Venice.³⁷ A month later, the senate was protesting that the Pope was demanding sums which he claimed were owed by Venice, when in reality it was he who was the debtor.³⁸ By the end of 1443, no ships were ready.

The Crusade of Varna: the campaigns of 1443

The success of the crusade depended on the Karamanid and Hungarian armies invading Murad's realms simultaneously, while the allied fleets blocked the straits.

³² Taparel, 'Une episode', 10.

³³ Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 126.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

In the spring of 1443, urged on by John VIII and emboldened by Hunyadi's success in the previous year, Ibrahim of Karaman attacked Murad in Anatolia. By this time, however, neither the fleet nor the Hungarians were prepared, allowing Murad and his son Alaeddin to attack him in full force and, in a brutal campaign, to devastate his lands in reprisal (I, IV.3). The campaign, according to Neşri's chronology, was over by the end of the Muslim year 846, corresponding to 30 April 1443, but more probably it lasted into the early summer. It was not long after the campaign that Murad received news of the death of Alaeddin (IV.3).

The second campaign began in the autumn of 1443, once again before the fleet was even built. In mid-October 1443, a Hungarian army under the command of King Vladislav and the two most powerful magnates in Hungary, John Hunyadi and George Branković, crossed the Danube into Serbia. The motive for attacking at this season was most probably the fact that the majority of Ottoman troops were fief-holding cavalymen who, in the autumn, returned to their fiefs to collect the taxes due on the harvest, and could be mobilised only slowly and unwillingly. This was in contrast to Hunyadi himself, who had gained experience of winter campaigns during the Hungarian civil war. The Hungarians too enjoyed other advantages. The Sultan could not match the size of their army, and had difficulties in countering their methods of warfare. During the campaign, the wagenburg tactic, which the Hungarians had learned from the Hussites,³⁹ proved devastatingly effective both during their advance and in preventing the annihilation of their army during its retreat. Furthermore, Ottoman weaponry was often useless against the plate armour which the Hungarian knights and commanders wore. According to the author of the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad*, it was to his armour that Hunyadi owed his life. To add to Murad's difficulties, he could not rely on the loyalty or even the fighting capacity of the lords and troops from Rumelia (I).

The Hungarian advance was victorious. At the beginning of November, their army overcame a contingent of Rumelian troops in Serbia, forcing the governor-general of Rumelia, Kasim Pasha, to abandon his camp and to flee with his fellow commander Turahan through the Pirot and Dragoman Passes to Sofia, and to warn the Sultan of the invasion. It was presumably following this encounter that Hunyadi wrote to Nicholas Újlaki on 8 November, naming the Ottoman commanders in the battle and reporting on the prisoners that he had taken.⁴⁰ In the course of their flight, Kasim and Turahan burned the villages between Niš and Sofia. When the Sultan arrived in Sofia from Edirne, he followed Turahan's advice to burn the city and its surroundings,⁴¹ and to retreat. The Ottoman tactic was to use scorched earth to wear

39 Emanuel Constantin Antoche, 'Du Tábor de Jan Žižka au *tabur çengi* des armées ottomanes', *Turcica*, 36 (2004), 91–124.

40 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 142.

41 Following the narrative of the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad*. European accounts make the Hungarians rather than the Ottomans burn Sofia. In making the Sultan follow Turahan's advice, the *Holy Wars* agrees with the version of Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae Atheniensis Libri Decem*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1843), 310–11.

down the Hungarians and then to encounter them in the mountain passes beyond Sofia, where Ottoman inferiority in numbers would not be such a disadvantage. To this end, the Sultan ordered the inhabitants in the mountains to fell trees to impede the invaders' passage.⁴² The tactic was successful, and made more so by the onset of bitterly cold weather. At the battle of the Zlatitsa Pass, fought in the snow immediately before Christmas 1443, the Hungarians suffered their first – and crucial – defeat. It was the wagenburg defence that saved their retreating army from destruction. On the return march, however, Hunyadi was able to secure another victory, when he ambushed a pursuing force in the Dragoman Pass, taking prisoner Mahmud Bey, the son-in-law of the Sultan and brother of the Grand Vizier (I, III, V.I). Constantine Mihailović names the place of the action as Kunovica.⁴³ It was probably, above all, this success that created the illusion that the war of the Zlatitsa Pass had been a Christian triumph.

In reality, it had been a disaster. In his account of the Hungarian army's retreat, Długosz describes 'the greater part of the King's army falling in heaps, overcome by hunger, and some soldiers marching with their bodies tottering hither and thither ... most of them in truth so exhausted that you would think them to be ghosts devoid of flesh rather than men.'⁴⁴ His description echoes precisely the account of the army's return in *The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad* (I). However, the appearance of the captured standards in the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Buda reinforced the illusion of victory.⁴⁵ It was an illusion that the King and, especially, Cesarini were anxious to maintain. Jehan de Wavrin reports that, after the battle, Cesarini was to go to the Pope, and 'in every place that he went through, he was to announce the great victories that he and the King had won against the Turks. However, he was to keep quiet about the losses that the Christians had suffered in the mountains, contradicting anyone who said anything about them' (II).

In contrast to the triumphalism of the Christian allies, Murad returned to Edirne in a state of anger and dejection. He had, it is true, stopped the crusaders at the Zlatitsa Pass, but they had, as they advanced and during their retreat, won victories over his forces, who had proved themselves unreliable. He reserved his special anger for Turahan, whom he held responsible for the setbacks of his army and for the capture of Mahmud Bey at the Dragoman Pass, and sent him to imprisonment in Tokat (I, IV.5).

42 Ibid., 308.

43 Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, transl. B. Stolz (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1975), 65.

44 Jan Długosz, *Ioannis Dlugosii seu Longini Historiae Polonicae* (Leipzig, 1711), 778.

45 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 138; Michael, *The Annals*, 490. Unlike Długosz, Thuróczy does not report on the state of the Hungarian army on its return.

Preparations, 1444

The news of Christian victories had spread before the end of the campaign. Already in December 1443, the Venetian senate had received information from the Bailo of Corfu that the Turks in the Albanian castles of Vlorë (Valona), Gjirokastër (Argyrokastion) and Kanina were in great fear, and strengthening their defences against a possible attack. Taking the view that the Ottomans were unlikely to remain in Albania if Christian successes continued, the senate instructed the Bailo to take possession of these places ‘but only if the Turks were to offer them.’⁴⁶ The Venetians maintained a cautious interest in acquiring these strongholds throughout 1444. However, a suggestion in early February 1444 that, should the reports of a Christian victory be true, Venice should occupy Scutari (Üsküdar) on the Bosphorus and Gallipoli ‘in the name of King Vladislav’ was voted down.⁴⁷

Clearly unaware of the defeat at the Zlatitsa Pass, the Venetian senate in January 1444 began to press for the completion of the fleet. The senators congratulated the King – ‘the supreme and most excellent leader among the Christians’ – in addition to Cesarini and John Hunyadi on their victories which, they emphasised, demanded the immediate despatch of galleys ‘to gain the greatest honour and immortal glory.’ That their intent was serious is clear from their agreeing to the collection of tithes from the Venetian clergy to pay for the undertaking.⁴⁸ Towards the end of January, they instructed the Captain of the Gulf to convey Isidore, Cardinal of Russia, to Clarentza in the Peloponnesos with twenty men, most probably on a mission to Constantine Dragases, the Byzantine Despot of Mistra and brother of the Emperor John VIII,⁴⁹ who was to participate in the crusade. In March, after a six-week delay, they finally despatched their own ambassador, John De Reguardati, to King Vladislav in Buda.⁵⁰ In a letter of 23 March, the senate, in reply to enquiries from the Duke of Burgundy, reported that the Duke’s four galleys and the ten galley hulls for the Pope’s flotilla were complete and that Cardinal Condulmer was in Venice, adding optimistically that he was ready to embark. The arming of the galleys, they said, could go ahead shortly, reporting that the Cardinal was hoping to extract money for this from Florence. The Florentine contribution in fact continued to be a matter of dispute between Venice and the Pope and Cardinal.⁵¹ The senators, in a reference to the battle of the Zlatitsa Pass, also reported that the King of Hungary had returned to his land after the lack of food and the devastated country had forced him to retreat, but was said to be ready to set out again in the spring. It was obviously with this timetable in mind that they had urged Cardinal Condulmer at the beginning of February to begin arming the Pope’s galleys and to depart as early as possible.⁵² Cesarini, they told the Duke, was due to

46 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 145.

47 *Ibid.*, 151.

48 *Ibid.*, 146

49 *Ibid.*, 147

50 *Ibid.*, 161.

51 *Ibid.*, 150; 6 February 1444.

52 *Ibid.*, 149.

arrive in Venice, and they promised to give the latest news to Waleran de Wavrin, when he arrived in Venice with letters of exchange.⁵³

The Venetian government was clearly anxious to maintain a sense of urgency among the allies. On 12 May, in reply to letters from both De Reguardati and Cesarini in Hungary, they stated that the Pope's flotilla would depart in a few days' time, and that a Burgundian ambassador had arrived to press for the armament of the Duke's galleys. In recognition that power in Hungary did not rest exclusively with the King, De Reguardati received the instruction to pass this information to John Hunyadi and George Branković, and to put pressure on Cesarini to make sure that the army's departure was not delayed.⁵⁴ The senate clearly envisaged a campaign during the summer of 1444 and the over-optimistic information about the papal galleys was perhaps deliberately misleading, and intended simply to hasten the preparation of the Hungarian army. In fact, at the end of May, the galleys still had not left, and Venice, Cardinal Condulmer and the Pope were still wrangling over costs. On 25 May, the senate complained that the Pope had not completed arming the galleys and was using the money from the tithe for other things, and that Condulmer was unjustifiably demanding money for his own upkeep. The senators ended by threatening to 'take measures', since, as they put it, 'if the Supreme Pontiff values his honour, we also hold ours in high esteem.'⁵⁵

Nonetheless, preparations continued. When Cardinal Condulmer announced at the beginning of June that the arming of the galleys was complete, the Venetians became more willing to raise funds for the fleet in their own territories. On 17 June, for example, the Doge instructed the Duke of Candia to collect the tithe of Crete to pay for provisions for the galleys which Venice was arming on Crete, and even for the pontifical, Burgundian and Ragusan galleys if the money already collected proved to be insufficient.⁵⁶ On the same day, the Venetian commander, Alvise Loredan, received his instructions. He was to go directly to the straits, where he was to serve under the command of the Cardinal Vice-Chancellor Condulmer. The same applied to 'the magnificent Lord De Wavrin (II) who, as we know for certain and as has been promised to us, must obey the Most Reverend Lord Cardinal Legate.' He was to expect the Byzantine Emperor's ships at the straits: if they were not there, the legate would ask for the Emperor's help in the name of the Pope. The instructions refer to the problems encountered in arming the fleet, and order Loredan to complete equipping the vessels and taking on board crews at Pola and Corfu.⁵⁷ Finally, at the beginning of July, the senate could report to Cesarini in Buda that Cardinal Condulmer had departed on 22 June. They followed the letter with another to Condulmer, urging him to reach the straits as soon as possible as the season was

53 Ibid., 162–3.

54 Ibid., 167–8.

55 Ibid., 170.

56 Ibid., 173.

57 Ibid., 173–4.

already advanced.⁵⁸ Finally, on 7 and 8 July, the Burgundian galleys left. Condulmer reached Modon on 17 July and left three days later;⁵⁹ Loredan was in Modon on 25 July, and from there wrote to the Duke of Candia, urging him to raise money for the ‘most holy fleet’ from the Greek clergy and monks on Crete.⁶⁰ De Wavrin left Corfu on 28 July.⁶¹

Most of the vessels in the fleet came from the Pope, Venice and the Duke of Burgundy. However, in early 1444 the Pope had also requested a further two galleys from the Republic of Ragusa, which were granted on condition that the Pope himself provide not less than twelve – a condition that was never fulfilled – and provided that the Christian fleet be at the Dardanelles by 30 September, suggesting that the Ragusans were anticipating a Hungarian campaign in the autumn rather than in the summer.⁶² The vessels were nonetheless ready to depart in the first week of July.⁶³ On 17 August, the captains of the galleys announced their imminent departure from Modon.⁶⁴ By the end of August, the entire Christian fleet – Papal, Venetian, Burgundian and Ragusan – had assembled in the straits.

The arming of the fleet had accompanied the preparation of the land armies. In Hungary, since the treasury was empty, the King levied a tax on every town and village in the Kingdom to pay for the expedition, at the same time making Hunyadi responsible for the supply of wagons, horses, artillery and other war materials.⁶⁵ The implementation of the tax began in June.⁶⁶ In the Peloponnesos, Constantine Dragases had rebuilt the defensive wall across the isthmus of Corinth and prepared to harry southern Greece (IV.6). On 24 September 1444, when the crusade was already under way, the Ragusans sent news from the Christian camp ‘to the lords of Albania and Morea, exhorting them to arms.’⁶⁷

Negotiations, 1444

By the end of August, therefore, the military and naval preparations for the crusade were complete. The allies had also begun negotiations over the spoils of victory, with discussions, it seems, centring on Buda. In April 1444, the Ragusans received requests to facilitate the passage of both Constantine Dragases and the ambassador of the Byzantine Emperor to Hungary. At the end of June they despatched their own

58 Ibid., 176.

59 Ibid., 184.

60 Ibid., 180.

61 Ibid., 184.

62 Ibid., 401.

63 Ibid., 403.

64 Ibid., 407.

65 Michael, *The Annals*, 491.

66 Pál Engel, ‘János Hunyadi and the peace “of Szeged” (1444)’, *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XLVII (1994), 241–57.

67 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 403.

envoy.⁶⁸ The Venetian De Reguardati had already left in March, with instructions to accompany the Hungarian army on the campaign, in order, presumably, to ensure that Venice received her rightful reward. In the end, for reasons that are unclear, De Reguardati did not depart with the Hungarians, but returned to Venice in October.⁶⁹

It is clear that, as the Ottomans' rival for hegemony in the Balkan peninsula, Hungary would acquire most of the conquered territory. The extent of Hungarian ambition is unknown, but Długosz reports that the King gave Hunyadi a written promise that, following the victory, he was to be made King of Bulgaria.⁷⁰ During his negotiations with a Hungarian intermediary, the Venetian envoy De Reguardati had received an undertaking that Venice would receive Thessaloniki and Gallipoli and 'other Greek lands'. At the same time he complained that the Byzantine ambassador had talked about the pontifical, Burgundian and Byzantine galleys, but 'made no mention of our state.' De Reguardati received instructions to remind the negotiators that Venice was sending six to eight, and perhaps more, of her own galleys, and had provided money and crews for the remainder so that 'although they are said to belong to others, they can be called ours.' The senate, in the meantime, had also considered but rejected a plan to acquire 'Maronia and Panidos which are situated on the sea.'⁷¹ Maronia on the coast of Thrace was a site of alum production. While negotiations were continuing in Buda during July, the senate once again considered the proposal from the governor of Corfu to occupy Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Kanina and Ioannina, which were important to Venice as sources of wheat and salt. While reminding the governor that they had already rejected this proposal in June, they nonetheless permitted the occupation of Valona and Kanina on condition that the Turks evacuate them first. What they perhaps did not know is that the Ragusans were hoping to acquire exactly these places. The Ragusan ambassador to Hungary had received instructions on 27 June to ask whether the King '— if God should grant him to expel the most cruel Turkish enemies from Greece, which we fully believe —, would grant that the territory of Valona [Vlorë], situated on the sea, together with its appurtenances and with its fortress called Kanina, be conceded to us.' This district was 'copious and abundant in victuals.'⁷² It is unclear whether the Emperor John VIII and the Despot Constantine Dragases made any territorial demands beyond, presumably, retaining what they themselves could conquer.

The negotiators in the summer of 1444 knew that the key to victory, and therefore to their own territorial and other aspirations, was the participation of Hungary under the leadership of King Vladislav, John Hunyadi and George Branković. The pressure on the King to lead a second expedition was therefore almost irresistible. The carefully fostered illusion that the campaign of 1443 had been a triumph had clearly spread. Długosz even claims that the Kings of France, England, Spain and Aragon,

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., 188.

70 Michael, *The Annals*, 493.

71 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 177–8.

72 Ibid., 403.

as well as the Dukes of Burgundy and Milan, and the cities of Venice, Florence and Genoa had sent messages of congratulations, urging the King to organise a second expedition.⁷³ Venice and Burgundy were already participants, while the King of Aragon involved himself in the negotiations for the crusade, without in the end contributing. These were external inducements to continue with the undertaking. In Hungary itself, the King held a Diet at Buda on 24 April at which, as Cesarini reported to the Venetian senate, he swore between the Cardinal's hands to lead an expedition in the summer.⁷⁴ It was on this occasion too that John Jiškra, the strongest supporter of Queen Elizabeth's son Ladislaus, agreed to a truce with Vladislav, thus removing the danger of civil war within Hungary.⁷⁵ The allies received further assurances of the King's intentions when, on 2 July 1444, he made a declaration at Buda of his intention to set out for Várad on 15 July to assemble an army against the Turks. In this carefully worded statement, the work probably of Cesarini, he refers to his victories of the previous year, glossing over the defeat at the Zlatitsa Pass (V.4). The King, it seems, intended this statement as a public announcement of his aims. In August, referring presumably to this document, the Ragusan ambassadors to the King of Bosnia claimed to have seen a letter 'from the most serene King of Hungary, written on the twenty-fourth of last month, which he wrote to the King of Bosnia, saying how he was now preparing to proceed to the destruction of the evil Turks.'⁷⁶ Another copy went to Florence (V.4), and others presumably to different rulers and governments in Europe.

If, however, the King's resolve had been as clear cut as his public statements imply, he and Cesarini would not have felt the need to reassure the world of his intentions with the July declaration. In fact, while he was under pressure to mount the expedition, he faced equally strong pressure to abandon it altogether. In the first place, a faction in Poland was demanding his return to put an end to civil strife in the country. This demand he put off, by promising to return when he had defeated the Turks.⁷⁷ Second, the horrors of the winter war of 1443, in contrast to the publicly proclaimed version of events, must have acted as a disincentive to reopen hostilities. Most important, however, were the peace negotiations which accompanied the preparations for war.⁷⁸

Subsequent events suggest that Murad II himself was the greatest proponent of peace. Nonetheless, he must also have faced pressure to negotiate from within his own family. The Hungarians had captured Mahmud Çelebi, who was both his own brother-in-law and brother of the Grand Vizier, and the chronicle of Neşri makes Murad's sister in particular beg him to obtain her husband's release (V.1). Further

⁷³ Michael, *The Annals*, 490.

⁷⁴ Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 168.

⁷⁵ Michael, *The Annals*, 490.

⁷⁶ Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 407.

⁷⁷ Michael, *The Annals*, 490, 493.

⁷⁸ For the sanest accounts of these negotiations and their outcome, see Halil İnalçık, '1444 buhranı', in Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), 1–53, and Engel, 'János Hunyadi'.

pressure must have come from Murad's wife Mara, acting on behalf of her father George Branković. On 6 March 1444, the Ragusans provided a ship to transport as far as Split a Greek monk, the 'envoy of the daughter of the lord Despot', on an embassy to Branković.⁷⁹ What they discussed is unknown, but the envoy seems to have set in train peace negotiations with the Sultan. On 24 April, at the same time as he was vowing to lead a crusade, King Vladislav sent a letter to Murad announcing that he was despatching his ambassador, Stojka Gisdanić, to Edirne, with full powers to negotiate on his behalf. He requested Murad to swear an oath on the treaty to be concluded and to send his own ambassadors to Hungary, so that he, the King, could also swear (V.2).

The first result of the negotiations was the release of Mahmud Çelebi, who arrived in Edirne evidently in late May or early June (I). The embassy from Hungary arrived soon afterwards. The antiquarian Ciriaco of Ancona, whom the Pope had clearly co-opted as a spy to report on the progress of the crusading plans,⁸⁰ reports the arrival in Edirne of Stojka Gisdanić, representing the King, a certain Vitislav, representing John Hunyadi, and two others representing George Branković. The negotiations, Ciriaco informs us, lasted for three days, and he agrees with the *Holy Wars* (I) in making the return of the Danubian fortresses the most contentious issue. In particular, the Ottomans wished to retain Golubac, but it was at this point that the crusaders' ally, Ibrahim of Karaman, invaded Murad's lands in Anatolia, leaving him with no time to prolong the negotiations and forcing him to abandon the castle.⁸¹ The discussions ended with a treaty concluded on 12 June. By its terms, Murad was to return his lands and castles, including Smederovo and Golubac, to George Branković, and to release his two sons. The Voivode of Wallachia, Vlad Drakul, was to continue to pay tribute to Murad, but without the obligation to attend his court in person. With Hungary, Murad concluded a ten-year truce. When Murad had sworn an oath to observe the treaty, he sent Baltaoğlu Süleyman (I) and a Greek called Vranas to Hungary to ratify the agreement with the oaths of the King, Hunyadi and Branković.⁸²

By July, when he publicly declared his intention to lead a crusade, the King must already have known the outcome of the negotiations at Edirne. It is clear, too, that knowledge of the peace negotiations had spread to other partners in the undertaking, and that these put pressure on the King, Hunyadi and Branković to renounce the treaty. On 24 June, the pontifical spy Ciriaco of Ancona wrote to Hunyadi from Pera begging him not to observe the peace. The Turks, he said, were terrified, repairing their fortifications 'and preparing their army for retreat rather than battle.' The peace

⁷⁹ Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 401.

⁸⁰ E. W. Bodnar, 'Ciriaco d'Ancona and the crusade of Varna: A closer look', *Mediaevalia*, 14 (1988), 253–80.

⁸¹ Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letter 9, 36–9.

⁸² Ibid., Letters 9A, 9B1, 9B2, 37–47. Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th Century)*; *An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 197–9.

would allow Murad, who had crossed the straits into Asia to attack the Karamanids, to return to Europe with his army ‘to avenge the defeat that you inflicted on him in the recent past.’ Instead, the Christians should ‘declare a war worthy of the Christian religion’ and invade Thrace while the fleet blocked Murad’s passage to Europe.⁸³ While urging Hunyadi on to war, Ciriaco must also have informed the Pope about the treaty, and he, in his turn, must have informed Cesarini, if the Cardinal was not already aware of the events. On 19 July, Ciriaco went hunting outside Constantinople in the company of the Emperor John VIII and his brother Theodore,⁸⁴ and on this occasion, too, the treaty must have been a subject of discussion. The uncertainty that it caused for the Byzantine imperial family is evident from a letter dated 30 July 1444 which, Długosz claims, John VIII wrote to King Vladislav from Mistra. The author of the letter seems in fact to have been the Despot Constantine Dragases.⁸⁵ In it, he states that his envoy returning from Hungary had reassured him of the King’s intentions ‘to go against the Turks this summer’ and that he, the Despot, ‘had resolved to add all our powers and zeal to supporting you against the most cruel enemy, Amurath.’ Constantine however continues, ‘it has come to our notice that the Despot George and Your Serenity have concluded certain peace treaties with the said Amurath, and that he himself is preparing to send envoys to Your Excellency to conclude and confirm the agreements.’ He urges the King not to damage all Christendom by making peace with an enemy ‘who is so defeated and vanquished that his empire would collapse at the mere name of Your Majesty.’ It was, he continued, unthinkable that the King should be ‘turning his thoughts to peace’ when Murad’s subjects and neighbours – a reference perhaps to the lords in Albania – were turning against him, and when even his co-religionist, Ibrahim of Karaman, had ‘occupied the greater part of eastern Asia, right up to the seas, with his powers and his army’, and ‘the most holy fleet’ was blocking the straits. Furthermore, Murad had ‘venal ministers’ who would never negotiate in good faith. Finally, given the uncertainty of what is happening, Constantine urges the King that if he is abandoning the crusade ‘– something which the mind cannot even entertain – we urge and beg Your Excellency to make us more certain, without any doubt or obscurity concerning your thoughts, counsels and deliberations.’⁸⁶

The letter is an indication of the confusion that news of the peace negotiations caused among the allies. There was also confusion in Hungary. George Branković, through his daughter Mara, had clearly played a major part in the moves towards peace, and had gained the most from the treaty concluded at Edirne. The description in the *Holy Wars* (I) of Baltaoğlu’s arrival in Hungary also suggests that the Ottoman envoy conducted separate negotiations with him in his own residence. The problem for Branković, however, was how to convince the King and Hunyadi to ratify the

83 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letter 11, 50–53.

84 Ibid., Letter 12, 52–9.

85 A. Hohlweg, ‘Kaiser Johannes VIII. Palaeologus und der Kreuzzug des Jahres 1444’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 73 (1980), 14–24.

86 Długosz, *Ioannis Dlugossii*, 790–93.

treaty. Hunyadi he appears to have won over by bribery. In the belief, presumably, that the treaty would secure the return of his lands and rulership in Serbia, on 3 July he transferred to Hunyadi in perpetuity his lordship of Világosvár in the Kingdom of Hungary, and it was probably at the same time that he transferred to Hunyadi, nominally as security, his other estates of Mukačevo, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Debrecen and Böszörmény, making Hunyadi the largest landowner in the Kingdom.⁸⁷ Thus he hoped to secure Hunyadi's adherence to the treaty. How he sought to persuade the King is not clear.

The King, however, faced equally powerful forces pushing him in the opposite direction. The Polish faction in Hungary was anxious for him to lead a crusade in order to bolster his claims to legitimacy against the infant King Ladislaus, but above all he faced the persuasive powers of Cesarini. The Cardinal was a fervent believer in the crusade. Furthermore, since abandoning the Council of Basel, he had staked his career on supporting Eugenius IV against the Council, and this support entailed promoting the union of the Churches and organising the crusade. He had therefore to find a solution to the King's dilemma when Baltaoğlu and Vranas arrived in Szeged at the beginning of August to take the oath from Hunyadi, Branković and the King himself.⁸⁸ His solution, on 4 August 1444, was to make the King, in the presence of Hunyadi and all the barons and prelates of the Kingdom, abjure any treaties, present or future, which he had made or was to make with the Sultan (V.5). Cesarini had so formulated the declaration that negotiations with the ambassadors could continue, and the King could confirm the treaty by oath, but since the oath would be invalid, the crusade could still go ahead. Negotiations with Murad's ambassadors in fact went on for ten days after the King's declaration, causing further confusion among the crusading allies. On 12 and 14 August, Cesarini and De Reguardati respectively sent letters from Várad to the Venetian senate about the agreements made between Murad, the King and Despot, obliging the senate to despatch instructions to their commander at the Dardanelles on what to tell the Turks if a peace had been concluded (V.6). On 15 August, the treaty was ratified, evidently at Várad. A week later, on 22 August, Branković took back Serbia (V.7). It was, it seems, during the course of these negotiations that Vladislav offered to make Hunyadi King of Bulgaria if he abjured the oath.⁸⁹ This, as it turned out, he was quite willing to do, and it was in fact the King himself who suffered pangs of conscience. Thuróczy reports that he did not take the oath in person, but rather that 'lord János [Hunyadi] the Voevode swore a binding oath on behalf of the King himself and all the people of Hungary.'⁹⁰ Furthermore, both Długosz⁹¹ and the *Holy Wars* (I) comment on how the broken oath weighed heavily on Vladislav's mind.

87 Engel, 'János Hunyadi', 251.

88 Michael, *The Annals*, 492.

89 Ibid., 493.

90 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 140.

91 Michael, *The Annals*, 493.

Murad's ambassadors knew nothing of Cesarini's stratagem to invalidate the treaty and must have returned to Edirne to report on its successful ratification. In their absence, much had happened in the Ottoman realms.

During the course of the negotiations at Edirne, as Ciriaco of Ancona had reported, Ibrahim of Karaman attacked Murad in Anatolia. He had most probably timed the action following advice from the Byzantine Emperor that the Hungarians would invade Rumelia during the summer, and that by then the allied fleet would be in place (I). The attack, however, came too early and Murad was able to lead his army across the straits in person. From the evidence of a chronological list of 1445, it seems that Ibrahim plundered the towns lying on or near the border between Ottoman and Karamanid territory – Beyşehir, Akşehir, Bolvadin, Kütahya and Sivrihisar – and harried the lands around (IV.4). However, Murad's approach forced him into submission, seemingly without any major engagements. The hostilities ended with a treaty, concluded probably in August 1444, in which Ibrahim swore fealty to Murad and, significantly, also to his son Prince Mehmed (V.8). Murad seems also to have been generous to Ibrahim in the territorial settlement, granting him, the chronological list informs us, several border towns, including Akşehir and Beyşehir (IV.4), which Murad had seized in 1437.

By the end of August 1444, therefore, unaware that Cesarini had released the King from his oath, Murad must have felt that both his western and eastern borders were secure. It was, according to the *Holy Wars*, immediately after Ibrahim's submission that Murad on his journey southwards from Bursa announced his decision to abdicate in favour of his son, Prince Mehmed (I). There can be no doubt that he had been considering this step for some months. He had brought Mehmed from Manisa to Edirne in June, at the time of the peace negotiations (I), and Ciriaco of Ancona reports the Prince as remaining there when his father left the city to encounter the Karamanids.⁹² It is certain too that Murad's purpose in granting favourable terms in the treaty with Vladislav, Branković and Hunyadi and in the later settlement with Ibrahim of Karaman was to secure a lasting peace which would make his retirement possible.

What can never be certain is what prompted the abdication. It seems possible that the gloomy mood in which Murad returned from the Zlatitsa Pass never lifted, and that the death of his son Alaeddin had affected him deeply. His love for this son is evident from his will, where he stipulates that he should be buried 'at the side of his son Alaeddin, at a distance of three or four cubits'⁹³ The abdication was perhaps also a reflection of Murad's own character. The Greek chronicler Doukas, who must have had dealings with him on behalf of his Genoese employers, describes Murad as being a man without guile or malice,⁹⁴ while the Burgundian Bertrandon de la Broquière reports that 'he is said to be a gentle person, benign and free with lands and money.

92 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letter 11, 51–3.

93 See İnalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 206 (Turkish text); 211 (Arabic text).

94 Doukas, *Decline and Fall*, 177.

He hates war, which seems to be true ...'.⁹⁵ The primary function of a monarch, however, was as a leader in war, while politics and diplomacy required a cunning and ruthlessness which were perhaps alien to Murad's character. It is very probable therefore that, after the vicious wars of 1443 in Asia and Europe, and saddened by the death of Alaeddin, Murad had simply lost any taste for rulership. He retired to Manisa, believing that he had secured a lasting peace.

The campaign of 1444

The Ottoman chronicler Aşıkpaşazade believed that it was Murad's abdication that inspired the Hungarian campaign in the autumn of 1444. This cannot, however, be entirely accurate. The Sultan would not have abdicated before he knew the outcome of the negotiations with Hungary and Karaman, and by this time, urged on by Cesarini, Vladislav had already resolved to renounce any treaty that might be concluded. Nevertheless, Aşıkpaşazade may well be right in reporting that Ibrahim of Karaman sent an envoy to Hungary to urge the King to war (IV.5). With Murad's retirement and a twelve-year-old boy on the Ottoman throne, victory seemed certain.

By September 1444, Hungarian preparations were complete and the allied fleet had finally arrived at the straits. The Venetian and pontifical galleys, together with two from the Duke of Burgundy, blockaded the Dardanelles, where Ciriaco of Ancona confirmed their presence on 29 September.⁹⁶ The rest of the Burgundian ships, together with the galleys armed at Ragusa, and two from the Byzantine Emperor took up their position on the Bosphorus (II).

The presence of the fleet added to the fear of a second Hungarian invasion, and clearly increased the sense of foreboding that seems to have infected Murad's realms. The Ottomans, the Athenian Chalkokondyles reports, 'were in great fear and almost in despair ... and began to repair the walls wherever they had reason to expect a siege'.⁹⁷ It was in this atmosphere that the formerly independent dynasts on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire, encouraged by the envoys of the crusading powers, began to reclaim their lands 'like a grain harvest that has not yet come to maturity'.⁹⁸ The first of these was a member of the Zenevis clan who, with many of his Albanian followers, lost his life in an unsuccessful attack on his ancestral territories around Gjirokaštër in southern Albania.⁹⁹ By contrast, George Kastriote, known in Europe as Scanderbeg, from his Muslim name Iskender Beg, successfully reoccupied his father's stronghold of Krujë in central Albania, resisting Ottoman attempts to defeat him until 1466. Constantine Dragases, the Byzantine Despot of Mistra, in the meantime harried southern Greece (IV.6), gaining the allegiance of Thebes, the plain of Boeotia and the Vlachs of Mount Pindos, and compelling the

⁹⁵ Kline, *The Voyage d'Outremer*, 114–15.

⁹⁶ Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, 92–3.

⁹⁷ Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 324.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Florentine Duke of Athens, Nerio Acciajuoli, to pay tribute.¹⁰⁰ Constantine's brother, the Emperor himself, lacked the resources to make a military contribution to these incursions. Nonetheless, he had in his custody an Ottoman prince – perhaps Orhan, the son of Bayezid I's son, Süleyman¹⁰¹ – whom he released in the hope that he would find followers among Murad's subjects and recreate the chaos of the Ottoman civil war. The plan was a failure, except insofar as it heightened Ottoman unease in the face of an apparently imminent crusade (I).

These episodes on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire must have encouraged the crusading powers to believe that their victory was certain, and reports reaching the Hungarian army as it assembled that 'great burghers and merchants' had fled in terror across the straits to Bursa undoubtedly reinforced this impression (III). In the Ottoman capital, Edirne, panic spread when the Viziers ordered the construction of a moat around the city, making it clear that they expected a siege and, above all, when they began to remove their own valuables from the city to the more secure fortress of Dimetoka (I). A fire in the capital's commercial district intensified the terror. A measure of the population's fear was the appearance in Edirne of a preacher from a quasi-Muslim sect that held Jesus to be superior to Muhammad, and which became visible only at times of eschatological crisis.¹⁰² Preaching his heretical doctrines in public, he gained converts to his beliefs, forcing the judge of the city to order his execution and the gruesome punishment of his followers (IV.7).

While the Sultan's subjects waited in fear, most of the crusaders that departed from Szeged on about 20 September 1444 must have been confident of victory (IV.10). The army was, however, smaller than the force that had set out in 1443. Furthermore, George Branković, who had regained his lands in Serbia and apparently had scruples about breaching a sworn treaty,¹⁰³ did not participate. Chalkokondyles, like the author of the *Holy Wars* (I), makes him beg Vladislav to abandon the campaign, claiming that the Turks could not be defeated, as they were 'so numerous and all good warriors, hardened and accustomed to live on campaign.' It was only, he said, when reduced to extremity that they showed their true powers. Vladislav ignored his advice.¹⁰⁴ It is clear, nonetheless, that the King did not set out with high hopes or a clear conscience. He was, Długosz informs us, without his Polish contingent, as they had demanded too high a price for their participation, and the broken treaty preyed on his mind.¹⁰⁵ This is a point which the *Holy Wars* emphasises (I), and the King's letter of 22 September to the Polish State Council, justifying his breach of the treaty (V.9), must have been an attempt to salve his conscience. Of the leaders

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 318–20.

¹⁰¹ İnalçık, '1444 buhranı', 37.

¹⁰² Colin Imber, 'A note on "Christian" preachers in the Ottoman Empire', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, X (1990), 59–67.

¹⁰³ Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 325.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 326.

¹⁰⁵ Michael, *The Annals*, 493.

of the expedition, it seems to have been Hunyadi and Cesarini who set out in full certainty of victory.

The army's victorious and destructive march to the Black Sea coast at Varna¹⁰⁶ seemed to justify their optimism. As he had sworn on 4 August at Szeged, the King crossed the Danube at Orşova and, devastating the land to the south of the river, followed its course as far as Vidin. A German participant in the campaign, Hans Maugest, remembers the army conquering and burning the town, and slaughtering its inhabitants (III). The *Holy Wars* reports that the King spared it, since a prolonged siege would have delayed the army's progress (I), the two accounts suggesting that the crusaders destroyed the town and its suburbs, while sparing the citadel. It was as the town was in flames that Vlad Drakul – an Ottoman vassal according to the terms of the Treaty of Edirne – joined the Hungarian army with, Maugest says, seven thousand men (III). The army continued to Nicopolis, destroying Orjahovo on its way (I). Nicopolis, Maugest tells us, was completely razed to the ground (III). Once again, even if Maugest is correct about the town, the *Holy Wars* reports Ferizbeyoğlu's successful defence of the castle, which was in Ottoman hands when the Burgundian fleet arrived there in 1445 (II). From the Danube, the army turned southwards towards Târnovo, 'plundering and burning, killing all the Turks they found' (III). It seems that the main body of the army bypassed Târnovo, but the King, in Maugest's half-remembered version of events, sent a detachment against it, as he himself was besieging Shumen (III). The *Holy Wars* gives the details of how Ferizbeyoğlu ambushed and routed these men (I), killing three out of five hundred (III). This minor defeat, however dispiriting to the crusaders, could not check the army's progress. When the crusaders arrived before Shumen, they set fire to the castle, forcing the defenders to jump to their deaths (I, III). To the east of Shumen, Maugest recalls the capture of the town and citadel of Novi Pazar, and the subsequent slaughter of the inhabitants and their animals. When they had burned the town and castle 'they set off again through markets and towns. Whatever these were called, many of them were destroyed' (III). Maugest next describes the conquest and destruction of a castle which he calls Taşhisar (III), which the *Holy Wars* omits from its account, recalling instead the successful defence of Provadiya (I). Both describe, but in rather different terms, the capture of the fortress of Petrez and the march to the Black Sea at Varna where, after capturing the fortress, the army encamped (I, III). From there, the King and Hunyadi clearly intended to proceed southwards down the Black Sea coast towards Edirne. They had chosen this route to the north of the Balkan range and down the coast since the Ottomans had blocked the Shipka Pass and other passages leading southwards through the mountains to the Maritsa valley (I, II), and to use any of these routes would have risked repeating the bitter experience of the winter of 1443.

The only solution to the many crises that faced the Ottoman Empire in the late summer of 1444 seemed to be to recall Murad from retirement. According to the *Holy*

¹⁰⁶ Inconsistencies within and between texts make it difficult to reconstruct the crusaders' route.

Wars, the Viziers had already, when the Emperor released the Ottoman pretender, taken the decision to send Kassabzade Mahmud Pasha to the old Sultan. By the time he reached Manisa, Kassabzade had received the news of the Hungarian invasion, and Murad, reluctantly it seems, agreed to return (I).

In the meantime, the fleets blockading the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus had received news of the peace concluded at Várad in August: an Ottoman officer who enquired what the galleys were doing on the Bosphorus even showed De Wavrin a copy of the treaty. However, the arrival in Constantinople of messengers from Cesarini to announce that news of the peace was without foundation persuaded Cardinal Condulmer and the commanders of the fleet to remain in position. This was probably in mid-September. When Murad arrived with his Anatolian army in mid-October the straits were blocked (II).

He was, however, aware of the blockade and had already taken counter-measures. Part of his army, it seems, crossed the Dardanelles below Gallipoli, out of sight of the allied fleet (II). At the same time, Murad sent instructions to the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha to wait for him on the European shore of the Bosphorus, at the place where the channel is at its narrowest, and to set up artillery to bombard the allied vessels. To enable him to cross the water, the Sultan had arranged for the Genoese – presumably from the colony of Pera opposite Constantinople – to supply him with transport vessels and cannon from Pera. Halil Pasha arrived on the European shore with seven- or eight thousand men on ‘about 15 October 1444.’ The Sultan arrived on the Asian side on the following morning, bringing with him metal for casting cannon. When the guns were ready, they fired on the fleet, providing, together with the artillery on the other shore, cover for the transports bringing the army across. Under the protection of the guns, and with assistance of the strong current in the Bosphorus and a rising storm which made it impossible to keep the galleys in position, Murad and his army crossed the strait to Europe (I, II). From there, he sent the news of his safe crossing ahead to Edirne. He followed with his retinue, reassuring the population by ‘showing his person along the way.’ From Edirne, he issued the order for a general levy of troops from throughout Rumelia (I, IV.8). From Edirne, he proceeded to Varna.

The armies met on 10 November 1444. All accounts of the battle agree that, for most of the day, the Hungarians had the advantage, defeating first the Anatolian troops and killing their commander, the governor-general Karaca Bey, and then towards the end of the day driving the Rumelian cavalry under Şihabeddin Pasha from the field. By this time, the Sultan remained alone in a valley, with a guard of Janissaries and other infantry. It was at this point that the course of the battle changed. As the Sultan stood apparently defenceless, the King saw the opportunity for combining victory with personal glory. Chalkokondyles imaginatively depicts him as watching Hunyadi ‘a mere soldier’ gain glory by his victory first against Karaca Bey and then against the Rumelians, while he, the King, ‘sat idly by, like a lady in a grandstand watching his feats.’¹⁰⁷ Almost all accounts agree in making him ignore Hunyadi’s

107 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 335.

advice not to attack. As he charged into the ranks surrounding the Sultan, a Janissary, called Hayder the Hunchback according to Constantine Mihailović¹⁰⁸ or Koca Hızır according to Aşıkpaşazade (IV.5), dragged him from his horse and removed his head. When the Hungarian troops lost sight of the King, they fell into confusion, allowing the Ottoman cavalry that had fled the battlefield to return and complete the rout. It was, in the end, the King's folly that determined the outcome of the battle, his own death (IV.9) and the slaughter of several thousand crusaders.

Hunyadi, it seems, was able to gather his men and leave the battlefield in good order. However, as he crossed the Danube into Wallachia, his erstwhile ally, Vlad Drakul, captured him and held him prisoner,¹⁰⁹ supposedly for having pillaged his territories on the march to Varna and for having slandered him in the presence of the King.¹¹⁰ When Vlad had released him against a large sum of money, he returned to Hungary. The exact fate of Cardinal Cesarini remained unknown. Długosz reports that a Vlach boatman killed him as he ferried him across the Danube on his flight from Varna, and that his body was later retrieved from the river.¹¹¹ De Wavrin has a similar report (II) but, according to Hans Maugest, the Turks took him to Edirne, where they wished to flay him alive (III). It was not until 26 July 1445 that the College of Cardinals finally acknowledged his death.¹¹² The Hungarians never recovered the King's body or learned of its fate. Maugest claims that Murad arranged for the King's burial in a Greek chapel (III), but apparently without his head, which had a different posthumous fate. De Wavrin reports that the Turks at Gallipoli showed Loredan a severed head which they claimed to be the King's (II); Maugest states that Murad sent it to the Mamluk Sultan (III); while Mihailović¹¹³ and some recensions of Neşri's *History*¹¹⁴ describe how it was preserved for display in Ottoman cities. Murad despatched victory proclamations (IV.12) and several of the captive Hungarian knights to neighbouring Muslim rulers. Maugest enumerates twelve knights and twelve squires to the Mamluk Sultan in Cairo; twelve knights and twenty-four squires to the Khan of the Crimea; and six knights and six squires to Karaman (III). In March 1445, the Hungarian captives arrived in Cairo, to be paraded around the city in full armour. A few weeks later they converted to Islam (IV.10). The remaining captives who escaped execution were sold as slaves. A few were ransomed in Constantinople (II). The Sultan, meanwhile, believing his realm to be secure, once again retired to Manisa, leaving his son on the throne in Edirne.

108 Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 79.

109 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 147.

110 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 337–8.

111 Michael, *The Annals*, 497.

112 Joseph Gill, SJ, *Personalities of the Council of Florence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 102.

113 Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 79–81.

114 Neşri, *Kitab-i Cihan-nümâ*, ed. F. R. Unat and M. A. Köymen (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1957), 652–5.

The aftermath of battle

The defeat at Varna ended all realistic prospects for continuing the crusade. The scheme was impossible without the participation of Hungary, and at the end of 1444 the Kingdom faced disintegration. Since King Vladislav's body had never been recovered, his fate was unknown. The legitimately crowned King, Ladislaus, was an infant in the custody of Frederick III of Austria. The lack of a recognised king once again inflamed the animosities of the civil war of 1439–42, with Queen Elizabeth's kinsmen, the counts of Cilli, seizing castles in Croatia from the partisans of Vladislav, and Elizabeth's chief supporter Jan Jiškra extending his territory in the north. In the summer of 1445, Frederick III occupied the western borderlands of the Kingdom. The law-courts had not functioned since 1439, and castles remained in the hands of the barons who had seized them during the civil war. It was not until a Diet assembled in June 1446 to elect Hunyadi as regent on behalf of King Ladislaus that peace was restored,¹¹⁵ and by this time the hopes of the other crusading allies had evaporated.

The idea that the crusade might continue nonetheless lingered for a year after the battle. The immediate aftermath, however, saw recriminations and quarrels over money. At the end of January 1445, when the pontifical galleys were due to return to Venice, the senate instructed its envoy to Rome to demand money for the crews.¹¹⁶ When the envoy reported that the Pope was refusing to pay on the grounds that the fleet had achieved nothing noteworthy, and blaming Venice for its failure, the senate in reply taxed the Pope with ingratitude, reminding him of the almost intolerable hardship that the sailors had suffered, unable to acquire enough bread to eat or 'ever to provide themselves with fresh water without the spilling of blood and the deaths of many.' Furthermore, the cold in the straits had left many crippled with frostbite, and many more had died in daily battles with the Turks. To emphasise the point, the senators annexed Loredan's letter, and also stressed that the Pope already knew this from the letters he had received from the Emperor. When the envoy reported that the Pope was to pay by letters of exchange in Pera, the senate objected, asking him to send the letters directly to Venice for forwarding to Negroponte or Constantinople.¹¹⁷

The quarrels between Venice and the Pope continued. At the beginning of March, the Venetian envoy to Rome reported, the Pope had had letters read out in the consistory reporting on the battle between the Hungarians and Turks and the death of 'the Most Reverend Lord Cardinal of St Angelo' and putting the blame for this on the Venetians. He had, at the same time, asked whether the crusade should continue and whether he should appoint a new legate. The Venetians expressed the view that it would be useful to send a legate to Hungary, given the divisions within the Kingdom, but they were unable to make a decision on the crusade, since nothing had been heard from the east for two months. At the same time, they reminded the

115 Engel, *The Realm*, 288.

116 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 195.

117 *Ibid.*, 196.

Pope not to make payment for the galleys through the Genoese at Pera.¹¹⁸ Towards the end of April, the senate again instructed the Venetian envoy to Rome to continue reminding the Pope of the money he owed.¹¹⁹

By this time, the future course of the crusade had become clearer. On 13 February, Cardinal Condulmer had written to Venice that he was prepared to remain at Constantinople and restart the war, as he had heard that the Hungarians were ready to resume the offensive. On 3 April, the senate forwarded this letter to the envoy in Rome.¹²⁰ A month later, however, they wrote to Loredan, who had retired from the straits to the Venetian colony of Negroponte complaining of an illness and the miserable condition of his crews,¹²¹ instructing him to negotiate a peace with the ‘Sultan of Europe’ – a reference to Prince Mehmed – and to gain his permission to trade in his realms. The instructions display uncertainty about who the Ottoman ruler really was, by telling Loredan to make sure that the prince’s father, Murad, confirmed the treaty. In contrast to what Condulmer had heard, the senate was certain that the Hungarians would not return.¹²² In September 1445, Venice concluded a treaty with Mehmed, putting an end to even a formal allegiance to the crusade.¹²³

In the meantime, however, Condulmer continued to believe that the Hungarians would launch a third campaign, writing to Venice in early July that an Aragonese ambassador – presumably to the Emperor in Constantinople – had come from Buda carrying assurances from Hunyadi that the Hungarians intended to return to Thrace with a large army.¹²⁴ At the end of the same month, De Wavrin and Cardinal Condulmer heard from a Hungarian messenger that Hunyadi was assembling an army, and would be ready at Nicopolis on the Feast of Our Lady in September 1445 (II). This assurance seems to have determined the last phase of the crusade.

During the winter of 1444–45, Waleran de Wavrin had remained with Cardinal Condulmer in Constantinople. Here he faced severe problems in paying for the maintenance of his fleet, which he had overcome only by pawning his jewelled garments in Pera for a thousand ducats. A better way of raising money, however, was piracy and, after Easter 1445, the Burgundian ships left Constantinople for the Black Sea. De Wavrin and Pietre Vasquez took two galleys to the Danube where, at Kilia, they made contact with the Vlachs, and since these were in favour of continuing the crusade Pietre Vasquez continued to Hungary to seek news and to enlist Hungarian support (II). From the Danube, De Wavrin returned to the Black Sea, capturing two vessels laden with wheat on the journey to Caffa. Meanwhile Geoffroy de Thoisy, his cousin Jacot, Regnault de Confide and others had left Constantinople with three galleys, a galliot and a caravel. They cruised along the coast of Turkey, plundering

118 Ibid., 196–7.

119 Ibid., 200.

120 F. Thiriet, *Régestes des Délibérations du Senat de Venise concernant la Romanie* (Paris, The Hague: Mouton, 1961), no. 2682.

121 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 201.

122 Ibid., 200–201.

123 Ibid., 210–13.

124 Ibid., 202.

both ships and coastal settlements, covering the expenses for the re-equipment of their ships at Trebizond with five slave-women, worth in all 164 ducats. The ships continued to the coast of Georgia, hoping to plunder vessels carrying silk, when De Thoisy landed at Poti with the intention of pillaging the place and perhaps, since this was the site of the ancient Colchis, hoping, as a Knight of the Golden Fleece, to re-enact the exploits of Jason and the Argonauts. In reality the inhabitants killed several of his men and took him prisoner. He obtained his release through the good offices of the Emperor of Trebizond (II) or, according to the Genoese version, of the Genoese Jerome de Nigro.¹²⁵ On his release, Geoffroy continued to Caffa, capturing on the way two Greek vessels with cargoes of fish. In September, the government of Genoa complained bitterly of De Thoisy's piracy to the Duke of Burgundy, demanding that he release their Muslim subjects and their goods: 'Now if arms were taken up against the King of the Turks, what did the Persians, Armenians and Sarmatians who choose to live in these parts deserve? Why should they be plundered and taken prisoner?'¹²⁶ The dispute continued to poison relations between Genoa and Burgundy, and it was also Genoese displeasure that persuaded De Thoisy to return to Constantinople. Here he found letters from De Wavrin and Condulmer about the forthcoming expedition with the Hungarians and Vlachs, but he preferred to return with his ships to Nice and Villefranche.¹²⁷

For his part, De Wavrin returned to the Danube to meet Pietre Vasquez at Brăila. Vasquez brought the news about the battle of Varna, and reported that Hunyadi had asked De Wavrin and the Cardinal to go up the Danube with eight galleys. He would meet them in September with eight- to ten thousand troops. At the beginning of August, Cardinal Condulmer joined De Wavrin in the Danube delta, while Vasquez returned to Hungary to confirm that the fleet was ready. The Hungarians had also urged Vasquez to take on board an Ottoman prince, Savcı, who must be the same as the Davud son of Savcı, whom Chalkokondyles shows as fighting with the Hungarians at the battle of Kosovo in 1448, and who, he claims, was the grandson of Murad I (1362–89), through his son Savcı.¹²⁸ The galleys departed in mid-August for Silistra, at the same time as the governor-general of Rumelia, Şihabeddin Pasha went to Sofia,¹²⁹ presumably to forestall a co-ordinated Hungarian attack. Silistra was too well garrisoned for the fleet to assault and the attempt to use Savcı to spread disaffection among its Ottoman defenders was a complete failure. On 29 August, however, the combined forces of the Burgundians and Vlachs captured and burned Tutrakan, and Giurgiu and Ruse shortly afterwards. They continued towards Nicopolis, with the Vlachs on the north bank of the river and a Turkish force shadowing them on the south. At Nicopolis, they began to besiege the fort of Turnu-Măgurele opposite the town on the north bank of the Danube. On 15 September, Hunyadi arrived with a

125 Ibid., 203.

126 Ibid., 204.

127 Taparel, 'Une episode', 22.

128 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 363.

129 İnalçık, 'İstanbul'un fethinden önce Fâtih Sultan Mehmed', in *Fatih Devri*, 88–9.

Hungarian army, and the fleet continued upstream to the mouth of the River Jiu, where the Hungarians had their transports. On 29 September, the Hungarians crossed at Orjahovo, to engage in a few indecisive skirmishes with the Turkish force that had followed the fleet. When it departed, leaving scorched earth in its wake, Hunyadi refused to follow. He had, he said, fulfilled his promise by meeting De Wavrin and Condulmer at the time agreed, and advised the fleet to return before the river froze. It reached Constantinople on 2 November 1445 (II).

This was the end of the crusade, although hopes of prolonging it faded only slowly. In October 1445, the Venetian senators received a Byzantine ambassador, Archbishop Pachomios, who informed them of negotiations with the King of France, the Duke of Burgundy and the Pope, but they refused to support the proposed expedition before they had received news of the galleys.¹³⁰ When Cardinal Condulmer and Loredan finally returned to Venice in January 1446, Condulmer continued to Rome with proposals for an expedition 'to expel the Turks from Greece,'¹³¹ but by this time the scheme was a mere fantasy.

The failure of the crusade did not, however, put an end to the secular motives of the participants. Murad had retired to Manisa after the battle of Varna. Two years later, a devastating fire in Edirne and then a Janissary rebellion persuaded the Viziers to recall the old Sultan, who arrived in the capital at the end of August 1446.¹³² His return to the throne ended a period of political crisis in the Ottoman Empire at about the same time as Hunyadi's appointment as regent restored peace in Hungary. Murad's first major action after his reaccession was to attack one of the crusading allies, Constantine Dragases. In December 1446, partly at the instigation of Constantine's enemy, Nerio Acciajuoli of Athens, Murad destroyed the Hexamilion wall and entered the Peloponnesos to harry Constantine's territory, reducing the Despot to the status of Ottoman tributary and repossessing the lands that he had seized in southern Greece. These included Thebes, which had previously belonged to Nerio.¹³³ In 1448, with the encouragement of Venice, he opened hostilities against Scanderbeg, who had re-established himself in 1444 as an independent ruler on his family's domains in Albania and extended his realms by marrying into the Arianit clan. This action Murad cut short at the news of a renewed Hungarian attack.

In 1447, with his position in Hungary assured, Hunyadi had tried to resuscitate the crusading alliance of 1444. The new Pope, Nicholas V, promised to provide contingents of pontifical and Aragonese troops, which never in practice materialised, while Scanderbeg also promised help, which never in the end came. Hunyadi's only ally was Dan, the Voevode of Wallachia and murderer of Vlad Drakul. On this occasion Hunyadi marched southwards to encounter the Sultan on the Plain

¹³⁰ Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 204.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 206

¹³² İnalçık, 'İstanbul'un fethinden önce'; Franz Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath: Vor- und Nachspiel der Schlacht bei Varna', *Oriens*, 3 (1950), 229–65; Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 136–7.

¹³³ Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 155–70.

of Kosovo on 23 October 1448. Two days later, apparently in the early morning of 25 October, he fled the battlefield, giving Murad the victory. In the following year, the Ottomans recaptured Giurgiu, which the Vlachs and Burgundians had taken in 1445.

As a result of the crusade George Branković had recovered his lands in Serbia, and Vlad Drakul had, with Burgundian assistance, acquired two castles on the Danube. Both of these outcomes benefited Hungary by making the southern frontier of the Kingdom less vulnerable to Ottoman raids. Hunyadi had acquired Branković's estates in Hungary and the regency of the Kingdom, which his son Matthias Corvinus was to rule as king. It is Hunyadi, however, who acquired a lasting reputation, first as a Christian hero and later as a national hero of both Hungary and Rumania.

The translations

There are several English translations of contemporary or near contemporary accounts of the crusade. For a narrative of events, modern historiography has relied in particular on the *Annals or Chronicles of the Famed Kingdom of Poland* of Jan Długosz (c.1415–80). As an employee of Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, Długosz had a first-hand knowledge of events and incorporated documentary material into his narrative. He began work on his *Annals* after Oleśnicki's death in 1455. For a summary of the entire chronicle, see Maurice Michael, with a commentary by Paul Smith, *The Annals of Jan Długosz* (Chichester: IM Publications, 1997). The chronicle of János Thuróczy (c.1435–89), a clerk in the royal courts of Hungary, has a section on the crusade, but is not as well informed as Długosz, and lacks the kind of documentation that Długosz provides. See János Thuróczy, translated by Frank Mantello, with foreword and commentary by Pál Engel, *Chronicle of the Hungarians* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, 1991). The letters of the antiquarian traveller Ciriaco of Ancona are an important source for establishing the chronology of events and, since Ciriaco was clearly acting as a spy on the Pope's behalf, absolutely essential in following the Hungarian–Ottoman negotiations of 1444. It is Ciriaco who has preserved a Latin translation of the text of the Treaty of Edirne. For the Latin texts of his correspondence, with English translations, see Edward W. Bodnar, with Clive Foss, *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2003). The Serb Constantine Mihailović, who served in the Ottoman army, probably as a Janissary, from about 1453 until his capture by the Hungarians at Jajce in 1463, also describes the campaign. For an English translation of the Czech recension of his 'memoirs', see Konstantin Mihailović, translated by B. Stolz, with a commentary by Svat Soucek, *Memoirs of a Janissary* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1975). The Greek chronicle of Michael Doukas is important not simply because it provides a contemporary account of the crusade, but also because Doukas (d. after 1462), who carried out diplomatic missions to the Ottoman court on behalf of his Genoese employers on Chios, sometimes provides comments on the personalities of the figures involved in events. For an English

translation, see Doukas, translated by J. A. Magoulias, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1975). The important contemporary narrative of the crusade by the Athenian historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles awaits a translation.

The texts translated below are:

I Anonymous, edited, with notes and facsimile, by Halil İnalcık and Mevlûd Oğuz, *Gazavât-i Sultân Murâd b. Mehemmed Hân. İzladi ve Varna Savaşları Üzerinde Anonim Gazavâtnâme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989). An anonymous Ottoman account of the battles of the Zlatitsa Pass and Varna. The text survives in a single manuscript, dating probably from the late fifteenth century. The work was probably composed during the second reign of Murad II's son, Mehmed II (1444–46, 1451–81). The author seems to have been a witness to the events described and to have served in the entourage of Murad II, perhaps in the scribal service.

II Jehan de Wavrin, edited by N. Jorga, *La Campagne des Croisés sur le Danube (1445)* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1927). Excerpt from the *Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre* by the Burgundian chronicler Jehan de Wavrin (d. c.1474). Jehan de Wavrin based this account of the crusade largely on the memoirs of his nephew Waleran, who commanded the Burgundian ships on the Bosphorus, the Black Sea and the Danube in 1444–45. A short memoir by Waleran himself survives in manuscript (Lille, Archives du Nord, B 1984, no. 59 234).

III Michel Beheim, 'Türkenschlacht bei Warna', in Hans Gille and Ingeborg Spiewald, *Die Gedichte des Michel Beheim* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), vol.1, no. 104, 328–56. A ballad on the crusades of 1443 and 1444. Michel Beheim (1416–74) was a minstrel who served in the courts of the German nobility, including the royal court at Vienna. He based the section of the ballad on the crusade of 1444 on the memoirs of a captive of the Turks, Hans Maugest. He is the author of several ballads on events and personalities in Hungary, Bohemia and the Balkans. The translation indicates the stanzas but not the individual lines of the ballad.

IV.1 Georg Hofmann (ed.), *Acta Concilii Florentini* (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1955), 262.

IV.2 Uruç b. 'Âdil el-Kazzâz, edited by Franz Babinger, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* ('Annals of the House of Osman') (Hanover: Heinz Laufer, 1925), 52–3. Uruç's chronicle survives in several recensions, the earliest of which continues to 1467. For the period from 1422 the author relies heavily on Ottoman chronological lists (see **IV.4**). The author was a resident of Edirne, active during the reign of Bayezid II (1481–1512).

IV.3 Neşri, edited by Franz Taeschner, *Ğihannüma. Die altosmanische Chronik des Mevlânâ Mehemmed Neschrî*, facsimile of the Codex Menzel (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1951), 170–71. Neşri (d. probably c.1520) completed the first recension

of his chronicle in c.1485. The text is based largely on the chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade and the anonymous chronicle, Oxford Bodleian Library, Marsh, 313, but at times diverges from these sources. The Codex Menzel appears to be an autograph of the first recension of the chronicle. See V. L. Ménage, *Neshri's History of the Ottomans: The Sources and Development of the Text* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

IV.4 Osman Turan (ed.), *İstanbul'un Fethinden Önce Yazılmış Tarihî Takvimler* ('Historical almanacs written before the conquest of Istanbul') (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), 31. Excerpt from a chronological list compiled in 1445. See V. L. Ménage, 'The "Annals of Murad II"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXXIX (1976), 570–84.

IV.5 Aşıkpaşazade, edited by Ç. N. Atsız, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân* ('Annals of the House of Osman') (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınları, 1949), 183–5. In the late 1430s, Aşıkpaşazade (c.1400–after 1484) was in the following of the marcher lord Ishak Bey of Skopje, and participated in several of Murad II's campaigns, including the siege of Belgrade in 1440.

IV.6 Peter Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1, 1975), chronicle 33, ¶49, 251.

IV.7 *Cronaca Zancaruola*, unpublished. This excerpt in Franz Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath: Vor- und Nachspiel der Schlacht bei Varna (1444)', *Oriens*, 3 (1950), 244–5.

IV.8 Text in Adnan Sadık Erzi, 'Türkiye kütüphanelerinden notlar ve vesikalar, II', *Belleten*, 14 (1950), 595–6.

IV.9 Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 1, chronicle 54, ¶13, 389.

IV.10 Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Mabsūk fī Dhayl al-Sulūk* (Cairo, n.d.), 98–9. Al-Sakhāwī (1427–97) was a Mamluk scholar and historian. This passage combines, sometimes verbatim, the accounts by his older contemporaries, especially Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 9 (Hyderabad, 1976), 231.

IV.11 St Cyril and St Methodius Library, Sofia. OAK 45/29, 37v. Ottoman tax register of the Nicopolis district, c.1450.

IV.12 Text in Erzi, 'Türkiye kütüphanelerinden notlar ve vesikalar, II', 620–31. Murad II's victory proclamation is discussed in Lajos Fekete, 'Das *Fethname* über die Schlacht bei Varna (Zur Kritik Feriduns)', *Byzantinoslavica*, 14 (1953), 258–70.

V.1 Neşri, ed. Taeschner, *Ğihannüma*, 172.

V.2 Ciriaco of Ancona, edited and translated by Edward W. Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), Letter 9A, 38–41.

V.3 Ciriaco of Ancona, ed. and transl. Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letters 9B1, 9B2, 41–7; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th century): An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 197–9. The text of the Treaty of Edirne is analysed in Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 100–109.

- V.4** N. Jorga, *Notes et Extraits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XIV^e Siècle*, II, 2 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 404–5.
- V.5** Długosz, *Ioannis Długossii seu Longini Historia Polonicae* (Leipzig, 1711), 794–6. Partial text of Vladislav's renunciation of the Treaty of Edirne in Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 182–3.
- V.6** Jorga, *Notes et Extraits*, II, 2, 187. Partial text in Pál Engel, 'János Hunyadi and the peace "of Szeged" (1444)', *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XLVII (1994), 245n. The translation follows the text as given in Engel, 'János Hunyadi'.
- V.7** L. Stojanović, 'Srpski rodoslovi i letopisi', *Glasnik Srpskog Ucenog Drustva*, 53 (1883), 88–9. Quoted in O. Halecki, *The Crusade of Varna: A Discussion of Controversial Problems* (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1943), 54–5, and Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath', 240.
- V.8** Text in Yahya bin Mehmed el-Kātib, edited by Şinasi Tekin, *Menāhicü'l-İnşā* (Cambridge, Mass.: Orient Press, 1971), 23–4; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, 'İbrahim Beyin Karaman imareti vakfiyesi', *Belleten*, 1 (1937), 120–21.
- V.9** Text in Engel, 'János Hunyadi', 254.

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I

Anonymous

28 Rajab the Venerated. In the Year 848/10 November 1444

The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad Son of Sultan Mehmed Khan

In the Name of God the Compassionate the Merciful

Praise be to God the Lord of the Worlds, and Prayer and Peace be upon our Lord Muhammad, his Family and his Companions, all of them. Gratitude and thanks to the Creator of the World who made Holy War in the Path of God a way for His Muslim Slaves to achieve High Degrees.

God the Praised the Exalted said: ‘How often has a small group conquered a great host.’¹ In accordance with the sublime contents of this Noble Verse, it is God the Glorious the Exalted who allows the few to conquer the many. When He bestows so much as an atom of His grace and guidance, He routs and scatters a hundred thousand infidels. The reason for collecting and composing these lines so full of defects is that the joyous companions who draw a benefit from this agreeable book will remember the wretched author with a prayer.

What is wished for² in this transient universe
Is a good name and fame in the world.
He achieved a good name through holy war and struggle.
Who is there like him, and in what age?

May God the Lord of the Worlds make abundant reward cheap to His Majesty the late Sultan Murad son of Mehmed Khan, who inspired this book which is so full of defects, and render easy his entry to paradise and the sight of the Noble Vision of God. Amen, O You who answer the prayers of supplicants.

It is related that, in the year of the Hegira 846/1442–43, in the glorious days of the deceased, it was the noble wish of the great Sultan – by which I mean Murad Khan

1 Qur’an 2.249.

2 The Turkish phrase (*murad olan*) is a word-play on the name of the Sultan.

– to send his beloved son³ to govern the land of Saruhan.⁴ He gave the Prince the men called Kassaboğlu Mahmud and Ibrahim the Chancellor as associates and, bestowing on him horsetail, standard, drum and banner, appointed him to the district of Saruhan. He sent him off with many words of advice. With the words, ‘The command belongs to my Sultan!’, the Prince distributed his standards, horsetails and banners⁵ and set out for Saruhan with his band playing. When he had arrived safely in Saruhan, he consulted with his two tutors about the well-being of the weak and the poor, while the learned and the pious, the wealthy and the indigent dwelt in peace beneath the felicity-bestowing shadow of the Prince.

Concerning the sedition of the Emperor of Istanbul

One day that accursed and irreligious man called the Emperor of Istanbul thought to himself: ‘This son of Osman is not satisfied with his own lands, but has set foot in Rumelia⁶ and seized numerous towns. Now he has even captured Edirne and settled right under our nose. If we do not do something about it, he will harm us too. The best thing would be for me to set the Turks against the Hungarians, the Poles and the Czechs.⁷ Then, when the son of Osman is exhausted, I shall be ready to come out and take Edirne from him and to take possession of all Rumelia.’ So he summoned all his Priests, Bans⁸ and Royal Metropolitans to a council. They met together and, as a result of their deliberations, decided to go to the Pope of Rome to tell him the situation and to take counsel with him. They would do whatever nonsense the Pope of Rome spoke. The accursed Emperor prepared great galleons, put all the priests and monks on board, and set off to the Pope of Rome.⁹

One day news reached the Pope of Rome that the Emperor of Istanbul was coming to visit him. He gave the order, and every one of his priests and monks went out to meet him. With each man lighting candles and burning incense, they greeted the Emperor and gave him lodgings. Then the Emperor went to the Pope of Rome’s pigsty. When he had rubbed his face on the ground, he removed his hat and, kissing the Pope of Rome’s unclean hand, took his place opposite him. When that pig called the Pope of Rome raised his head to honour the Emperor, the accursed Emperor laid out his gifts before him, bestowing so much on him, his priests and his monks that he drowned them in gold florins.

3 Prince Mehmed, later to rule as Mehmed II ‘the Conqueror’ (1444–46, 1451–81).

4 A district in western Anatolia, with its capital at Manisa. It was customarily under the rule of a son of the reigning sultan.

5 These were symbols of royal authority.

6 The term refers to the Ottoman lands in Europe.

7 The phrase ‘Poles and Czechs’ forms a rhyming doublet in Turkish (*Leh ve Çeh*) and is included here for rhetorical effect rather than for strict historical accuracy.

8 Ban (Hungarian): a governor and military commander on the southern marches of Hungary. The term is inappropriate in a Byzantine context.

9 What follows refers to the Council of Ferrara–Florence.

Then the Pope of Rome said: 'My son the Emperor, what do you want? Speak, and we will listen.' The Emperor replied: 'O head of our religion, the son of Osman is no longer confined to his Anatolia or to his Bursa, but has now set foot in Rumelia and conquered Sofia, Filibe,¹⁰ Edirne, and many other lands. He has destroyed our churches, removed the bells and idols from some of them and built minarets in their place. He has turned some of them into mosques and some of them into madrasas. He has taken some of the Christians' girls, boys and women and converted them to his own religion. He has killed some of their men and cast others into chains. He has perpetrated many such wrongs, and we can bear it no longer. We therefore urge you to admonish all the Kings and the Christian community, so that we can punish these Ottomans and remove them from our lands, turn some of their mosques into temples for idols and others into taverns, destroy the minarets which they have built and hang bells. If we let these Turks be, there will be no me in Istanbul, no King of Hungary, no Poles and no Czechs. They will utterly destroy all of them, and dig out the Christian community by the roots. Can you not see what they have done to a great King like the Despot?'¹¹ They have taken his lands from him and demeaned him among monarchs. Now you are the glory of the Christians, the leader of our religion. You should never cease from admonishing and warning every Christian and every King that it is inconceivable that the torch of the religion of Christ should be extinguished in your time.' With this he fell silent.

Now when that accursed man called the Pope of Rome heard such words coming from the Emperor, he knew that he could stir up immense trouble and immediately gave orders that the King of Hungary, the King known as the Despot and others should be summoned. He wrote letters and despatched them to all quarters, summoning the aforementioned execrated men. They all set out and gathered around the Pope of Rome, and when they said, 'What is your command?', the accursed man called the Pope of Rome gave tongue and admonished them at great length: 'Are you not ashamed before Jesus? Have you no fear of Narnur?'¹² Or do Afruz, Yanduluz, Manduluz and Martuluz favour and help you? Now if any of you opposes the Emperor's plan and fails to help him in whatever he commands or to act as he says, let him be excommunicated from our religion. He will receive no favour from Narnur and Patreman Yandulus.¹³ You should not forget this. You should expel the son of Osman from Rumelia and then, when your army is rested, proceed to take Bursa and all the lands up to Jerusalem. You should destroy the minarets of their mosques and hang great bells in their place – forgive us, O God¹⁴ –, light candles all

10 Plovdiv (Bulgaria).

11 The Despot of Serbia, George Branković.

12 The author's name for the God of the Christians, apparently composed of two Arabic words: *nar* ('fire') and *nur* ('light').

13 A reference presumably to the Christian Trinity. The terms seem to be a corruption of the Greek 'ο πατήρ 'ο υἱός το 'άγιον πνεύμα ('Father, Son and Holy Spirit'). The spellings in the manuscript of Yanduluz/Yandulus and other 'exotic' terms are inconsistent.

14 The Arabic phrase is an interjection by the author, asking God's forgiveness for writing down a blasphemy.

around them and burn incense in their midst. Let us see how you advance the religion of Jesus! If you do as I say, Narnur will be pleased with you and Patreman Yandulus will favour you.' He exhorted and admonished them with a hundred thousand bits of nonsense like this.

Each of them said, 'So be it. What more could we want than whatever rubbish it is you've swallowed?', and set off to his own country. The Emperor too boarded his galleon and, when he had arrived in Istanbul, settled into his pigsty. In order to learn about the situation of the Padishah who is the Refuge of the World, he sent out spies and kept his eyes on the roads.

Concerning the Karamanid's¹⁵ campaign

At the same time, the Karamanid heard about what was happening. One day the Emperor's ambassador met with him and gave tongue: 'Our King the Emperor sends you copious greetings, and his reply is as follows: you should assemble your troops and set out on a campaign to seize Bursa from the son of Osman. You should sit on your ancestral throne with no fears or worries. If Sultan Murad tries to come against you, we shall so effectively prevent him crossing over the sea that even if he were a bird, it would be impossible for him to fly.'

The Karamanid gave proper consideration to the reply of the accursed man called the Emperor. He decided to help him, and began to collect his troops. One day he summoned all his lords to his side and said: 'It is my desire to take back my lands and territories from the House of Osman and to go and reside there. Wherever they oppose us, you should clap anyone you do not kill in irons. You should not behave in any other way.' When he had admonished his lords, they all said, 'To hear is to obey!', and prepared for the campaign. They marched off and devastated the land, killing some of the Ottomans and clapping others in irons. The Karamanid took control of the lands as before and, happy and contented, insolently settled down there.

Let our story now return to our Padishah the Refuge of the World, Murad Khan son of Mehmed Khan, who had heard absolutely nothing of these disorders. Sultan Murad summoned the Viziers and gave his command: 'I wish to hunt cranes and so I am going to the place called Tavuslu for the royal hunt. You should make preparations accordingly. I shall stay there for a few days, but you should prepare for a campaign, because – if God Most High is willing – in the spring I shall lead an imperial campaign against the infidels of Hungary. You should assemble the troops of Islam in good time.' However, on the same day that the Padishah reached Tavuslu, a messenger came to His Excellency the Grand Vizier in the city of Edirne, calling for help. When he reported the mischief that the Karamanid had caused, some of the Viziers believed him while others did not. When each of them had spoken, the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha said: 'Whether this is true or false, we must report the situation

¹⁵ Ibrahim of Karaman, ruler of the emirate of Karaman in south-central Anatolia, which bordered on Ottoman territory.

to the Padishah.' He wrote a letter and sent the man with it to the Padishah. When letter and man reached the Padishah, the Padishah of the World treated it as a matter of no importance. Nor did he trust the man who had brought it, and settled down to his pleasure.

Meanwhile, however, more men had arrived in Edirne, and when they confirmed that the situation really was as reported and gave details of the Karamanid's mischief, the Grand Vizier gave an order summoning a person called Kattaroğlu. He then wrote another letter and sent it with Kattaroğlu to the Padishah. With the words, 'The command belongs to my Sultan!', Kattaroğlu took the letter and, when he reached the Padishah, kissed the ground and presented it. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World studied the letter and asked Kattaroğlu about the situation. The moment Kattaroğlu had explained the circumstances one by one, the Padishah did not hesitate for a second but turned back and set out for Edirne.

The Padishah arrived in Edirne and, on the morning of the following day, summoned the ulema. When he had explained the situation to them, he said: 'Masters, what is your ruling? What is the judgement of the shariah if a man makes common cause with the infidel and causes harm and oppression to the community of Muhammad?' When the ulema replied, 'If this is the case, he is himself an infidel', the Padishah issued his orders. Leaving half of the troops of Rumelia in Edirne and taking half with him, he set off for Karaman with his band playing with full pomp and ceremony. As they drew near, the Padishah of the World sent a group of young men ahead to spy out where the Karamanid was and to capture a few informants. With the words, 'The command belongs to the Sultan!', they set off. As they were going along, they came across a crowd of people whom they recognised as the Karamanid's soldiers. They immediately drew their swords and fell on them, killing some while sparing others and putting them in chains. When they brought them to His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World, he rewarded them handsomely and had the informants brought into his presence. He asked them about the Karamanid, and they answered all his questions. The Padishah considered the situation.

Meanwhile, the rest of the defeated soldiers had fled and made their way to the Karamanid. When they explained what had happened to them, and how many of them had been captured and taken prisoner, the Karamanid went out of his mind and had no idea what to do. When the troops who were accompanying him heard this, they fled company by company and scattered back to their own homes.

In the meantime the Padishah of the World had ordered Tatar troops to harry the Karamanid's lands. With the words, 'The command belongs to the Sultan!', they mounted their horses and began to ravage the Karamanid's realms and to deport its inhabitants in droves. Now it so happened that one day the Padishah the Refuge of the World set out on the chase and, as he was hunting in the open country, he saw the Tatar troops relentlessly carrying off the land's inhabitants in droves. When he saw a whole lot of men trampled underfoot and suffering torment and misery just because of the mischief of a single dog, he took pity on their suffering and ordered the Tatar troops not to trouble these wretches in future. With the words, 'The command belongs to the Sultan!', they stopped what they were doing.

Now when the Karamanid saw what had happened, he had no idea what to do, and when he realised that the accursed man called the Emperor had not helped him at all, he did not know what had hit him. He began to brand his liver with the fire of regret and to strike his head with the stones of repentance. His lands were laid waste and their habitations desolate. Suffering, perplexed and at a loss, he summoned his great men and lords and said to them: 'Find a way out of this. Would it be a good idea if we went and rubbed our faces in the dust at the Padishah's feet and asked for forgiveness in the hope that he might pardon us?' Summoning his ulema, he sent them to the Padishah the Refuge of the World to do as he proposed. Now when his ulema and pious men came bare-headed and bare-footed into the presence of the Padishah, they met with the Pashas and told them that the Karamanid had repented, regretted what he had done and begged forgiveness. The Pashas took the delegation into the Padishah's council and explained the situation.

Now the Padishah the Refuge of the World showed no favours to these envoys and, without looking them in the face, said: 'That scum called the Karamanid has no religion, no faith. He has collaborated with the unbelieving infidel and coveted the throne. Does he believe that he can get away with this mischief? Either I shall seize him and cut off his head, or else he takes himself off to another country. There is no other way.' So saying, he sent the envoys away in disgrace. This time the envoys threw themselves on the mercy of the Pashas, earnestly entreating them and asking their favour. A few days passed like this, until finally the Pashas said: 'If your lord swears an oath and gives an undertaking that he will never again cause such trouble, we will take it upon ourselves to ask the Padishah to forgive him. Otherwise it is impossible.' When the ambassadors had made clear that their lord had repented a thousand times and expressed a hundred thousand regrets, beating himself with stones, the Pashas too entreated His Majesty the Glorious Padishah and begged his favour. The Sultan for his part forgave the Karamanid on condition that he never again stir up sedition and mischief. He clad the envoys in robes, and gave the Karamanid back his lands. Then he left that spot and set out on the return journey. With his band playing, he proceeded triumphantly to Bursa. He dismissed the troops of Islam, and each man set off homewards.

Most of the Tatar troops, however, passed through Istanbul, where they sold the plunder which they had taken from the Karamanid's realms. When the people of Istanbul saw this, they went to the Emperor and told him how much the Tatars had pillaged and how much booty they had taken. 'Illustrious King,' they said, 'the Tatar troops have plundered the Karamanid's lands so thoroughly that the people have nothing left to scratch their teeth with.' The Emperor was struck with grief and said: 'I was hoping that he would keep the son of Osman occupied for a while. After that I would have set out to seize the son of Osman's territories and then finish off the Karamanid. But since things have turned out like this, so much the better. They are both enemies of our faith, and if one of them is destroyed it is a blessing for us either way. If this plan has come to grief, I shall set up another, so that the son of Osman will not know what has hit him.' So saying he fell silent.

Meanwhile the Padishah of the World, feasting and drinking, travelled in stages to Mihaliç and Biga and thence to Gallipoli. He crossed the water in safety and, when he was a day's journey from Edirne, the people of the city, high and low, its ulema and pious men, came out to meet him. They slaughtered sacrifice animals for every step that he took, and laid out carpets for his feet. They greeted the Padishah with honour and dignity, and when he entered his palace in felicity, he bestowed favours and robes of honour on all the people according to their station. Then the Padishah occupied himself with his own pleasure, eating, drinking and making merry.

An account of how the accursed Emperor wrote to Hungary and what happened

In the meantime the accursed man they call the Emperor had sent letters to the King of Hungary, in which he had written: 'What are you waiting for? The son of Osman is facing disaster. From where I am sitting, I have endeavoured to the utmost of my ability to serve the religion of His Majesty Jesus and to honour Latiäza,¹⁶ Patreman Yandulus and Narnur, and to implement the word of the head of our religion, the Pope of Rome. I have stirred up strife between the Karamanid and the son of Osman and have performed deeds that will make a spoonful of the blood of either of them worth a thousand gold pieces to the other. The two enemies of our faith have drawn their swords and are fighting one another. What are you waiting for when there is such an opportunity? Do you not fear Narnur? Are you not ashamed before Patreman Yandulus? And above all, do you not fear the curse of the head of our religion, the Pope of Rome? Now when you receive my letter, you should not delay for a single instant, but collect your troops, and we shall wield our swords to the best of our ability, you from that side, and we from this. Let us – forgive us, O God – seize Rumelia from end to end. We shall slaughter some of the enemies of our religion and throw others in irons. Let us – forgive us, O God – hang bells in their mosques and burn candles all around them. Let us make manifest the religion of His Majesty Jesus. When we have seized the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, we shall not spare a single Muhammadan as far as Jerusalem the Noble.' With this he concluded his letter.

When the King of Hungary¹⁷ received the letter, this evil-doing King summoned the pig known as the son of the Despot,¹⁸ the accursed man called Yanko,¹⁹ the Prince of Wallachia,²⁰ the Polish and Czech²¹ Kings and the Hungarian and Croatian Captains, and told them what was in the letter. They collected troops and, as they were preparing to set off, the Despot gave all of them great feasts, with eating and

16 I cannot explain this name. It presumably refers to a member of the Christian Trinity.

17 Vladislav III and I, King of Poland (1434–44) and Hungary (1440–44).

18 George Branković, displaced Despot of Serbia.

19 John Hunyadi, Voevode of Transylvania.

20 Vlad Drakul, Voevode of Wallachia.

21 See note 7.

drinking. Then they began their march and, setting off with pomp and ceremony, and with innumerable carts, cannon and munitions, they crossed the Danube to Belgrade. Here they pitched their tents and all of them met together in a council. When the council was over, the evil-doing King appointed the pig called Yanko as skirmisher and, attaching to him the infidel called Çirin Mihal,²² also as a skirmisher, gave them their orders: 'Whatever you do, you should bring me the son of Turahan alive. If he refuses to encounter you and flees, you should pursue him until you catch up and either bring his head or bring him alive. Once we have him, things will be easy. There will be no one who will be able to resist us, not Evrenos Bey, nor Ishak Bey, nor Ali Bey son of Evrenos Bey, nor Feriz Bey.'²³ The best would be if you could capture Turahan alive. Like his father, he is a respected man with much gold. When everything is over we can get his gold in abundance.' The King admonished them with a great deal of such nonsense. With the words, 'The command belongs to the King!', they marched to Serbia at the head of the infidels who are as low as the dust.

Meanwhile Kasim Pasha was amusing himself at Şehirköy,²⁴ when a man came to him with the news: 'Your Excellency, why are you waiting? The Hungarian infidels are in Lazeli²⁵ and have plundered the country.' Kasim Pasha was terrified and, with the words, 'Help! The Padishah must be informed at once. We must prepare', he sent a letter to the Padishah the Refuge of the World, informing him of the situation. Then he summoned Turahan Bey and the other lords of Rumelia to a council and, following their deliberations, they decided that they should at once mount their horses and settle the matter with a sudden attack on Yanko's army. But Turahan Bey said: 'Let me go and show myself to the infidels with my troops. When they make a charge at me, attack at once. It may be that His Majesty God the Praised the Exalted will bestow his favour and we shall defeat these unbelievers.' They all considered this to be a good plan, and Turahan set off with soldiers as they had decided. The next day, Kasim Bey and all the troops of Islam mounted and set off to the place agreed. Now they looked out for Turahan who should have made himself visible to the enemy as he had said he would, so that they could attack from their side, but there was absolutely no sign of him. But let us leave them there for while and go to Turahan Bey.

Turahan Bey left with his army and, that night, spied on the infidels who are as low as the dust and took stock of them. What he saw was that it was as if men had rained from the sky. Realising that there was no way of dealing with these infidels and that it would be impossible to resist them, he immediately gave an order to set fire to all of Lazeli and its villages, and then, turning back his horse, he [and his men]

22 Michael Szilágyi, brother-in-law of John Hunyadi.

23 These were the marcher lords of Ottoman Rumelia.

24 Pirot (Serbia).

25 'Lazar's land'; that is, Serbia. The term refers to the territories ruled by the Serbian Knez Lazar, killed at the Battle of Kosovo (1389).

fled down the road to Izinbol, leaving their camp where it was. The accursed Yanko came and seized all their tents and pavilions.

Kasim Bey waited for a long time with the troops of Islam, but when they saw that there was no sign of Turahan Bey and that the infidels were innumerable, they too turned their horses to go. At this moment, however, Hasanbeyzade Isa, an honourable and famous man, spoke: 'I am not running away,' he said, 'I am attacking these infidels who are as low as the dust.' Then he stretched himself like a wounded lion and gave the command. They struck the batons on the war-drums and, with a single, eager cry of 'Allah! Allah!' he hurled himself against that majestic host of accursed infidels. He drove the ranks of unbelievers who are as low as the earth one into the other. But there is a saying: a single stone does not make a wall, and if it does, it does not last. However, that chief among martyrs drew his sword and dealt the infidels who are as low as the dust such blows that the blood of the enemy dripped from his elbows. Like a human dragon, if he struck someone once, there was no need to strike again, and there was no one left to beg favours of the surgeon. Fighting like this, he at last drank the sweet draught of martyrdom, and not a single one of the warriors who had entered the battle with him escaped. May God's mercy be upon all of them.

But now let us return to Kasim Pasha. He turned his horse around and fled through the Niš Pass to Şehirköy, where he halted and gave the order to burn the town of Niš and its villages. Then they burned Şehirköy and its villages and, without delaying there for an hour, went through the Dragoman Pass on the way to the city of Sofia. Kasim Pasha had left his tents behind in their entirety. Now the accursed Yanko had advanced as far as Niš and found it completely burned down and destroyed, with not a soul remaining. From there he proceeded to Şehirköy. That too was burned with no trace of humankind left.

When he saw that Kasim Pasha had left his tents, pavilions and baggage as they were, he was overjoyed. He went over to Kasim Pasha's tent, dismounted, sat down in it and gave the order: 'If anyone has a prisoner, bring him here.' Now a man called Balaban the Eunuch had been captured and they brought him to Yanko. When the accursed Yanko noticed that he had no beard, he asked: 'What has happened to this man's beard?' When they replied that he was a eunuch and that eunuchs are beardless, he called Balaban forward and asked him about the Padishah: 'Is your Shah in Anatolia or in Edirne? Does he mean to come against us and fight? Or is he about to flee? Give us the true answer!' Now it is true that Balaban was, in the literal sense, a eunuch, but in spirit he was a real man. He gave the following reply: 'At present our Padishah is in Edirne, but do not imagine that he will run away from you. On the contrary, you should understand that he will order his cavalry to mount up. He will call up several hundred thousand horsemen from Rumelia and block the passes you have come through. So far, you have advanced without trouble, but

whether or not you can make it back to your own lands is a different matter. You rely on your carts, but they will surround you and your wagenburg,²⁶ as the sea surrounds the world, or like a belt surrounding the waist, and you will perish from grief like a dog. Do you not know this? And do you imagine that you have defeated the House of Osman's army? It was Hasanbeyzade Isa Bey who attacked you, and did you not notice what one lord did to you with a handful of troops? He drove your ranks one against the other and brought down more than thirty thousand of your soldiers. If this is how it is when a thousand infidels fall upon one of our warriors, how will it be for you when Sultan Murad Khan comes in felicity and finds you on his lands, and when he sends ten men with swords in their hands against one of yours? What I say is the truth. The rest is up to you.' With this he fell silent.

The accursed man known as Yanko preened himself in the Pasha's tent and made himself ill from the stuff they call raki and wine. As he offered cups right and left, his shit rose to his mouth and the blood in his arse mounted to his filthy face. He thought for a while and said: 'This is not a trivial matter. If anything goes wrong, the King will remove my head. The best thing for me to do is to stay here until the evil-doing King arrives, and when he comes, to explain the situation, and to add my words to the Despot's.' So he stayed there, and when the evil-doing King arrived he bared his head before the King and explained the situation clearly, point by point. 'My King,' he said, 'if you wish, I will bring Balaban the Eunuch into your presence.' When the King replied, 'Very good, bring him!', they brought Balaban before him, and Balaban repeated what he had said before.

As all the Kings, Bans and Dukes were listening attentively to what Balaban the Eunuch had to say, the accursed and evil-doing King lifted his head and looked the Despot in the face. 'You are a great and experienced man', he said. 'What do you say? What should be done?' The accursed Despot bared his head and replied: 'To the best of my knowledge and understanding, it would not be wise to advance further, even if it is the manly thing to do. The right thing would be to return to our lands in good time, because it is now winter, and winter in these parts is fearsome. I realise that if the Padishah resists us and blocks the passes, we shall be left in this open country, frostbitten, with no hands and no feet. The best thing is to turn back.'

When he had finished speaking, the accursed man called Župan²⁷ Yanko said: 'No! Because the son of Osman is your son-in-law,²⁸ when you speak, you are fighting with his sword. But things are not like this. If you were going to turn back, why did you not calculate on doing this in the first place? What will we have achieved if we turn back? Will we have taken revenge on the son of Osman? We have already trampled on his realms and destroyed a swathe of his territories. If we turned back now, the son of Osman would come after us the moment he saw what we were doing,

26 A mobile fortification, with cannon mounted on or behind carts, which also provided protection for the troops. The Hungarians had adopted this tactic from the Hussites. The Turkish term for wagenburg (*tabur*, from *Tábor*) reflects its Hussite origin.

27 Župan (Slavonic): a governor.

28 Murad II had married George Branković's daughter Mara in 1435.

even if this is not what he had intended to do. Our troops would long for home. They would be terrified and not one would stay behind to fight. How could we face the son of Osman and give him his due without any troops? The best thing to do is this. We have come this far and cannot turn back now. If he does not resist us we shall go as far as Edirne, and if we do have to fight, we shall accept our destiny. Even if you turn back, I will not.’ With these words he fell silent. Every one of the swine had his say, until their deliberations reached the point when they decided to advance as far as Sofia and – forgive us, O God – pillage the city. There they would hold a great council and act according to the situation.

Meanwhile, Kasim Bey and Turahan Bey had met up in Sofia and alighted there, exchanging big words: ‘It was your fault!’ ‘No, it was your fault!’

But now let us return to our Padishah the Refuge of the World, I mean His Majesty Sultan Murad son of Mehmed Khan. One day, as he was taking his pleasure in the city of Edirne, he received the message that men had come bringing letters from his slave Kasim Bey. At the Padishah’s command, the letters were brought and read out at an extraordinary meeting of his council. When he had understood what was in the letters, the Padishah gave orders: ‘Quick! Make preparations to meet the enemies of our religion so that they cannot destroy our realms!’ Whereupon, within a short space of time, the Viziers and deputies had made ready the army of Islam and prepared for a campaign.

His Majesty Sultan Murad Khan orders a general mobilisation and marches against the infidels

One day the Padishah asked the Viziers what they had been doing. In reply, the Viziers said: ‘My Padishah, all preparations for the campaign have been made, and a good number of troops from among your slaves – both Janissaries and cavalrymen – have assembled and are at the ready. However, to judge from what Kasim Bey says in his letter, our troops are not equal to the enemy’s.’ When they said this, the Padishah of the World gave the command: ‘Because the infidels who are as low as the dust have overrun our dominions and are attacking us, it is incumbent on every member of the community of Muhammad to depart for this holy war.²⁹ Let everyone in Rumelia who is capable of wielding a mace set out, whether on foot or on horseback.’

With this order for a general mobilisation, within – God is greatest of all – a very short time, countless troops were raised. Then His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World resolved on holy war.³⁰ He unfurled the horsetails and standards and

29 In Islamic legal theory, holy war is an obligation on the Muslim community at large, but not on all individuals within the community. It becomes a personal obligation on all Muslims only when non-Muslims attack Muslim territory.

30 Islamic jurists classify holy war as an ‘act of worship’, which to be valid in the eyes of God requires sincerity of intention. Hence, in this passage, the Sultan’s ‘resolve’ to pursue a holy war.

set out from Edirne with the band playing and drums beating. Eating and drinking and stage by stage, he set out in search of the Hungarian infidels. However, it was the depths of winter and the snow was so deep that peasants went in front of the army to clear the way. They advanced like this to Stanimaka, where they halted. At Stanimaka, the Padishah gave the command to the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha: ‘Lala,³¹ go back to Edirne and stay there. We did not leave anyone in Edirne and the people there are living in fear. This apart, you must not allow the troops who are crossing the straits from Anatolia to delay, but send them after us. If any enemy – be it the Emperor or anybody else – tries to attack us from the rear, you should act manfully and not fail to inform us.’ With the words, ‘The command belongs to my sovereign!’, the Grand Vizier returned to Edirne.

The Padishah proceeded with felicity to Filibe and, when he entered the town, summoned all the lords into his presence. Taking counsel with Şahin Pasha³² and the rest, he said: ‘When, if God Most High is willing, we are favoured with a safe arrival in Sofia, we should send notice to the governors of every sanjak³³ to come immediately, and to the kadis³⁴ to send the troops from the general levy to Sofia as quickly as possible. We shall then instruct Ozguroğlu to position himself so as to cut off the retreat of the infidels who are as low as the earth. Yahya Bey should station himself on one of the enemy’s flanks, and we should position Davud Bey to threaten him from the other. We should block all the passes wherever they are. Then we can stay in Sofia with nothing to worry about until the troops of Anatolia and Rumelia are ready and prepared. Afterwards, however things turn out, we can act accordingly. But what we must do now is to make every effort to reach Sofia in case – who knows – the infidels should get there first and plunder the city.’ Sending out numerous decrees and repeated commands to this effect, he left Filibe with felicity and proceeded towards Sofia.

In the meantime, Kasim Bey had heard that the Padishah was approaching. Everybody – Kasim Bey, the great and the humble of Sofia, the ulema and pious men of the city – rejoiced and went out to greet the Padishah. They laid carpets at his feet and welcomed him with honour and respect. Kasim Bey, however, was in low spirits, worrying how, if the Sultan were to ask him, he could admit that God had not granted it to him to rally his troops and achieve glory. As he was hiding away on his own, they told His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World: ‘My Sovereign, Kasim Bey is in a state of utter depression. We do not know what the matter is.’ When he heard this, the Padishah gave the command to summon Kasim Bey into his presence. With the words, ‘The command belongs to my Sovereign!’, Kasim Bey stood up,

31 The title given to a tutor charged with the education of an Ottoman prince. It was also used, as it is here, as a title of address by the sultan to his Grand Vizier.

32 Şihabeddin Pasha.

33 A sanjak was an administrative unit within an Ottoman province. In times of war the governors of sanjaks commanded the cavalymen holding fiefs within their sanjaks.

34 A kadi was a judge in an Islamic court. Ottoman kadis also performed administrative tasks outside their judicial function, such as levying auxiliary troops.

renewed his ablutions, entered the presence of the Padishah the Refuge of the World and kissed the ground. Then, as he stood, with his hands crossed in front of him, the Padishah looked into his face and spoke: 'Kasim Bey, I want to hear from you, blow by blow, how you fought with Yanko and were defeated, which of my lords fought and which fled.' When Kasim Bey told the Padishah from start to finish how it had been, how Turahan Bey had slunk off and how Hasanbeyzade Isa had fallen a martyr, the Padishah said: 'And you, when you saw that the infidels who are as low as the dust were in overwhelming numbers, what happened? Why did you let yourself be noticed? And now the accursed man is giving himself airs because he thinks he has defeated the troops of the House of Osman. You knew that your companions would not assist you, so why did you not tell us from the beginning what was happening? Do you not know the trouble that they have caused before? All they are good for is big words. Remember what they did to Musa Bey.³⁵ Think of their deceit when they fled to my father and how, when he died and they were carrying his body to Bursa, they produced an impostor³⁶ and made him their lord. They seized Lala Bayezid³⁷ there and martyred him, and then showed the impostor the way over the straits to Mihaliç. What happened to them at Mihaliç was only by the grace of God and then, once again, they guided him over the straits to Gallipoli. We followed and sent men in pursuit of them from Edirne until they reached the town called Eski,³⁸ where they seized him and, at my command, hanged him by the neck. What troubles these were! Well, this was the noble wish of Almighty God. You did what you did in the hope that we shall defeat the enemy. Well, from today, may God the Praised the Exalted, out of His grace and favour, grant us ease in gaining victory and may He utterly rout the abject infidels. From now on we must prepare our troops.'

35 The reference is to Murad II's uncle, Musa. During the Ottoman civil war (1402–13) Musa had ruled in Rumelia from 1411 until his defeat and death at the hands of Murad's father Mehmed I. During Musa's reign in Rumelia, the Rumelian marcher lords had deserted him and gone over to the service of his brother Mehmed.

36 The reference is to Mustafa 'the Impostor', son of Bayezid I and uncle of Murad II. He disappeared after his father's defeat by Timur at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, probably as a prisoner of Timur. He reappeared in the west in 1416 when he made an unsuccessful attempt to seize power in Rumelia. He took refuge in the Byzantine city of Thessaloniki. On the accession of Murad II in 1421, the Byzantine Emperor released him and he took control of Rumelia for a few months in that year. He crossed the straits to Anatolia to confront his nephew Murad, but suffered a defeat and returned to Rumelia with Murad in pursuit. Murad caught up with him and hanged him as a common criminal, declaring him to be an impostor and not an Ottoman prince. In Ottoman historiography, he became known as Mustafa the Impostor. This passage refers to these events in 1421–22

37 Bayezid Pasha, Grand Vizier to Murad II's father Mehmed I (1413–21). When Mustafa 'the Impostor' declared himself sultan in Rumelia in 1421, Murad sent Bayezid Pasha to confront him at Edirne. The Rumelian lords deserted Bayezid Pasha on the battlefield, and Bayezid himself was killed.

38 Babaeski (Turkey).

So saying, he gave the command, and they summoned Fazlullah Efendi into the presence of the Padishah. Fazlullah came and kissed the ground and, as he stood ready for service, the Padishah ordered that decrees be sent to the kadis, commanding each one of them to levy salaried troops and to send them as rapidly as possible to Sofia. ‘Şahin Bey and the two of you’, he continued, ‘should take command and inspect the troops as they arrive, overlooking no one. In the present circumstances, this campaign is an obligation incumbent on all Muslims, while it is an obligation on us to provide for their needs and salaries, as it is my wish that the salaried irregulars should form a disciplined troop and not be all mixed up like a black man’s hair. You should organise them all. Ömer Kethüda and Bıçakçı Reis should also come and learn what is happening.’

The Padishah gave the command summoning these two men, and he clothed them in robes of honour. Then he ordered Turahan Bey to come and, when he arrived, they held long consultations. The Padishah the Refuge of the World was not pleased with what they said, but because Turahan was an experienced veteran, they paid no attention. Then the Padishah once again commanded that decrees be written to the judges as follows:

This holy war is an obligation on all who live in Rumelia, great or small, whether on foot or on horse. When my imperial command arrives, you and the agent I am sending should together levy from their houses the inhabitants of each of your judicial districts, and send them quickly to Sofia, the capital of Rumelia. You should not neglect this matter, but act according to my command. It should be known that whoever accompanies us on this victory-crowned campaign and offers assistance out of love for the religion of Islam, my imperial assent has been granted for whatever it is they request. Whatever it is they wish – whether a timar or zeamet,³⁹ whether a post in the Janissaries or the household cavalry or whether release from *yürük*⁴⁰ status – I have accepted.

As the commands were written and sent out to every region, the troops of Islam began to come in bands from all directions.

One day, the Padishah of the Religion of Islam gave a command to bring Hacı Isa into his presence. Hacı Isa was found and brought before the Padishah’s council but because one of his arms was wounded, it was hanging from his neck in a sling. Now the Padishah of the World knew this Hacı Isa but pretended not to and asked: ‘Who is this young man, and why is his arm hanging from his neck?’ They replied: ‘This young man was with Hasanbeyzade when there was the clash with Yanko. Only this lad escaped, but he was wounded in the encounter. This is the young man called Hacı Isa, one of your valiant slaves.’ The Padishah gave the order and he was clothed in a kaftan. The Padishah treated him with kindness, honouring him with gifts and favours. Then as he said, ‘Come on! Get the troops ready!’, Hacı Isa went out and he began to assemble his following.

39 A timar was a smaller military fief, and a zeamet a large military fief.

40 *Yürük* is a general term for a Turkish nomad. The *yürüks* in the Balkans had the obligation to provide auxiliary military services to the Ottoman Sultan.

The city of Sofia is burned on the orders of the Padishah

Meanwhile the accursed Yanko had one day mounted his horse and set off for Sofia with the entire army of infidels who are as low as the dust. Kasim Pasha was stationed in that direction, keeping watch. One day, the guard came to announce: 'The infidel army is approaching! Do whatever you have to!' Kasim Bey and Turahan Bey went to look and realised that it would be impossible to fight these infidels. Turahan Bey at once mounted and, with a horse in reserve, galloped off to His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World. Immediately on arrival, he appeared before the Sultan and kissed the ground.

When the Padishah asked, 'Turahan, what is the matter? Tell me, why have you come?', Turahan Bey informed him that the infidels had left Şehiröy and were heading towards Sofia. When the Padishah asked him what should be done, Turahan replied: 'My Padishah, there is no way out of this. We are no match for these infidels. They cannot be resisted. All we can do is to leave this city and retreat. You should give the order to burn the city and its surrounding villages. My hope is that, when the infidels who are as low the dust enter the plain of Sofia, a storm will blow up and when they find no shelter, they will lose their hands and feet. After that the matter is simple. If there is no possibility of resisting them, this is the only solution.'

So the Padishah commanded everyone to take his family and belongings, and to set fire to the city and its villages. Now see what chaos and confusion there was! The people of Sofia willy-nilly took their families and possessions and, with sighs and sobbing, scattered in all directions. Meanwhile, Kasim Bey, on the orders of the Padishah, set fire to every part of Sofia and its surroundings, destroying even its hot springs. In short, it was such that mothers forgot their children. Not a straw was left in Sofia or its surrounds.

While this was going on, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World left with the main body of the army. Crossing the Kapulu Pass, he alighted at Tanrı Pınarı. The Padishah was extremely low-spirited and regretted what he had done. But for what purpose? What had happened had happened, and it grieved him night and day. 'Alas!' he worried, 'What a fate we have visited on fair Sofia! The man who told us to do this is not our friend. Alas! We acted without thinking when we followed the word of a man who is a calamity.' He suffered bitter pangs of conscience, but seeing that there was nothing to be done, he issued orders with the thought, 'It was God's decree.' While the Janissaries blocked the defiles, Kasim Pasha went past Akdanişman to Izladi⁴¹ and blocked the pass there.

Our story now returns to the King of Hungary, who was bringing up the rear of his army. One day, when he had crossed the Morava and entered Niš, he saw that the town had been burned to the ground and looked like a coal-black field. When the evil-doing King asked who had burned down the town, the accursed men who accompanied him replied: 'My King, it was the townspeople who burned it. They fled with their families and children.' Next day as they advanced, they saw that all

41 Zlatitsa.

the villages too had been burned. On the following day, they proceeded as far as Şehirköy, where the King was amazed to see that this town too had been burned to a cinder. When the King asked what this was all about, the accursed Despot replied: ‘My King, it is obvious what it is about. Only we are not giving a thought to how our venture will end. The Turk is using a trick to draw us into his clutches. The land on our right as far as Salonica is all in the hands of the Turk. On our left is the Tatar Khan,⁴² who has only to speak the word and within two days he will fall on us with two hundred thousand men. And then there is the son of Osman who will encounter us we know not when. The Turk is cunningly luring us into a trap, and we must not accept the treatment. Very well, my King, you are doing this above all for my sake. May you be honoured in the presence of the Lord Jesus and may Patreman Yandalus be your helper, but this affair will not turn out well. The rest is for you to decide.’

Now the accursed man called Yanko had that day returned with a mere handful of infidels to meet the King, and he came in during this speech. When he heard these words from the Despot, Yanko said: ‘Things are not as you make them out to be. The Turk has so terrified you that you imagine every oak tree you see is a Turk, and you try to frighten us too. Do you really think that after this the Turk will pull himself together and attack us? I have given the Turk a bloody nose. It is inconceivable that after today he will stand up to me and fight. The best thing to do now is to send letters to all the priests who are round about, and get them to help us and bring us food.’

This is what the King did. He wrote letters to the priests and to people who worshipped idols and the cross to the effect that, on the instructions of the Pope of Rome, if anyone refused to bring him assistance, he would kill them and take their wives and daughters prisoner. However, anyone who offered to help, by bringing and selling provisions or by acting as guides, would escape these perils. Matreman⁴³ Yandulus would be pleased with them, and Narnur would bring joy to their spirits. He wrote a great deal of such nonsense and despatched the letters. Most of the people in fact submitted to these accursed men. Some began to bring provisions to sell. Some mounted their horses and acted as guides. In short, that year they paid their jizya⁴⁴ to the infidels who are as low as the dust, and many of the subject infidels mounted their horses and joined Yanko’s army.

Now Yanko thought to himself: ‘It really is excellent that these people have mounted their horses and come to us. I will immediately form them into a contingent and send them ahead of us. If the Turks attack us they will make an excellent shield.’ He gave the command and the infidel subjects set off as a contingent. That day they crossed the Dragoman Pass and entered the plain of Sofia. When they arrived in the city of Sofia, they saw that it had been burned from end to end and turned into a blackened field. Its villages too were burned down and reduced to black charcoal. But whatever its state, these accursed men alighted and combed through the city with long spikes. Anything they found buried they dug up and plundered.

42 The Khan of the Crimea.

43 *Sic.* See note 13.

44 A tax payable by the non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim sovereign.

Then all the infidels collected in one spot and looked for a church, so that the priests could come in and conduct their infidel rites. They could not locate a church, but instead found the Siyavuş Pasha mosque and, since it used to be a church, they hung a great bell inside and lit candles all around. They brought the Metropolitan Bishop and, appointing him their priest, recited a lot of nonsense as their infidel rites required. Leaving the Bishop in charge of Sofia, they departed in the direction of Ermen-yolu. The Bishop, meanwhile, hung bells in that noble mosque and lit candles all around it, so that the infidels who are as low as the dust occasionally came to worship there.

Now the Pasha of Sofia was in Radomir, and one day he was told about what had happened. He at once became incandescent, gave orders to bring his horse immediately and, mounting at once, he set off for Sofia with his troops going on ahead. When he arrived, he knocked down the church door and either cut off the heads or gouged out the eyes of the priests, monks and infidels who were inside. They cut off the head of the dog called the Bishop, put it in a bag and turned to go. They handed the heads of the Bishop and of a few important men to a courier, who carried them to the Sultan. As soon as the Padishah saw the heads, he knew that all the subjects had given their allegiance to the infidels. He straightaway gave the order that whoever so wished could go and cut off the head of anyone they captured, whether *voy nuk*⁴⁵ or subject, who had supplied provisions to the infidels, seize their property and take their women and children prisoner.

When he gave the order – God is truly the greatest – every single one of those troops who had fled in terror from the infidels who are as low as the dust turned into a lion, as they set off in every direction. Whenever they reached a village, they slaughtered the men and took the women and children prisoner. They plundered the provisions in their stores and seized their property and sustenance. The result was that fodder which had been for sale in the army of the infidels who are as low as the earth for four *akçes*⁴⁶ was now selling at half an *esedi*,⁴⁷ and where ten eggs had cost one *akçe*, they were ready to pay an *esedi* for a single egg to bind a wound, but still could not find any. Among the troops of Islam, however, a portion of fodder which had been sold for half an *esedi* fell to three *akçes*, and where one egg had cost ten *akçes*, ten eggs now cost one. The subjects of Sofia and Radomir were crushed beneath the horses' hooves, and whoever presented the Padishah with a head received a bonus of five gold florins.

One day His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World summoned Uzunkarioğlu into his presence and gave the order: 'Go and bring me an informant from the Hungarian infidels, but make sure that it is not an infidel from Sofia!' With the words, 'The command belongs to my Sultan!', Uzunkarioğlu mounted and rode in the direction of the infidels. He emboldened his companions with words of encouragement and they too set out. When evening fell, they encamped in the open

45 A non-Muslim auxiliary serving in the Ottoman army.

46 An Ottoman silver coin.

47 Presumably a Bohemian silver pfennig, stamped with a lion.

country and delayed their march until morning. In the morning, they mounted their horses and continued. That night a mist had fallen so thick that they could scarcely make each other out and, as they continued on their way, unable to see for the fog, they found themselves among the ranks of the infidels. At that moment, on God's command a wind blew up and the mist lifted.

As soon as the infidels saw them, they attacked from all directions. Uzunkarioğlu realised that it was too late and that he was drowned in a sea of calamities. He brandished his lance and, preparing himself for death, struck the infidels such a blow that he drove their ranks one into the other, but as he was opening up a way through their ranks, by God's decree, his horse stumbled and fell dead, trapping his arm beneath it. Try as he may, he could not stand up. Meanwhile, the accursed ones had come up to him and made Uzunkarioğlu a miserable captive in chains. They put him in a cart, and said to one another as they were bringing him to the evil-doing King: 'Has this Turk gone out of his mind? How can two thousand men stand up to such a mighty army? But he tried and now he's been caught.' As they spoke, an important man from the army of infidels who are as low as the dust spoke up: 'It would have been better if he had not come and got caught. We have seized him with a lot of soldiers, that is true, but at the expense of how many Christian troops? Do you not see how corpse is piled on corpse? It was through the help of Lord Jesus and the grace of Narnur that his horse fell. You have seen what would have happened to you if it had not fallen, how many heads he would have cut off, and what else he would have done! And at the end of it he would still have got away! Not one of you had the courage so much as to seize him from behind, let alone to go up beside him. Our Kings did not listen to what the Despot Župan had to say, but these Turks will do something to us like nothing else.'

Now it happened that Uzunkarioğlu knew their language and, when he heard these words, he thought to himself: 'My end is near, but at least let me start a fire in these infidels' hearts.' Then the infidels who are as low as the dust took Uzunkarioğlu to Yanko. Yanko raised his head and said: 'I am going to ask you a few things. You should answer well and truthfully. If you do not tell the truth, I shall finish you off.' To this Uzunkarioğlu replied: 'I shall tell you when the King of Hungary, the Despot and Yanko – all three of them – are together in one place, then I shall tell you. But I will not tell you now, and if you like, you can cut me into ear-sized pieces.' When he had finished speaking, Yanko said: 'This Turk has some important information. Just take him to the King!'

They immediately took Uzunkarioğlu away and brought him before the King. Yanko came with them and, when he had recounted Uzunkarioğlu's exploits to the King, he added that he had said that he would not tell anything to him, but rather to the King. So the King, the Despot and Yanko assembled and asked about the Padishah and his troops. Now listen to what Uzunkarioğlu said, as he opened his mouth like a honey pot: 'Long live our Padishah! He is on the other side of the pass you are coming to and, to answer your question about his troops, the slaves of the Porte – that is his Janissaries – are with him, and so are all the troops of Rumelia. And the vanguard of the Anatolian troops is advancing in a continuous stream, wave

upon wave, division upon division. In brief, leaving aside the troops from Anatolia, there are more than three times a hundred thousand troops from Rumelia alone. And why do you ask me about the Padishah? Do you not know? Has the Padishah never come to your land? Think of what he did to the Great King⁴⁸ and of what he did to the Despot's father! You will flee before him, as a sheep flees before a lion. If you are a man, go through this pass and then you will see what mothers have brought forth!

Then he added: 'My King, do not take offence at what I have said. Whatever I have spoken is the truth. I have added nothing and I have taken nothing away. In a few days all will be clear. You imagine that the Padishah is fleeing from you. You do not know that he has done to you what he was going to do. Now you have come this far, you have forgotten what is behind you. In three or four days' time he will block all the passes in your rear. You should understand that the burned-out towns that you saw were torched to lure you here, not because you were feared. You have reached here safely, but I do not know how you can continue. You rely on your carts, hoping that the House of Osman will attack them so that you can drive them back with cannon and arquebus. But do you not know that they have tumbled to this trick of yours and will not approach the carts? No, they will surround you completely, out of range of the guns, and stay there until you are reduced to eating one another. And do not tell me that you are going to turn back and run away. It will do you no good, because I know that the passes are blocked. Even if you were a bird, flying would be impossible.

'Now if you ask me why I came, I wagered before the sultan that – yes – I would go with my own lads to fight Yanko. I would either capture him alive or cut off his head; or at least I would seize a few of his Dukes and Bans. But because it was foggy I could not see the way, and as I entered between your ranks, at God's command, the mist lifted. Destiny upset my plans. But praise be to God the All the Praised the All High, my corpse is not alone. I need not mourn my own death when I have brought so many infidels who are as low as the dust to the ground like autumn leaves. What is more, if my horse had not stumbled, I would have got clean away. But such is the will of God, my horse tripped, I was injured, my arm was trapped beneath the animal, and you and Yanko are now boasting about it. But Yanko could not withstand me. His ranks trampled over each other and fell all over him. As it is, a thousand of your men were killed for each one of us. How will you find it when there are ten of us for each one of you?'

He spoke like this for a long time, scaring the wits out of the infidels to the point that they did not know what to do. As Uzunkarioğlu Hızır Bey continued they became more and more perturbed: 'Look, my King, you did not like what I had to say, but it might well be that one day you will remember these words of mine and bless me copiously, repenting what you did and regretting bitterly that you failed to act on my words, because there is not a man among you capable of giving a reply to the son of Osman. This is how I understand things. Now you do whatever you think is best.' So saying, he fell silent and they took him out.

48 Sigismund, King of Hungary (1387–1437) and Holy Roman Emperor (1433–37).

Then the accursed Yanko spoke: ‘This fellow has certainly given us some good information, but what he is really doing is talking up his side.’ In reply, the Despot said: ‘This fellow has a lot to say and there is something in every word he speaks. Because so long as the son of Osman’s Porte and the slaves of his Porte are with him, it is difficult to give him a reply. I have said this much, and you paid no attention, but now you must heed what I have to say. I have it from my father what sort of a vampire this son of Osman is.’ When he had spoken, the accursed Yanko said: ‘I shall find the son of Osman, wherever he is, and smash him once and for all. You just watch and follow me. The son of Osman can do whatever he is able. After all this, it would not do not to fight him.’ At this, everyone dispersed to their tents for the night. On the following morning, they all got up and marched straight towards the pass.

In the meantime, the Padishah had received the news that the infidels were nearing the pass. He at once summoned his lords and emboldened them with commands and words of admonition. That night the Padishah did not go into his tent but slept in the open. In the morning he stationed the Anatolian troops on his right and the Rumelians on his left, arranging the army of Islam from end to end in proper order.

The accursed Yanko, meanwhile, advanced with the King behind him. When Yanko looked and saw the infantry, he quickly got down from the cart, mounted his horse and attacked them. God is greatest – the infantry, with cries of ‘Allah! Allah!’, showered arrows. When the Padishah of the World saw this, he shouted out, ‘What are you waiting for!’, and at once the war-drums were beaten, the pipes began to wail and the trumpets to bray, while the cymbals left the field a-tremble and the kettle-drums thundered. Here and there, banners were unfurled, once again the battle-cry was raised, and the troops of Islam fell upon the enemy. God is greatest – that day the sun came up deep red from the vapour of blood. Many men attained their desire for the Next World by drinking the sweet draught of martyrdom, and many achieved their earthly desires by cutting off heads and spilling blood. In brief, as the azabs⁴⁹ and Janissaries gathered in one place and fought valiantly for the sake of Islam, the accursed Yanko saw that there was no way forward. He urged his horse through to the front rank and, as he was encouraging the infidels who are as low as the dust, a lead bullet from the army of Islam struck his horse. At that moment he crashed to the ground with his horse and weapons, like a dog falling off the roof of a bazaar. The warriors of Islam struck him with arrows, but they could not penetrate him. Many young heroes took their swords to him, but God did not grant it to them to cut him open, because that unbeliever was clad in pure iron. Eventually, a few thousand infidels fell upon him and saved him by the skin of his teeth. Many of those wretched men fell to earth in the fray, and one of the accursed man’s black standards was captured, together with his grey horse and its trappings. They turned the standard upside down and brought it with the horse to the Padishah, who gave them a reward. The battle continued like this until evening. Then, as the sun set and night fell, the drum for rest was beaten. Sergeants went between the two armies and the two troops were separated from each other. But the Padishah commanded: ‘Everyone should

49 These were infantrymen levied for the space of a campaign.

remain where they are and not move.’ The army of Islam did not stir until morning, but stayed where it was.

Our story now returns to the infidels, who that night retired defeated. They gathered around the King and said: ‘My King, now it has happened to us. We were told that the son of Osman had fled. What sort of a flight is this? Today they made us drink poison by the bowlful. They almost captured alive a great hero like Yanko. As it turned out, we saved Yanko, but a great many Christian folk have departed to Narnur. What is more, they have taken a grey horse from Yanko’s train, and carried off one of his black standards and overturned it. Most fortunate King, it turns out that the Turk’s infantrymen are a terrible trial for us, the likes of which have never been seen. In the face of a hundred thousand assaults and a hundred thousand blows, not one of them moved, not one of them even blinked. Until now we have never seen warriors like this. What we must do now is to leave our carts where they are and tonight stop fighting and flee. Otherwise, if we start to fight again in the morning, not one of us will be left alive.’ The others replied, ‘Hear! Hear!’, and began to weep.

A little later, an infidel came in and bowed his head before the Despot. When he told the Despot how things were, the Despot said: ‘I knew that you would face disaster if you came this far. But what has happened has happened.’ When the others said, ‘But what should we do now?’, the Despot answered: ‘The thing to do is for the King and our carts to depart from here. Meanwhile, we shall confront the son of Osman with forty- or fifty thousand Christian warriors so that he will not be able to catch up with the most fortunate King and do him harm.’ When he had spoken, everyone had something to say.

To return to the Padishah of the World, he called his Janissary slaves into his presence and spoke: ‘Tomorrow is the day of battle. Let me see what you can do, and all this treasure of mine is yours. Do the job and I will drown you in gold and silver.’ As he spoke, all the slaves bowed their heads, and as they said, ‘Long life to our Padishah! Tomorrow, God willing, we shall give the infidels who are as low as the dust such a beating that in time it will pass into legend’, the Padishah of the World raised his hand, emboldening and bestowing his blessings on all of them.

Then the Padishah summoned the commanders and, with them, Ömer Kethüda. They all came and stood humbly with heads bowed. The Padishah of the World clothed each one of them in a robe of honour and asked how they were. Then he said: ‘Tomorrow is a royal battle. Let me see how you perform.’ Each one of them bowed his head again and, saying, ‘It is for the Padishah to command. We shall fight until each one of us is cut to pieces’, went out. Then the Padishah summoned his lords. When he had issued the command for all sanjak governors and all governors-general to come, all these lords assembled in his presence and bowed their heads. ‘Tomorrow at dawn,’ he said, ‘the royal battle, the imperial battle begins. Let me see you performing like men. We must show these infidels who are as low as the dust what they are worth. Our dead will be martyrs, the rest of us will be blessed.’ But however much the Padishah of the World admonished these men, not one of them spoke a word or uttered a sound. They simply stood looking at one another. When the Padishah of the World saw them like this, he knew that no good would come of

them, and so raised his face to the throne of God and offered a silent prayer, thinking in his heart: 'If my slaves the Janissaries and azabs stand firm, the enemy – God willing – will be routed. God willing, when this affair is over, I shall punish these lords. I shall execute some and the others I shall banish.'

When morning came, both sides drew up their ranks. The Padishah looked on and saw that the infantry were treating the enemy as of no account and advancing against them rank on rank. When he saw this he raised his hands to pray for blessings on his Janissaries and azabs. He gave the command and the batons struck the war-drums. The drums began to groan, the cry of 'Allah! Allah!' went up, and arrows rained on the infidels who are as low as the dust. Some they shot with arquebuses, tearing their entrails apart. God is the greatest of the great, that day there was such a battle that father could not recognise son, nor son father. Hands, feet, ears, noses littered the ground like chippings from Habib the Carpenter.⁵⁰ The accursed Yanko observed this, but could do nothing. Willy-nilly the infidels took to the shelter of their carts and prepared cannon and arquebus.

Now at this moment Turahan Bey appeared before the Padishah and, bowing his head to the ground, said: 'My Padishah, the infidels who are as low as the dust have withdrawn their troops to the carts and are standing ready to fight to the death. Give the command to the troops of Islam to retreat, because if we attack the infidels, they will dig in between the carts and kill our soldiers with cannon and arquebus fire. Then things will become difficult for us.' His words persuaded the Padishah, and the Padishah the Refuge of the World ordered the sergeants to go between the ranks and to turn back the troops of Islam just as the infidels who are as low as the dust were at their last gasp.

The Padishah of the World realised too late that there was mischief in Turahan Bey's mind and that he should have sent troops forward to block the passes. When he heard that no one had gone, he said: 'Nothing will happen until I go myself!' However, the infidels who are as low as the dust seized the opportunity. That night they departed and pitched their camp after crossing the River Sofia at the village of Kerman. Next day they did not linger but set off again. In the meantime the Padishah had departed in felicity and hurried in pursuit of the infidels who are as low as the dust. Spies meanwhile had told the King: 'The Turkish troops are about to catch up and attack you. Prepare to defend yourself!'

As they spoke they saw that the troops of Islam had indeed caught up. The evil-doing King immediately called up his men like donkeys, and they quickly chained their carts together to make a wagenburg. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World commanded an assault on the infidels who are as low as the dust, to finish off the enemies of our religion once and for all. With the words, 'It is for our Padishah to command!', the ranks were drawn up, with everyone, horse and foot, in their proper position in the right line, ready and prepared, waiting for the signal. The miserable infidels meanwhile mounted their horses and came out from the wagenburg. As the

50 A figure from Muslim mythology, identified with the man in Qur'an 36.13ff who warns the people of a city not to reject three apostles that God had sent.

accursed man called Yanko was urging on his horse, the Padishah gave the order. There was a shout of 'Allah! Allah!' and, on every side, the batons struck the war-drums. The noise of music, the banging of kettle-drums and the clamour of heroes' breasts filled the plain of Sofia from end to end. On every side the warriors drew their fiery swords with intent to wage holy war and to attack the infidels. They launched such an attack on the infidels who are as low as the dust that they were like a hungry wolf among a flock of sheep or a burning fire in a dry reed-bed.

When the accursed Yanko saw this, he grunted like a pig. With the words, 'Come on! What are you doing? You have brought shame on Narnur! Patreman Yandulus will turn his face from you!', he urged on his horse and gave encouragement to the infidels who are as low as the dust. When the Padishah the Refuge of the World saw what that infidel was doing, he spurred his horse and went forward in felicity. God is the greatest of the great: as the infidels who are as low as the earth began to fall like autumn leaves, they lost the power to resist and had to pile themselves panting into their wagenburgs and prepare to fight with cannon and arquebus. The warriors of Islam, however, paid no attention to the infidels' guns and, like lions that have tasted blood, assaulted their fortification from every side.

Now just as the infidels who are as low as the dust had given up firing their cannons and arquebuses and every one of them was worrying only for his own skin, on our side Turahan Bey galloped up and bowed his head before the Padishah. 'My Padishah,' he said, 'order the troops of Islam to withdraw from this wagenburg. These accursed infidels are treacherous, and unless our men withdraw, they will fire their guns, the troops of Islam will be routed, and those accursed men will sally forth from the wagenburg and set upon us. Then what will we have left to defend ourselves with against all of them?' When he had spoken, the Padishah replied: 'Turahan, what you say is wrong. I can see with my own eyes that the enemy does not have the strength to fire either cannon or arquebus. You are out of your mind.' To this Turahan replied: 'My Padishah, cut off my head so that I do not have to witness this disgrace before I die. I know how the thing will end. Look, my Padishah, there is no one older than me among your lords. There may be one among your Anatolian slaves, but they do not know the treachery and deceitfulness of these infidels. My Padishah, you cannot strike the target with hope alone. The wise act slowly and with caution, the foolish in anger and in haste. Think what this will lead to, my Padishah. You will suffer for this, or you will unless you let the words of this old man be your sovereign remedy.' He spoke at length in this way.

Now the Padishah knew that the infidels who are as low as the dust lacked the strength to resist, but he thought to himself: 'If things turn out as I said, fine; but if they do not, people will say that the Padishah's word cannot be trusted. The best thing is to pull back our troops and see what God Most High ordains.' So he commanded the troops of Islam to withdraw. Sergeants immediately went among the ranks and with difficulty separated the troops who were at the height of their fury. Everyone returned to his tent, some cursing Turahan and some cursing whoever was responsible for this. They had, however, plundered many of the carts of the infidels who are as low as the earth. As for the infidels, they could breathe again and, offering

many thanks to Patreman Yandulus, they encamped abject and defeated. May God the Praised, the All High, the Glorious, whose gifts are universal, with His generosity, beneficence and favour, always leave them abject and defeated. May he make the troops of Islam ever victorious and triumphant, for the sake of the Seal of Prophecy His beloved messenger Muhammad Mustafa – may God bless him and give him peace; for the Honour of the Tablet and the Pen; for the honour of the Treasure of the Throne; for the honour of the Pure Innocents and the Grazing Beasts; and for the sake of power and glory; O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Possessor of Glory and Munificence. When evening came, the infidels who are as low as the dust took flight, crossed the Şehirköy Pass and pitched camp on the plain of Şehirköy. However, the accursed infidels had left a large number of infantrymen in the pass to block the troops of Islam when they came after them, and there they waited in ambush.

In the meantime the Padishah the Lord of the World spoke to Turahan Bey. ‘Look here, Turahan,’ he said, ‘you have ruined our plans and now the damage is done. You withdrew our forces and let the infidels who are as low as the dust escape scot-free. Tonight they will seize the opportunity to cross the Şehirköy Pass, and what do you propose to do about this?’ Turahan replied: ‘My Padishah, stay here in delight and felicity. We are the slaves of the Padishah. Just give the command and we will strike the enemy such a blow that not one of them will escape.’

The Padishah commanded all the lords and timar-holders to go, and Mahmud Bey son of Ibrahim Pasha,⁵¹ Hasan Pasha and Turahan Bey all set off in pursuit of the infidels who are as low as the dust. However, there was not a well left in any of the places where the infidels had pitched their camp which they had not stuffed up with corpses. Where there were no wells, they had lit great fires and thrown the corpses into the flames to burn, so that the Turks should not see what they had suffered.

But to return to our story, the lords and troops of Islam pursued the infidels and, as they approached the pass, the lords stopped to deliberate, in case the infidels had laid an ambush in the pass. As they were drawing up plans to go together by a road to the north of the village of Dragoman and to send men to investigate the pass, Turahan came up and asked what they were discussing. When they had told him of their decision, Turahan – that man was not a lord, he was a black disaster – upset their plans by saying: ‘What are you thinking of? Do you imagine fugitive soldiers will lay an ambush? You are sneaking off like this before you have even seen the enemy. Can you not see what I am going to do to you?’ As they marched fearlessly into the pass, the accursed ones who were lying in ambush rained down arquebus fire which they were powerless to resist. Everyone turned and fled, but Mahmud Bey son of Ibrahim Pasha was an honourable lord. Instead of fleeing he put up such a vigorous fight that the infidels were powerless against him.

Mahmud Bey was left on his own. Seeing that the battle was over and wishing to escape with his life, he spurred on his horse, but mistook the road and came to an inhospitable place which he could not cross on horseback. He dismounted at once

⁵¹ Mahmud Bey was brother of the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha and brother-in-law of the Sultan.

but a group of those accursed infidels noticed that he was a great man and eagerly fell on him, like a herd of swine. Mahmud Bey felled a lot of them, but there was no way out. A single hand cannot clap and a single stone does not make a wall. The accursed ones did what they had to do and took that hero prisoner. No one thought that Mahmud Bey was the Sultan's son-in-law and turned back to help him. No, they allowed him to be captured.

For their part, the infidels took Mahmud Bey and stripped him, leaving him without a scrap – O my God, protect us from those who talk of it – and led him thence to the King's tent. As the Despot, the King and Yanko were sitting there wondering what they should do to stop the Turks striking them, Yanko boasted: 'What can the Turks do to us that we have to fear?' To this the King replied: 'Do not talk nonsense! If the Turk had ordered his men to continue the attack yesterday, neither of us would be here today. The Turks would have licked us up like salt. And why did you not give the order to fire the cannon and arquebus that you had ready? Guns – whether cannon or arquebus – cannot fire themselves. They need men! I wonder what hole you had stuck your head into at that moment?'

Just as the King was scolding Yanko, the infidels came through the door and announced: 'Good news, my King! The Turk has been routed and one of his lords captured.' But the King replied: 'It does not matter whether one lord has been captured or ten, those Turks cannot be beaten. You are speaking nonsense. By now we have captured several of their lords, but they have still felled as many Christians as there are hairs in their beards. All right, you have captured a lord, but God knows how many Christians have been lost. Come on, bring him in and let us look at him!'

They brought in Mahmud Bey. The King ordered all his Bans, Dukes and Captains to greet him, and they all rose in his honour. They set up a throne and Mahmud Bey took his place. But he was naked. He was not a lord, he was not even a cameleer, so the King gave the command and they at once brought sumptuous clothes and dressed him from head to foot. They asked him who he was and whom he served. Mahmud Bey replied: 'I am Mahmud Bey, son of Ibrahim Pasha. My brother is the Grand Vizier, Halil Pasha.' When he had spoken, the Despot ordered: 'Bring Mahmud Bey a saddled horse! Have another tent set up for the lord! Provide him with twenty servants and all necessities!'

They put Mahmud Bey on the horse and he rode to his tent. The Despot accompanied him and they sat down together in the tent. The Despot asked Mahmud Bey how he was and then said to him: 'Keep your spirits up, I shall soon reunite you with your family and people. You are a great man. Wherever you go, your station in life is obvious, and I have received many favours from your father. I am not a man to disregard my religion by forgetting favours.' Flattering him with a fox-like cunning, the Despot continued: 'My son, beware of thinking that these Christians have been defeated. Far from being defeated, they are not in the slightest bit afraid. I am the one who has been terrifying them day and night, and this is why they retreated. Otherwise Filibe could not have held out against them, nor Edirne, nor Bursa. But anyway, I persuaded them to turn back, because I have enjoyed many favours from

the House of Osman.' He spoke many such words – hundreds and thousands of them – because that unbeliever was hatching a plot.

Mahmud Bey listened to all this vile man had to say and then lifted his head and began to speak: 'All right, let us suppose that everything you have said is true, and that you are a friend of the House of Osman. But what about all these Kings who have come with you – the Czechs and Poles, the Župan Yanko, you yourself the Župan Despot, the King himself and the Captain of the Franks?⁵² Are not all these Župans here as well?' The Despot replied: 'Certainly they are here.' 'You say that not a single person has turned back?' The Despot said: 'No, no one has turned back.' 'Now my good man, you say that these infidels have not been defeated. Well, if they have not been defeated, what has become of your troops without number? Have they ascended into heaven or what? Do you think that I am green and do not know anything? Do not look down on me. I have known soldiers and war ever since I was small. But you, you experience war only once every few years, when you have to. We see off one or two enemies in a single year. As it is, about two-thirds of your troops who came against our land were fodder for the sword, and the heads of some have rolled before the Padishah. As for the ones who escaped with their heads, some have been stuffed down wells, some have filled up the streams, and some have been incinerated. You did this so that the House of Osman would not see the rout and be aware of what has happened. But you should know that the wise put you in the balance each day and weigh you, hundredweight by hundredweight, pound by pound and ounce by ounce. Well, I may not know a thing, but in return for the goodness you have shown me, let me just say this. If you succeed in crossing the Morava safely, whether in defeat or in good order, you will have done well merely to have saved your skins. Because, from what I understand, the purpose of sending us to this pass with five- or six thousand men is that we should catch up with you and, in the darkness of dawn, turn back pretending to fight, while [...]'⁵³ each person should walk for ten hours, stopping nowhere. If the animals pulling any of our carts become tired and stop, then, for the love of Jesus, everything in the cart should be plundered and the cart burned.' With this repeated command, they withdrew in the early evening, miserable and dejected, watching their backs all the time.

Meanwhile, the troops of Islam had been routed in the battle at the pass and had scattered, with father ashamed to look at son. The Anatolian troops came to the imperial encampment with Turahan and the governor of Anatolia. Everyone sat there silent and ashamed, each one withdrawn into his own world. The Padishah the Refuge of the World, however, believed that these men had come having achieved something, and when he asked, 'When are we to hear the good news?', they replied: 'My Padishah, our troops were routed as they were pursuing the enemy – may your life be spared – and Mahmud Bey was captured.' When the Padishah asked, 'Which of the soldiers has come here?', and received the answer, 'All of them are here', he became angry and said: 'Bring me those Anatolian dogs!' They were at once

52 In Islamic usage, the term 'Franks' serves as a general word for western Europeans.

53 A folio is missing in the manuscript.

brought into his presence, and he commanded his Chief Door-keepers:⁵⁴ ‘Beat these wretches!’ Now, my friend, some of them received a beating, some of them had their hair and beards shaved off, and some had their fiefs confiscated and given to others. Each one of them was humiliated in some way or other.

Next day the Padishah mounted his horse and set off for Edirne, halting nowhere. He continued without stopping and without showing favour to any of the lords. He never even looked them in the face. One day, when he had encamped near Edirne, the people of the city heard of his arrival, and all of them, great and small, came out to meet the Padishah. He asked all of them how they were and granted favours to each one according to his station. He established himself upon the throne according to custom, and saw to the welfare of the poor and helpless, and then devoted himself to pleasure and good company.

Now the infidels who are as low as the dust did not stop where they were but, defeated and overwhelmed, and in a state of abject misery, they continued their march day and night until they reached Parakin. They crossed the Morava river in fear and trembling, sending out spies in all directions to make sure that the army of Islam had not blocked their path. When they had gone as far as the Kapulu Pass, they abandoned all the booty that they had plundered, together with the provisions and everything else that they had purchased for cash. They went through weeping bitterly and crying aloud, with brother abandoning brother and father son, making a feast for dogs that had been left hungry for days in the towns and villages.

To sum up, when they crossed the Morava, the evil-doing King gave the command and they brought a great number of sheep and oxen to slaughter as a sacrifice. They staged a great celebration and, as they approached Belgrade like this, as if they had just been reborn, the infidels of Belgrade came out to meet them. Then, however, they noticed that there was not a single one of the returning heroes who did not bear a mark. Some lacked an arm and some a foot; some had no nose and some no ears. As they paraded by half naked, some blind and some lame, the infidels of Belgrade saw them in this state and assumed, because many had left and few returned, that they had achieved great things and fought great battles, seizing all Rumelia and garrisoning castles. Of the soldiers that had left, at least half had not returned, and they assumed that the ones who had come back were simply the ones who were of no use. Everyone dispersed to their houses, believing that, whatever else had happened, the Turks had been removed. When morning came they realised what had been their fate.

A few days after the evil-doing King had entered Belgrade, he gave the order for all his Bans and Dukes to assemble. They began their deliberations and everybody said his piece until it was the Despot’s turn to speak. The accursed Despot opened his mouth to speak: ‘What you are all saying is so much hot air’, he said. ‘I knew how this venture would turn out and I told you over and over again. But what can I do? Nobody paid any attention to me. The Župan Yanko went so far as to insult me and to

54 Officers of the Ottoman palace, responsible for guarding the entrance to the palace and for carrying out punishments and executions.

upset my plans, claiming that because the Turk is my son-in-law I was wielding the sword on his behalf and trying to frighten you. I still maintain that this is why things have turned out the way they have. Narnur is still our helper and we have reached Belgrade alive, but we shall not continue to be so lucky. We have trodden on the tail of a sleeping dragon and, come the spring, the Turk will make Belgrade our prison, seize our sons and daughters and inflict fresh wounds on our old ones. We must do something about this straightaway. The Turk was a little wary of us at first, but now he has tweaked our beard and does not rate us very highly. So whatever you are going to do, do it straightaway.'

When the Despot had finished it was the evil-doing King's turn to speak: 'The best thing', he said, 'would be to send out letters to all and sundry, to collect troops and to despatch spies to the land of the Turks. They can find out how many troops the Turks are sending against us and report back. If they are not, we shall order a general levy and leave Yanko in Belgrade, while we go to encounter the Turks. If Narnur helps us and we defeat the Turks, we shall summon Yanko from Belgrade, pursue them and exterminate the lot. Then we shall go forward to seize Edirne and occupy Rumelia from end to end.'

Yanko applauded the King's plan. 'My King,' he said, 'this is as it should be.' The King looked at the Despot again and said: 'What do you say to this?' The Despot replied: 'My King your plan is excellent, but we need to consider how many days it will take for our troops to be ready, if you start enrolling them from today.' They made the calculation, and when they replied, 'Our troops will be ready in six months', the Despot said: 'My King, how long is it until the summer when the grass begins to grow?' They replied that it was fifty or sixty days. To this the Despot retorted: 'The Turks will not wait until we have raised the troops and are ready and prepared. You can be certain that they will be here in fifty, sixty or seventy days' time. The Turks, you see, made preparations this winter. They will look at the grass and, as soon as it begins to sprout, they will be upon us. They would be attacking now except that, unlike us, the Turks do not miscalculate. They know that, if they attacked now, we would remove some of the hay and barley from our villages and burn the rest, and what would their animals eat then? That is why they are waiting for summer. You saw how they burned all the towns and villages because we went in winter, and what shortages we suffered.'

When the Despot had spoken at length, the King said: 'We suffered the way we did because we did not listen to what you said at the outset. You are a venerable old man and Narnur's beloved slave. But what has happened has happened. Now we must find a way out. See to it for us.' When he had spoken, the accursed Despot said: 'This is what you should do now. You should be on your guard and still send agents to all parts to collect troops. Then we should hold great banquets for that Turk in my captivity, give him horses, piles of gold and robes, and set him free. Once he has gone, we should between us appoint ambassadors and seek to pacify the son of Osman. The three of us should humbly beseech him to forgive our wrongdoing. We

should ask for Güğercinlik⁵⁵ and Semendire⁵⁶ on my behalf. I hope that our words will persuade the son of Osman, because they are a merciful people. They do not strike the person who begs for mercy and they do not pursue the fugitive. You have seen it for yourself. If Narnur shows us his favour and we make peace with the son of Osman, nothing like this will happen. If he gives us Semendire, fine. If he does not, well, that is fine too. Just let him be at peace with us.'

All of them approved this plan. They set Mahmud Bey free after bestowing on him innumerable gifts and horses with richly adorned saddles. He went straight to His Majesty the Padishah. Meanwhile, the infidels who are as low as the dust prepared gifts and sent a few unbelievers to His Majesty the Padishah. These unbelievers went on their way, eating and drinking and stage by stage.

Meanwhile, the Padishah the Refuge of the World was holding a council one day, and seeing to the affairs of the poor and humble, when his attention fell on Turahan Bey. He at once ordered Baltaoğlu to seize Turahan and bring him to the council. On receiving the decree the Head Door-keeper seized Turahan Bey and imprisoned him on the Sultan's order. However, the governor-general of Rumelia, Kasim Pasha, spoke at length to the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha, telling him: 'This Turahan has his fellow conspirators. These should be punished as well.' To this Halil replied: 'Look, my brother Pasha, if the head goes, the foot goes with it.' 'In which case,' said Kasim Pasha, 'remove me from Rumelia and bestow it on someone else. Long life to the Padishah, we shall not be out of office for long.' When he had spoken, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World granted Rumelia to Şahin Pasha and gave the order: 'Take Turahan and imprison him in the castle at Tokat!' The Head Door-keeper took Turahan and imprisoned him in the castle at Tokat.

But to return to our story, the infidels who are as low as the dust had freed and sent off Mahmud Pasha and one day he appeared in Edirne. The Padishah of the World was delighted and asked him what had happened and how he had escaped. Mahmud Pasha told the Padishah, blow by blow, everything that he had seen and heard, and he and the Padishah engaged in pleasant conversation.

One day, too, the ambassadors from the infidels entered Edirne and went to the Pashas to beg for favours. These, however, gave no encouragement and showed no favours. A few days later, the ambassadors appeared before His Excellency Halil Pasha. They begged him and implored him, kissing his hand and his hem, but for three days he paid them no attention, telling them: 'I have no power to deal with this matter or to bring it up before the Sultan. My Padishah is angry with the infidels, so do you really expect him to listen? The troops of Islam have gathered, wave after wave, to form a mighty army. The Padishah is not going to disband this army before he has clashed with the accursed ones.' He tormented them like this for three more days. However, Halil Pasha had in fact informed the Padishah the Refuge of the World that the ambassadors had arrived and were begging for peace, and when they again implored him with heads bowed, Halil Pasha said: 'All right, for

55 Golubac.

56 Smederovo.

your sake I shall bring it up with my Padishah.’ One day, he admitted them to the Padishah’s council and made them kiss the ground. Then he said to His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World: ‘My Padishah, these people are ambassadors, and ambassadors should never be held responsible. My Padishah, these men are in our trust. We must give them their reply and send them on their way.’

At the command, he took their letter and it was read out. It read: ‘My Padishah, you who are the Sultan of Mecca and Medina: I who am the King of Hungary of the line of Anushirevan.⁵⁷ My sovereign, we did what we did out of ignorance, and we have confessed to our faults. Whatever we may have done, you should not do the same. Your mercy is whole and complete. My Padishah, if you do not spare us, at least spare the people so that they are not trodden underfoot. It is true that we behaved shamelessly, but now we know our limits. Our request to you is simply that you should make a gift of Semendire and Güğercinlik to the great Despot; that henceforth you will be our friend; and that our merchants should go back and forth as before. We shall be friend to your friend and enemy to your enemy.’ With this the letter came to a conclusion.

When the Padishah had heard the letter, the embassy presented the gifts that it had brought and then left the imperial council. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World looked directly at the Pashas and said: ‘What do you say to this? The infidels have asked for peace, but demanded Semendire. What would you do about this?’ To this the Pashas replied: ‘This is not like other matters. Summon a council to bring together the Janissary officers and all men of affairs, great and small. Let them discuss the matter. The infidels, it is true, want peace, but they have also demanded two castles. Nothing can be decided until all this has been discussed.’ When they said this [...].⁵⁸ When the Sultan said, ‘It would be wise to accept the peace at an early stage and to strengthen the bargaining position’, the Pashas assembled and summoned the ambassador. ‘Look, ambassador,’ they said, ‘we shall take it upon ourselves to persuade the Padishah to do what you want and make peace. But we too have something to propose. If you accept it, fine, but if not, then do not delay your departure or inconvenience yourselves and, what is more, do not delay us in our business, because we are ready, day and night, to go on campaign. Do not hold up our plans!’ When the ambassadors said, ‘Tell us what it is you want’, the Pashas answered: ‘If your Kings – whether it is Yanko, the Despot or the King himself – swear an oath, fine! If their honour forbids them from swearing an oath, then prepare for the time, sixty-five days from now, when we can hold a discussion in comfort before Belgrade, and definitely settle the matter one way or other. If not this year, then next. And if things are still not sorted out, then another year. The quarrel can go on until doomsday.’

On receiving this reply, the ambassador took it upon himself to see that the Kings swore an oath, and that a person called Baltaoğlu Süleyman would be sent with an

57 A mythical pre-Islamic Iranian king, much invoked in Islamic panegyric. The name is used here for rhetorical effect.

58 A folio is missing in the manuscript.

embassy. Then, the Pashas dispersed with the words, 'Let us go to the Sultan. We wish we had discussed this and done something like it before', and came into the presence of the Padishah. They informed him in detail about what had transpired, and told him that Baltaoğlu was to go as ambassador. The Padishah issued a decree accordingly and Baltaoğlu set off for Hungary.

To turn to another matter, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World was one day relaxing and taking his pleasure when his mind turned to the Prince, and he ordered that he should be brought to him. Letters were immediately written, and messengers carried them to the Prince. They presented the letter to him with the words, 'Your father the Padishah of the World wishes to see you', and with the reply, 'It is for the Padishah to command', the Prince prepared for the journey. He mounted his horse and, distributing horsetail standards and ordering his band to play, he left Saruhan and set off bound for Edirne.

One day, as they approached Edirne, the Prince's tutors advised him: 'My Prince, when we come to Edirne, the pashas and lords will come out to greet you, so let us see how you treat them. You should treat each one according to his station and enquire after his welfare.' They gave him a great deal of such advice. Then, as he approached Edirne one day, the pashas and lords, and people great and small, indeed came out to greet him. The Prince asked after the welfare of all of them and, showing courtesy to each of them in turn, entered the palace. The Prince kissed his father's hand and, once reunited, father and son settled down to enjoyment and pleasure.

An account of the second sedition of the Emperor

Our story now returns to that pig called the Emperor. When that faithless infidel observed how the Hungarian infidels and the House of Osman had clashed together and in the end made peace, he once again placed the pot of sedition on the fire and boiled up the soup of treason. At length, his scheming mind concluded that he should once again stir up the Karamanid, and so he sent one of his chief priests to him with letters. The priest departed and one day came before the Karamanid to present the letters. The Karamanid cast his eye over the letter and read: 'I who am the Emperor of Istanbul; you who are the son of Karaman. You should know that it was out of consideration for your forebears that up until now we have not been attentive and have been so indulgent to the son of Osman. But for our consideration for your forebears, we would not have abandoned Edirne, Filibe or Sofia. Your forebears treated us well, and for this we do not touch your lands. But now that the Hungarian infidels have worn out the son of Osman, I am sure that he is incapable of a farthing's worth of work. If I stir myself now it will be possible to seize his protected realms in their entirety and at no cost. It may look as though this calculation does you an injustice, but if you need territory and act in time, you can seize his land while there is an opportunity. But if you think that you are not the man to do this, you should give my messenger a clear answer, so that I at least can set off from here and show the son of Osman what he is worth, take his land from him and drive him to

Jerusalem, or even to the Ka'ba.⁵⁹ But if you stand idly by while I punish the Turk and seize his lands, and then claim that they are yours, you should know for sure that I shall punish you as well. If you are afraid that you cannot withstand the son of Osman if he attacks you, have no fear, because the King of Hungary, the Despot and the Župan Yanko will be marching from the west. What is more, I have raised and educated a young man who poses as the son of Osman, and I shall turn him out against the Turk with many troops. All the lords in the following of the Turk will join this impostor. We shall use this trick to upset the Turk's equilibrium, and if he has to flee to the opposite shore, we shall block the straits with Frankish⁶⁰ ships and refuse him passage. Meanwhile, if you need land and territory, you should advance while the opportunity is there.' With this he concluded the letter.

When the Karamanid had absorbed all this, he immediately threw his hat into the air, caught it again and said: 'Our lucky star has really risen this time.' He began to prepare for a campaign, but the lords and great men of Karaman did not consent to the plan. 'Come, my lord,' they said, 'stop what you are doing. Do not abandon your Islam to follow the word of an infidel. It is no use repenting when it is too late. That enemy of our religion the Emperor is not advocating this because he loves you. He is only encouraging you so that he can achieve his own ends. That infidel is no more a friend to us than he is a friend to the son of Osman.' They proffered him a great deal of such advice, but to no avail. That traitor still let himself be corrupted.

Meanwhile Baltaoğlu had accompanied the ambassadors to Hungary. One day he and the ambassadors arrived at the capital of the infidels who are as low as the dust. A couple of days later he was taken into the presence of the King. Speaking to Baltaoğlu, the King said: 'Who are you? And why did you come here? Or have you come as a trader to buy merchandise?' Baltaoğlu replied: 'What makes you say that? Do I look like a merchant? No, I am not a trader. It is just that you sent an envoy and begged our Padishah for peace. My Padishah sent me here to find out what your answer is and to give him certain news. I did not come here to plead with you, and my Padishah does not plead. Now – praise and thanks be to God – my Padishah has many soldiers. So many of the troops of Islam have assembled that only God knows how many there are. If you wish to fight again, then the warriors are ready and waiting. All they need is a signal from the Padishah. Our purpose in coming here is to get definite news. We certainly did not come to see you.'

The Despot got up and took Baltaoğlu with him to his residence, where he implored him: 'Have you got anything for me? Will the Padishah give me back Semendire?' To this Baltaoğlu replied: 'I have the Padishah's word. If the three of you – you, the King and Yanko – just do as I wish and swear an oath that you will not make war on us again, then what you want is acceptable to me. Otherwise it is quite impossible. Not only do you not get the castle, you will not even be able to look in that direction.'

59 The sacred shrine in Mecca, which forms the centre of the Muslim Pilgrimage.

60 See note 51.

When Baltaoğlu had spoken, the Despot went back to the King and explained blow by blow what had happened. Then all three of them consulted together and concluded that it would not do not to swear an oath. The Turk was ready to attack them, and it would not be possible to respond. So next day they summoned Baltaoğlu to the King's palace and showed him his place. Baltaoğlu sat down. It was the King who spoke: 'We asked the Padishah for the castle of Semendire on behalf of the great Despot. Can you immediately evacuate the castles and deliver them to the Despot, or must you first notify the Padishah?' Baltaoğlu replied: 'Look, my King, I can put into effect what you propose and I can accept what you are asking for, but only on condition that the three of you swear an oath together. Otherwise it is impossible.' So the three accursed men swore solemn oaths, and had treaties drawn up and delivered to Baltaoğlu. When they had bestowed gold coins and gifts on him, Baltaoğlu went with the accursed Despot to Semendire, which he evacuated and delivered to the Despot. Then he set off to the Padishah the Refuge of the World.

Meanwhile the Karamanid did what the accursed Emperor had told him. He collected troops so that he could harry and devastate the land, gain its allegiance and take it into his possession. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World was in Edirne, enjoying the company of his son, when he received the news that once again the accursed Emperor had goaded the Karamanid to rebel. On hearing this, the Padishah said: 'While the Prince sits on my throne, I shall take the troops of Anatolia to find the Karamanid and punish him.' But on the day that he proposed setting off, none of the lords and pashas approved. They muttered a lot but to no avail. They did not, however, know what the Padishah intended.

So the Padishah set out against the Karamanid, purposing holy war. He crossed the water in felicity and arrived at the city of Bursa. When he had passed through there and reached Yenişehir, they brought the bad news to the Karamanid: 'May fortune favour you! Sultan Murad is attacking with numberless troops. Let us see what answer you will give him. The Padishah has crossed the sea in safety and reached Yenişehir.' When the Karamanid heard this, he went out of his mind and had no idea what to do. He had assumed that the Emperor would fight the Padishah and stop him crossing the sea, but it did not turn out as he had expected. The accursed Emperor had never even confronted the Padishah. When the Karamanid saw how the accursed man had tricked him, he knew what was bound to happen to him. So he collected his lords together and said: 'Find a way out of this. I regret what I have done.'

The lords and men of affairs came together in a council, but could find no solution except to go to the Padishah again and humbly plead with him. This is what they proposed to do. They collected gifts to present to him, and the great men went to the imperial council of His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World. All of them bowed their heads and, clinging to the Padishah's hem, wept collectively: 'My Padishah, although he did this, please, Your Majesty, do not do the same! Mercy! Be merciful!' Now His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World took pity and pardoned the Karamanid, and gave him back his lands. Then he returned with the

troops of Islam. He stayed a few days in Bursa and then departed from there to halt in the plain of Mihaliç.

Here the Padishah commanded the Ağa of the Janissaries Hızır Ağa and other lords to gather around his luminous presence. He honoured each one of them according to his station, bestowed robes on them and said: ‘Look here, lords and pashas. Up until now I have been your Padishah. From today your Padishah is my son. Let us see how you get along, what you plan and how you manage everything. I have given everything – my crown, my throne, my title – to my son. You should recognise my son as Padishah.’ When he had spoken, everyone bowed, saying: ‘It is for my sovereign to command.’ And then everyone – Janissaries, cavalymen, and all the lords and pashas – departed for Edirne. The Padishah of the World stayed there, while the troops of Islam approached Edirne stage by stage, eating and drinking, and entered the city.

The Prince became Sultan in place of his father and settled joyously on the throne, seeing to the affairs of the poor and helpless.

About the Impostor⁶¹

In the meantime, the accursed man called the Emperor had written letters and distributed them all around. Furthermore, he had freed that scoundrel called the Impostor, and said to him as he showered him with gold and treasure: ‘Come on now! Claim that the throne is yours. When you declare that you are a scion of the House of Osman, and say, “While I am here, what right have you to the throne?”, all the lords and pashas will turn to you and deliver the throne to you. When you ascend the throne, you should listen to me and do whatever I say. Let us see what kind of a Padishah you are.’ With many admonitions and spouting no end of such nonsense, he released the fellow called the Impostor.

For his part, the Impostor set off making this claim. He settled in a village called İncegiz, where he stayed for a few days so that the people could come and offer him allegiance and make him Padishah. However, no one embraced the Impostor’s cause and no one paid him any attention. When he realised this, he became greatly distressed and set off to Ağaç Denizi.⁶² He arrived there one day and pitched his tents.

When news of this reached Edirne, the Padishah gave the command and all the Pashas gathered around his luminous presence. When he asked what was to be done, everybody had his say, until eventually they decided that the best thing to do would be to write a letter explaining everything and to summon Sultan Murad. While they

61 Halil İnalçık plausibly identifies this figure with Prince Orhan, an Ottoman prince of uncertain descent who was a fugitive in Constantinople and who was to lose his life at the Ottoman conquest of the city in 1453. Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), 69 n.2.

62 Literally, ‘the sea of trees’. Dobrudža, the area of north-eastern Bulgaria south of the Danube delta.

were organising this, they received another piece of news. 'What are you waiting for?', they heard; 'The Impostor has gone to Ağaç Denizi and has seized all the land on the other side of the mountains.' When they heard this, the Pashas once again assembled around the Padishah and discussed what to do. Again they saw fit to despatch a man to summon the Padishah and sent Mahmud Pasha. Mahmud Pasha set off with his slaves for Gallipoli, where they crossed the sea. The infidels heard nothing of this and knew nothing.

In the meantime, the Prince had commanded Şahin Pasha to take the troops of Rumelia and punish the Impostor. With the words, 'It is for the Padishah to command,' Şahin Pasha took the Rumelian troops and marched against him. At the same time, the Pasha commanded one of the lords, Koç Hüseyinoğlu, to guard the Impostor's route and ordered Şamlu Ali to go in pursuit. He admonished him: 'Let us see you now. You should guard the road to Istanbul and block it completely.' Then he despatched his treasurer, commanding him to order the kadis and subashis⁶³ in adjacent areas to ensure that no one stayed at home, but instead went out to guard the region. In the meantime, Koçoğlu came near to the Impostor.

The Impostor, meanwhile, had heard what was happening and asked what he should do. The infidels replied: 'For the last one or two days we have noticed that the Turks are blocking our way and will not let us through. The situation is serious.' When the Impostor replied, 'But what should we do?', the infidels said: 'This is what should be done. You should go in safety to the Emperor and tell him our position with regards to the Turk. The Emperor can take action on our behalf and save us from his clutches. There really is no other way out.'

On hearing this, the Impostor was beside himself with fear and, in the early evening of the same day, he set off with two hundred men in the direction of Istanbul. In the meantime, the treasurer and Koçoğlu prepared to block his passage, at the same time sending a man to get the Pasha to join them, so that they could capture the Impostor. What they did not know was that the Impostor had already taken flight. When morning came, news reached Koç Hüseyinoğlu that the Impostor had fled and he at once turned round and went in pursuit. Şamlu Ali joined the pursuit behind him, having alerted the country, while the Pasha followed behind the two of them. The Impostor, meanwhile, took a secret path through the forest and, in fear for his life, followed the shore of the Black Sea past Midye.

When the Pasha was informed that the Impostor had passed Midye, he sent out strict orders: 'Whatever you do, you must catch up with the Impostor and on no account allow him to escape.' He himself joined in the chase.

In fear for his life, the Impostor went on without a break until one day he reached Istanbul and came safely into the Emperor's presence. There he explained to the Emperor everything that had happened, blow by blow. When the Emperor said to him, 'My son, did none of the House of Osman's lords join you? Did the country not turn to you?', the Impostor replied: 'Not a single man gave me his allegiance.

63 A subashi was the holder of a large military fief. In addition to his military functions he was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in his area.

I was not treated as a man and, from what I understand, they will hunt me down as far as the Edirne Gate,⁶⁴ and even lay siege to Istanbul. But what has happened has happened. You should now see to the defence of the city.’ As he said this, the Emperor was terrified and withdrew into his own thoughts.

Meanwhile, the men appointed to the task went in hot pursuit, but to no avail. They could not catch up with the Impostor and so returned to Edirne and entered the Padishah’s presence. They explained blow by blow what had happened to the Impostor. The Prince was pleased and bestowed gifts and favours on each one.

The Emperor’s sedition

The accursed Emperor did not know what to do. Once again he placed the pot of sedition on the fire and began to turn things over in his mind. Now before all this had happened, the accursed Emperor had already sent out letters, in which he had written: ‘Be prepared! I have once again duped the son of Karaman. When the son of Osman is marching against him, you should not for a single day put off attacking on the other front. For our part we shall set out from here with the Impostor and use all kinds of tricks to seize territory from the son of Osman, while co-operating with you as before.’

Now he had sent one of these letters to the King of Hungary. However, the evil-doing King was at peace with the House of Osman and, because they had concluded solemn treaties, he paid no attention to the accursed Emperor’s letter. Nevertheless, the accursed Emperor saw how far things had gone and that he was sure to drown in a sea of disaster. If he failed to pursue the matter and hesitated even for a single moment, there would be no end of trouble and he would bring catastrophe on his own head. Immediately, therefore, he wrote another letter and despatched it to the King of Hungary. When it arrived the King issued a command to all his Bans and Dukes to assemble and read the Emperor’s letter. This is what the letter said: ‘I who am the Emperor of Istanbul; you who are the almighty King from the stock of Anushirevan.⁶⁵ When this letter arrives, you should be aware that when on a previous occasion you attacked the House of Osman, you dealt the son of Osman such a blow that it could scarcely have been greater. However, because there was not a level-headed man among you, you took fright and turned back. The son of Osman’s entire Porte was routed and began to flee in droves across to Anatolia. The reason why I stood by and did nothing was to allow a few more of the son of Osman’s troops to scatter and flee. After that, I said, we should march from this side, surround the son of Osman and punish him, and then take possession of his territories. But as for you, you turned and fled without a backwards glance, and then made peace, begging for mercy. Was it not obvious to you when he surrendered a castle like Semendire, and when you hung bells in his mosques, that the Turk was exhausted and no longer able to fight? It is clear now that there is not a man among you with capability or

64 The Adrianople Gate in the land walls of Constantinople.

65 See note 56.

foresight. Now when this letter arrives, you should not delay for a moment, but levy an army and set out. We shall surround the Turk, you from that side and I from this, and destroy him totally. We shall capture towns and cities, hang bells in his mosques and honour and worship His Majesty Jesus and Narnur. Sultan Murad is in serious trouble, because at the moment he is marching against the Karamanid and there is no way that he can fight against you as well. Even if he wishes to, I shall not let him cross the sea, so much that even if he becomes a bird he will not be able to fly. I have covered the surface of the sea with ships, and control it so firmly that not even a fly can cross. Now if you advance while the opportunity is there, fine! But if you do not, I shall complain about you to the Pope of Rome and have you expelled from the infidel religion!’ With this the letter concluded.

When the evil-doing King had listened to all of this, he looked at his Bans and Dukes and said: ‘What do you say to this? What should we do?’ As they continued in silence, looking at one another in the face, Župan Yanko suddenly raised his head and spoke: ‘My King, I told you before, but instead of listening to me, you took fright, turned round and fled. Otherwise I, your slave, would have given the son of Osman a bloody nose. If we had just hung on for five or six days, they would all have been defeated and taken to flight. Today they would have neither Edirne nor Bursa [...],⁶⁶ but you would not listen to me.’ The evil-doing King [...]⁶⁷ went. ‘Now what can we do to find a way out, given that we have made a peace with the Turk and concluded a treaty with solemn oaths? Is it possible now to break the oath? And that accursed man called the Emperor [...] us to the Pope of Rome creates a difficult situation.’

When he had spoken, all of them met in council and, after deliberating, decided to go to war. They sent agents all around and collected troops. Then they ordered a general levy, and the infidels who are as low as the earth prepared as a body to set off. The evil-doing King gave the command to Župan Yanko [...]⁶⁸ and the rest of the infidel soldiers to accompany him. Of the King’s troops [...]⁶⁹ thousand men were mustered as reinforcements. The King of [...]⁷⁰ also mustered [...]⁷¹ and behind them the King of Poland mustered and sent thirty thousand men. Behind him, the King of Hungary paraded with another thirty thousand troops; and behind him Drakul⁷² mustered and sent a contingent of twenty thousand Vlach troops with his vile son. Behind him Čirin Mihaľ⁷³ paraded with a troop of twenty thousand. On top of this, the Pope of Rome sent one of his specially commissioned priests⁷⁴ and a further

66 Three words are erased in the manuscript.

67 Three words are erased in the manuscript.

68 One word erased in the manuscript.

69 Two or three words erased in the manuscript.

70 Three words erased in the manuscript.

71 Two words erased in the manuscript.

72 Vlad Drakul, the Voevode of Wallachia.

73 Michael Szilágyi.

74 Cardinal Julian Cesarini, the envoy of Pope Eugenius IV.

thirty thousand troops. All in all, within a short space of time, a hundred thousand troops gathered round the King, until the plain resembled the sea of pitch in Hell.

So the evil-doing King broke his treaty with the Padishah and, at an inauspicious hour, set out with drums beating and with a great array of armaments and cannon. They reached Orşova one day and, passing through Savarina,⁷⁵ they crossed the Danube at the plain of Vajen. Here the King sent the accursed man known as Çirin Mihal to the Timok district, which he devastated, leaving behind nothing, no wheat, barley or straw, no ox, sheep or pig, and no clothes to wear. He removed it all and brought it to the King. The peasants of the region saw what was happening but, lacking any power to resist, left, all of them, to settle in the place called Savarina. The peasants of Saraceli,⁷⁶ however, when they witnessed all this, offered their allegiance to the infidels who are as low as the dust.

Now Kümülüoğlu was the area's sanjak governor and, as he was riding about, wondering what to do in this situation, the peasants attacked him one night, stole his horsetail standards and plundered all his tents. It was the peasants of Saraceli who had perpetrated these acts and, since they had sided with the infidels, there was no way of stopping them. The infidels who are as low as the dust plundered them as well, so thoroughly that not a [...] ⁷⁷ remained where you could tie a horse. It was with difficulty that Kümülüoğlu escaped on horseback. Next day, he stopped for a while at the top of a slope, where about a hundred and fifty of his followers caught up with him. From there they fled to a town called Kümülüade's Ivrace, where they found Ferizbeyoğlu. They explained to him in detail everything that had happened.

An account of how the castle called Vidin came under siege

Meanwhile, the infidels who are as low as the dust advanced as far as Vidin, where they pitched their tents. Then the evil-doing King ordered the siege of the castle and, as the infidels advanced to occupy the ditch, the people of Vidin took refuge in God and, with the cry of 'Allah! Allah!', sallied from the castle with drawn swords. They struck those accursed men with such force that within a short time they had driven the infidels who are as low as the dust back towards the King. When the accursed man called Yanko saw what was happening, he said to the King: 'Give the command to me, your slave, and I will reduce the castle to rubble and tip it into the Danube.' The evil-doing King thought for a bit and then gave his reply: 'Very well. I know that you are capable of this, but the garrison will not surrender the castle so easily. It would mean that we would have to stay here for a few days, while our aim is to reach Edirne as soon as possible and seize the city while the son of Osman is off his guard. After that, the castle will be ours for the taking. I admit it is wrong to spare these castles, but if we delay here, the son of Osman might somehow or other cross the sea to meet us. Then we shall be in trouble. But if we occupy Edirne, the son of

⁷⁵ Turnu Severin.

⁷⁶ Possibly the district of Salas on the left bank of the Timok.

⁷⁷ One word erased in the manuscript.

Osman will not dare to attack us.' When he had spoken, they withdrew the infidel troops and did nothing.

When they saw this, the warriors of Islam returned victorious to the castle. They placed cannon, arquebusiers and mangonels on the turrets and walls, raised red flags at every corner and kept a close watch in the direction of the infidels, all the time saying: 'God is one! God is one!' Next day the infidels departed with much pomp and ceremony.

Meanwhile the black news had reached the Pashas in Edirne. They consulted together and told the Prince what was happening. 'My Padishah,' they said, 'the infidels who are as low as the dust are already in Saraceli.' When the Prince heard this, he asked what should be done. Each person said his piece, but it was the Prince who gave the command: 'Inform my father immediately, and bring him here by whatever means is possible, because we must go against these infidels. But Edirne must not be abandoned. One of us must stay here, and one of us must go.'

Letters were written immediately, and Mahmud Pasha mounted his horse and set off to Sultan Murad Khan. One day he reached His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World and explained to him everything that had happened. He begged and entreated him, but because the Padishah had no intention of crossing over to Rumelia, Mahmud Pasha implored of him even more strongly until finally, when he told him of the tricks that the Emperor had perpetrated, His Majesty the Padishah consented and said: 'Go now and pray for my son. Halil Pasha should come with my infantry slaves to meet me at the spot called Göksu.' Then Kassaboğlu Mahmud Pasha again kissed the ground before the Padishah and said: 'My Padishah, be so gracious as to direct a letter to your son and to the Pashas, so that they will believe what I say and rejoice. The Padishah gave the command for letters to be written and sent Mahmud Pasha on ahead. Mahmud Pasha mounted his horse and set off.

Meanwhile the pashas and lords assembled to discuss the situation. Everyone said their piece and finally, looking Çavuş Bey in the face, said: 'Çavuş Bey, you are an old slave of the Padishah and so have seen many things. You are the old wolf in our midst. What should we do in this situation? You tell us!' Çavuş Bey raised his head and said: 'I know this much. The enemy who is attacking us is extremely powerful, and the first thing we must do is to gather workmen together and to set them digging a ditch around the whole circuit of Edirne. We should channel water into the ditch wherever this is possible, and surround the citadel with water on all sides, like a billowing sea. Next, we should station forces in every district to cut off the defiles the enemy must pass through, and assemble at the ready all the troops of Anatolia and Rumelia. Next, we should alert the people in the towns and villages around the city and bring them into the citadel. We should procure and prepare sustenance for all the Muslims who are going to come into the fortress. Without people, stones and mortar do not make a castle and, however many people there may be, they are of no use without food. This much we know. For the rest, it is up to you to act as you think best.' With this he fell silent.

So the Prince gave the command to dig a ditch around Edirne, to alert the people all around and to bring them into the city. God is the greatest of the great: within a

short space of time they collected together men who dug a ditch which words cannot describe. At the same time, they alerted the people of the district and brought them into Edirne, busying themselves with their provisions and preparing such stores as they required. However, when Şahin Pasha and Halil Pasha removed all their own property and provisions from Edirne to the castle of Dimetoka, the people of Edirne began to mutter. They gathered around the Pashas and said: ‘Why are you doing this? What do you think you are doing, removing your property and provisions to Dimetoka? What can we poor folk do? Where can we go?’

At this the Pashas replied to the people: ‘We are men of affairs. We have removed some of our property and provisions, because nobody knows what is going to happen, and we may well need an outer treasury. You are slaves and subjects resident in this city, and what you need to do is to bring in all your property and provisions from outside and fight manfully for the religion of Islam. Nobody is going to tell you to leave this castle, but we face a thousand different responsibilities. We might be told to go and it may not be possible to come in again. In that case what do you imagine we would do when we needed our provisions which are now outside?’ However, this was not the Pashas’ real intention in removing their property and provisions. They had removed them simply so that they would not be there if the infidels captured the citadel.

In the meantime the Prince had issued a command and sent letters to the kadis in every district: ‘Whoever of you has members of the military residing in the area of your jurisdiction – whether Janissary, armourer, gunner, holder of a zeamet or timar, müteferrika⁷⁸ or çavuş⁷⁹ – you should quickly, without delaying for a single day or hour, levy military personnel, from one to a thousand, from a thousand to ten thousand, and send them to the plain of Edirne. Furthermore, you should have great trees felled and block each and every defile along the path of the infidels who are as low as the dust. You should act in no other way.’ He sent these commands to all districts and, in accordance with the Padishah’s decree, they issued orders to fell great trees and to block each and every defile on the path of the infidels who are as low as the dust.

At the same time, the Prince decreed that each of his slaves should be paid his salary, and each one honoured and clothed in sumptuous garments according to his station. As a result every man knew what his function was, and they stood like Alexander’s dam, each one ready for duty.

But now our story returns to the Vizier Mahmud Pasha, who had gone to His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World and brought back letters from him. When news reached Edirne that Mahmud Pasha had returned from His Majesty the

78 A member of a corps of officers in the Ottoman palace, made up of sons of office-holders and other dignitaries.

79 A sergeant; a member of a corps in the Ottoman palace responsible for transmitting the Sultan’s commands to their destinations, ordering ceremonial, inflicting punishments and other duties.

Padishah the Refuge of the World, the Viziers, deputies and notables of the province went out to meet him and brought him into the presence of the Prince.

Mahmud Pasha placed the Padishah's letters before the Prince, and they were read out at his command. This is what the letter said: 'Let us see what you can do. You should assemble the troops of Islam and take care to procure their food and provisions. You should send my Lala, Halil Pasha, to meet me as soon as possible with my infantry slaves, and a quantity of cannon and gunners. They should rendezvous with me at the place known as Göksu.' With this he concluded the letter.

The Prince and all the lords rejoiced. They all collected their wits and began to make serious preparations. The Prince gave the command and, assigning gunners with a quantity of cannon and ammunition to Halil Pasha, sent him to meet his father. With the words, 'It is for the Sultan to command', Halil Pasha set off from Edirne to meet the Padishah. In the meantime, the Rumelian soldiers had arrived, troop after troop and rank upon rank, and bowed their heads before Halil Pasha. Now Ferizbeyoğlu had also captured two informants from the infidels who are as low as the dust. They brought them to Halil Pasha's council and he interrogated them. These informants stated: 'My Sultan, the goal of our King is Edirne and he is coming to take the city.' On the Pasha's command, they took the two informants to the Prince. At the same time he richly rewarded the men who had brought the informants, assigning them timars and sending them on their way. He himself left with all the Janissaries, gunners, armourers and troops of Rumelia. He set off straight to the River Kopisa to meet the Padishah the Refuge of the World.

But now our story returns to the infidels who are as low as the dust. On the day they left Vidin, they had marched off with great pomp and ceremony. Now those accursed and faithless men marched on, pillaging Rahova⁸⁰ and Lofça⁸¹ on the way.

An account of how the infidels who are as low as the dust came to Nikebolu⁸² and were defeated

As the infidels approached, the lord of Nikebolu, Ferizbeyoğlu, gave orders. A few days in advance, he placed everybody and everything – dogs, cats, hens, cockerels, men and boys – in ambush on all sides. He left the gates of the citadel open and, putting his trust in God, he and the warriors of Islam kept watch for the infidels who are as low as the dust. Then one day the infidels appeared, and those proud and accursed men drew up their ranks. They saw that there was nobody in the castle and, assuming that the garrison had deserted and left, they informed the wicked man called Župan Yanko. Yanko gave the command and they marched into the castle ready to seize it and garrison it with a host of infidels.

Meanwhile Ferizbeyoğlu was ready and waiting. As the infidels who are as low as the dust went unhesitatingly forward to enter the castle – God is the greatest of

80 Orjahova.

81 Lovech.

82 Nikopol (Nicopolis).

the great – Ferizbeyoğlu gave the order and, with a single cry of ‘Allah! Allah!’, the soldiers of Islam drew their swords and launched an attack on those unsuspecting infidels such as words cannot describe. As the infidels who are as low as the dust advanced without a care, they blocked their path like Alexander’s dam and wielded their swords to such effect that there was not a woman in Nikebolu who had not fought and cut off heads. Within a short time, the infidels who are as low as the dust were routed and fled. The warriors, meanwhile, came out from the castle and seized those accursed men’s standards with their black crosses and placed them upside down on the battlements. They fired cannon and arquebus from the walls and battlements, until the infidels who are as low as the dust did not know what had hit them and could no longer help one another.

The evil-doing King said: ‘This castle was not a problem, but my goal is Edirne. Let us go and seize Edirne and afterwards send men to these castles. If they still fight we shall bombard them and capture the castle whether they like it or not. If they give up the castle without a fight, we shall accept their surrender and make them deliver the castle. Then, when they have done this, we shall slaughter their men, take their women and boys prisoner and plunder all their provisions and belongings.’ With this, the infidels who are as low as the dust left the castle behind and went off defeated in the direction of the Osama⁸³ river.

Ferizbeyoğlu sent the black standards of the infidels who are as low as the dust to Edirne, together with a number of heads and a few living infidels. The Grand Vizier’s deputy saw these and presented them to the Prince. That day the Prince offered up many prayers for Ferizbeyoğlu. The deputy Pasha, for his part, sent him a letter of congratulations. ‘My son,’ he wrote, ‘all honour to you! May the Padishah grant you his benefaction! Now, my son, you should keep a close watch and inform us of the direction the infidels who are as low as the dust propose to take, so that we can block the passes and not allow the infidels to reach the shore here before Sultan Murad Khan arrives.’ He closed the letter with further words of admonition and sent it to Sultan Murad Khan.

The siege of the castle of Tırnovi⁸⁴

The infidels who are as low as the dust marched on in fury. As they approached the castle of Tırnovi, the evil-doing King sent two special troops ahead, with orders to put the castle of Tırnovi firmly under siege and to capture it without showing mercy. When Ferizbeyoğlu heard what the infidels were planning, he divided his soldiers into two groups, and put his brother in command of one, saying: ‘Brother, you should go and spy on the infidels in such-and-such a place. I shall wait in ambush with my troops on this side. When the infidels see how few of you there are and attack, you should at first engage them and then flee, drawing the infidels towards me. When I

83 Osām.

84 Târnovo.

enter the battle with a cry of “Allah!” you should attack the infidels from the rear, and may God grant victory.’ This is what they did.

As the infidels who are as low as the dust were approaching Tirnovi Castle, beating their drums, they noticed a few Turkish soldiers standing on one side. They at once seized the opportunity to attack them, and these too joined battle, luring them into the ambush. At that moment they came to the point where the trap was laid, Ferizbeyoğlu and his troops raised their horsetails and standards and, beating their war-drums, drew their swords with a single cry of ‘Allah! Allah!’ They attacked those accursed ones with such vigour that the infidels who are as low as the dust assumed that it was Sultan Murad and immediately took to flight. The warriors of Islam fought a battle such as cannot be described. It was such that while one of those accursed ones had been detailed to face ten Turks, a thousand of them could not counter a single Turk, and they took to flight.

The troops of Islam took more booty than can be counted. No one bothered with the common stuff, but took only pure gold and silver coins. The infidels who are as low as the dust forgot all about Tirnovi and fled in fear for their lives back to the army of the evil-doing King. When Župan Yanko asked them what had happened, those accursed ones told him of the retribution they had suffered. When the King heard what had happened, he was extremely upset and said: ‘You are brave young men, each one of you detailed to face ten Turks. What happened to make you suffer such a rout, and to lose so much of your property and provisions to the Turks? The best thing now is to be sure that from today we do not become separated. Wherever we go, we should go as a whole army, so that the Turks will take fright and run away.’ He spoke a lot more of such nonsense.

Ferizbeyoğlu, for his part, once again loaded the heads of the infidels who are as low as the dust onto carts and sent them on to Edirne. When he made known what he had done to the infidels, the Pashas offered up many prayers to him and his followers, and submitted the information to the Prince. The Prince too offered up prayers and added offices to the ones that they already held.

Sultan Murad Khan’s imperial progress from Anatolia to this shore

Meanwhile, Halil Pasha marched with the infantry and the troops of Rumelia until one day he came to the place called İncügüz. From here he sent letters to the Padishah. When he knew that Halil Pasha had arrived, the Padishah the Refuge of the World set off and alighted at the place known as Göksu. From there, he wrote a letter to Halil Pasha, saying: ‘Let us see you now. You should guard both the near and far shore with cannon, so that the cannon on either side should be able to kiss each other.’ Halil Pasha did as the Padishah had commanded, placing cannon on either shore and setting them up so that not even a bird could find a passage between them, let alone a ship. When everything was fully prepared, Halil Pasha went to where the guns were located and admonished Saruca the gunner: ‘Let us see what you can do and how well you serve the manifest religion. If infidel ships appear, you should fire

the cannon from both shores and destroy the vessels belonging to the infidels who are as low as the dust. If you do this and it proves possible for the Padishah to cross safely over to this shore, I shall take it upon myself to make sure that whatever you wish from the Padishah will be provided for.’ Offering up a prayer, the chief gunner Saruca replied: ‘While I am here lying in wait with cannon at the ready, never mind enemy ships, if God Most High is willing, I shall not let even a bird fly past. The felicitous Sultan need not worry. He has only to board his galley with felicity.’

Now the pig called the Emperor had heard that Sultan Murad had reached Gökusu and was intending to cross to the near shore. He at once gave the command to fit out two of his mightiest ships and to fill them with arquebusiers. ‘Let us see how you serve Narnur’, he said. ‘If you can capture the son of Osman alive, bring me his head, or drive him away without allowing him to cross to this shore, I shall ask for half of Rumelia for you from the King.’ He talked a lot of such nonsense. Then one day, when he had equipped the two mighty ships, they hoisted the sails, put hands to the rudder and, surrendering the reins of the ships to the wind, set out to sea to block the passage of the Padishah.

Halil Pasha, however, had both shores of the Bosphorus firmly under his control and sent a message to the Padishah: ‘My Padishah, we are ready and waiting. You have simply to give the felicitous command.’ When His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World received the news, he rubbed his blessed face in the dust and prayed:

‘O noble and merciful Lord who lives eternally!
We know that sovereignty is yours without restriction.
You made me, your slave, the cause
That I should seek the good order of the world.
You are the Padishah, the cause of all causes.
May the divine decree watch over your slaves,
For jinn and men are obedient to your decree.
You give them all body and soul.
I, your slave, hope for help from you
Because only you know my trouble.’

When His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World had finished his prayer, he spurred on his horse towards the Bosphorus. At the same time, the two great ships which the Emperor had sent entered the Bosphorus in order to block the Padishah’s passage and to force him to turn back. The chief gunner Saruca was watching and waiting. As soon as the ships came into the target area, the chief gunner gave the command and all the guns fired at once, making heaven and earth resound. The infidels who are as low as the dust were lost in their own world, and when they suddenly heard the battle cry of the guns, their hearts leapt into their mouths and they had no idea what to do. The cannon balls, meanwhile, smashed into one of the ships, splintering its hull and sending it to the bottom of the sea. At the same time they opened a gaping hole in the other. With a thousand difficulties, it escaped and fled in the direction of Istanbul without stopping to look behind.

In the meantime, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World fearlessly boarded his galley and crossed the sea to the near shore. Here he met with Halil Pasha. He expressed his gratitude to all his slaves and, in particular, showered the chief gunner Saruca with countless gifts and favours. He offered prayers for all his slaves. Then Halil Pasha said to him: 'My Padishah, His Majesty the Prince is disturbed and worried waiting for news from His Highness the Padishah. What you should do now is to send a man ahead to announce that you have landed in safety on this shore, and that you have pierced the heart of the accursed man called the Emperor and emerged victorious. Then both the Prince and your slaves the Pashas will be free of anxiety and worry.' When he had spoken, the Padishah ordered letters to be written carrying the good news, and sent the Chief Door-keeper and Muhtesibzade ahead by post-horse. Then His Majesty the Padishah drew up his ranks, distributed horsetails and standards and, to the beat of drums, mounted his horse and set off in majesty. Meanwhile, the Chief Door-keeper and Muhtesibzade galloped to Edirne and brought the joyous news that the Padishah had arrived on this shore in safety and cut the Emperor's achilles tendon. When the Prince and other lords heard this, they were overjoyed. The dead among them came to life, and the living became seven-headed dragons.

Our story now returns to the ship that was damaged and fled towards Istanbul. One day it limped into the city like a slaughter fowl that has escaped from a falcon's claws. When they told the Emperor what had happened, the accursed man realised the position that he was now in and, shedding blood in place of tears, said: 'We have lost Istanbul. Alas! I trod on a sleeping dragon's tail. Farewell, Istanbul! Farewell!' But what use was this? He retreated into his own grief and did not receive the visitors who came from the infidels. He became restless, worrying night and day how to save Istanbul.

Meanwhile His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World travelled onwards in felicity, stage by stage, eating and drinking, and showing his person along the way but stopping nowhere. When he was one day's journey from Edirne, they informed the Prince that his father His Majesty Sultan Murad had arrived. The Prince gave the command and all the lords and Pashas, ulema and pious men went out to meet His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World. They greeted the Padishah with honour and respect, spreading carpets along his path and slaughtering sacrifice animals for each step he took. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World showed courtesy to each one according to his station and entered Edirne in splendour. Then each of the lords went to his own room.

The Prince, however, mounted his throne again and gave an order summoning Halil Pasha to his presence. He said to Halil Pasha: 'You should ask my father to stay in Edirne to defend the city from the infidels of Istanbul, while I lead a holy war against the Hungarian infidels.' Now Halil Pasha was a wise vizier and replied: 'My Prince, I cannot say this to His Majesty the Padishah. Praise be to God, our Padishah has come. From now on it is for him to decide. We do whatever he says. The enemy is very powerful and you, my Prince, are still a fresh rose. It becomes you only to act as the Padishah commands and to do nothing contrary to what he says.' He gave

him a great deal of such advice, but the Prince still went to his father. As he kissed the Padishah's hand, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World honoured and blessed his son, and talked to him of many things. But the Prince still said: 'My Padishah, I beg you to take me to the holy war so that I too can wield a sword against the infidels who are as low as the dust, for the sake of the manifest religion.' His Majesty the Padishah replied, admonishing the Prince: 'No, my son, do not say this. You do as I tell you. The enemy is strong, and when I march against him, you defend this city from the infidels of Istanbul, for who knows how things will turn out. You just offer prayers.'

Now the Padishah assumed that it was Halil Pasha who had advised the Prince to say this, and gave the command for Halil Pasha to be brought into his presence: 'Lala, you should act as a wise and prudent vizier. Is it for you to advise my son to ask to go on this campaign? You know that this world is full of trouble, so why did you put such words into the boy's mouth?' When he had spoken, Halil bowed his head and replied: 'My Padishah, I know nothing of this. The Prince in fact asked me to say this to Your Excellency the Padishah, but I, your slave, did not consent to what he said and gave my Prince solemn advice. But it seems that it had no effect and that he asked you himself. But, my Padishah, there is no harm done. He is young and knows no better. He means nothing else by it, otherwise I, your slave, would have known.' But the Padishah of the World gave full instructions to Halil Pasha: 'God willing, I have resolved to depart on a holy war to attack the enemy. In the meantime, you stay here and busy yourself with my son's affairs. You should keep watch and protect the city of Edirne from the infidels of Istanbul, and let me know whatever it is that happens.' Then, at an auspicious hour, he mounted his horse and, with drums beating, set out with all the troops of Islam against the infidels who are as low as the dust.

Now before this, the Padishah had collected the ulema of Edirne and said to them: 'Masters, these enemies of our religion are leading an army against us. Fine then, with God's grace, the slaves of our Porte⁸⁵ will remain loyal to us. But this is a dangerous enemy. It is possible that we may not be able to match it and, worse still, there may be acts of dishonour. In this case the land will be lost, and with this the people and families from the community of Muhammad will be taken prisoner and their wealth and property plundered. What should be done about this?' To this the ulema replied: 'My Padishah, because the infidels who are as low as the dust are attacking us, it is an obligation on all of us to join the holy war.'⁸⁶ When they had given their answer, the Padishah ordered a general levy throughout Rumelia, and every day soldiers from the levy assembled from every region, troop on troop and rank on rank.

⁸⁵ This phrase refers in particular to the Janissaries.

⁸⁶ The ulema are citing a legal rule. In Islamic law, if the infidels attack a Muslim sovereignty it is an obligation on each individual Muslim to join the war against them. See note 28.

Meanwhile the governor-general of Rumelia, Şahin Pasha, had assembled all the troops of Rumelia and pitched his tents at a place called Eski Hisar, and was keeping a watch on the infidels to see in which direction they were going. One day, he received a report that the infidels who are as low as the dust were intending to cross the mountains via Akça Kızanlık.⁸⁷ He immediately set off with trumpets sounding and drums beating and, when he arrived there, he blocked the roads over the mountains at Akça Kızanlık. By denying passage to the infidels who are as low as the dust, he delayed them for a long time. But they were still in great fear until the day they saw that Muhtesibzade had arrived. As Şahin Pasha was saying, 'May God grant us good fortune', Muhtesibzade came up and entered his tent. He approached the Pasha and, kissing his hem, brought the good news that the Padishah had crossed to this shore, and had just now left Edirne in felicity and was marching against the infidels who are as low as the dust. All the lords and commanders, great and small, were revived in spirit. The dead among them came to life and the living became seven-headed dragons. They began to breathe and to speak again freely.

Şahin Pasha bestowed such abundant favours on Muhtesibzade that he made him rich. He said to him: 'Now then, go quickly and kiss the Padishah's hem on my behalf and inform him of my situation. It is true, tell him, that we have prevented the infidels who are as low as the dust from coming through here and we have delayed them for a number of days, but our treasury is empty and our provisions exhausted. Because these people are not our followers, they do not obey orders and work for nothing. I had to break open the treasury for them. So you should make it known that we are short of cash, as you saw with your own eyes.'

He despatched Muhtesibzade to His Majesty the Padishah and then wrote a letter to Ferizbeyoğlu to inform him that the Padishah had crossed to this shore with the troops of Islam and was marching with the troops of Islam against the infidels who are as low as the dust. He also wrote admonishing him: 'Let us see, my son. You should be extremely diligent in keeping watch on the infidels who are as low as the dust to see where and in what direction they are going. You should also inform us so that, until the Padishah arrives, we can endeavour to stop the infidels from crossing the passes which we have blocked. Let us see how well you do in the sight of the Padishah. With luck, you will distinguish yourself and earn a good reputation. If you acquit yourself with honour, I shall take it upon myself to request from the Padishah whatever it is you wish.' He despatched an agent with the letter. When, one day, Ferizbeyoğlu received the letter and digested its contents, he was overjoyed. He felt as though he had been born anew and, sending the Pasha's agent on his way, began to keep watch and to spy on the infidels who are as low as the dust.

The infidels, meanwhile, were extremely dispirited by their defeat at Tırnovi, and had no idea what to do. One day they held a council and concluded: 'We shall gain nothing by waiting here. Our flocks are far from the pasture and our shepherd was helpless in the face of a few lads. The best thing for all of us is to continue on

⁸⁷ Kazanlâk. Akça Kızanlık lies to the south of the Shipka Pass through the Balkan range.

our journey and to capture Edirne. If we encounter the son of Osman, we shall kill and scatter all his men. We shall leave a powerful garrison in Edirne and the rest of us will harry the land, killing their men, taking their women and boys captive and plundering their property. We shall destroy their mosques, large and small, hang bells there and light candles all around them.’ Each one of them spouted whatever nonsense suited his own foul face. Then they left and set off through Kösova to Şumlu.⁸⁸

When Ferizbeyoğlu saw what was happening, he immediately and without delay wrote everything on a piece of paper and sent it off. ‘My father,’ he wrote, ‘the infidels have set off in the direction of Şumlu. I do not know whether they will reach the mountains or not. You should guard the passes closely, and we shall keep you informed of the infidels’ intentions, whatever these may be.’ When the Pasha received the letter, he at once set off to Tavuslu, where he paid the azabs. Next day he crossed the River Maraş and pitched his tents. From there he sent a command to his son to bring provisions as quickly as he could. Then he gave orders to Hasanbeyoğlu Isa Bey: ‘You too should stir yourself and go far away from here to keep watch over the castle’ – by ‘castle’ he meant Yanbolu⁸⁹ – ‘and make sure you send your man to us to keep us informed so that we can take measures accordingly.’ When he had spoken, Isa Bey went straight off to the castle.

The siege of the castle of Şumlu

Meanwhile, the infidels who are as low as the dust marched to Şumlu. The inhabitants assumed that the infidels would go straight past without paying the castle any attention. However, when they began to bombard Şumlu and the garrison saw what was happening, they too fought manfully, firing cannon and arquebus. Everyone fought as best they could, some with [...],⁹⁰ some with lances and some with arrows, so that there were few among them who had not performed a hundred feats of arms. However, they were unwary and, because the infidels were so numerous, they had no strength left to fight. By now it was evening, and with the infidels who are as low as the dust attacking from all sides, they could no longer resist. Seeing that the inevitable had happened they gathered together to bid each other farewell. Then, accepting death and commending themselves to God, each one went to his appointed place.

That night the infidels who are as low as the dust set up great ladders and stood at the ready. In the morning they attacked again, climbing up the ladders propped against all four sides of the castle. When the warriors of Islam – men and women – saw this, they fought more vigorously than words can describe. Corpse piled upon corpse, and when the infidels saw that there would be no end to this, they sent forward about thirty thousand infidels clad in steel armour. As a result, the weapons

88 Shumen.

89 Yambol.

90 A word is omitted in the manuscript.

that the warriors of Islam wielded could strike them but could not cut and, clad like this, they began to pour into the castle. This time the warriors of Islam shut themselves into the tower and, however hard the infidels who are as low as the dust tried, they could not take it. There was no end to the infidels who fell to the earth. Seeing that like this they would never succeed, they brought up fuel and set fire to the tower. Preferring to burn, the warriors of Islam did not yield. Some died, but some let themselves down from the tower. Thus did the Muslims strive on behalf of the manifest religion. However, the infidels beneath the walls held up spikes, swords and spears, and the people who threw themselves down from the tower fell onto these and gave up the ghost.

In brief, the infidels captured the castle of Şumlu. The accursed man called Župan Yanko put on his hat and went into the King's presence. 'You see, my King,' he said, 'this is how you capture a castle. No one will make them give up a castle simply by chattering.' When he had finished bragging like this, the King raised his head and, giving him no encouragement, said: 'You say you have captured a castle, but what you call a castle is no more than a sheep-pen. You have captured a castle. Fine, but where were all those Dukes of mine with canes in their hand? All those Bans of mine with rapiers in their hand? All those armoured men of mine to take on ten Turks each? If the merest stockade can cause us so much trouble, what will become of us when we reach Edirne? If this stockade can put up such a resistance with one- or two thousand men, how will we fight against a garrison with fifty- or sixty thousand? Do you not think? Do you not reflect? Or do you imagine that these lands cannot be the possessions of one man? One of these days we shall encounter the Turks. Then I shall see whether you are a man. If we defeat the Turks, then I too know that we shall see Edirne and promenade around it. Otherwise we shall not be granted even the sight of it, let alone its conquest. May Narnur be our helper and Patreman Yandulus our assistant. Otherwise there is no hope.'

Župan Yanko's eyes became shot with blood. 'My King,' he said, 'why do you say such things? Have you heard something, or have the Turks attacked you? One or two Turks are prowling around us. Is it these you are afraid of? The Emperor has stationed a lot of ships to guard the Bosphorus. Do you think the Turks have wings to fly over the sea? Or are they fish that can swim in the water? What is it you are talking about? And even if the Turks were to cross to this shore, it is not as if I do not know the son of Osman. I know him well. Only yesterday I came head to head with him. Let us skirt the near side of these mountains and go to Edirne by the Black Sea coast. Then you will see what I can do.' He continued at length with such nonsense.

The siege of the castle of Poravadi⁹¹

After further consultation, they left for the place known as Matara. However, all its inhabitants had fled to the castle of Poravadiye. Finding Matara empty, the accursed

91 Provadiya. The spelling of this place-name in the manuscript is inconsistent.

ones burned the citadel and moved on to Porovadi. Thinking that it was like Şumlu, it was their intention to set up cannon for a bombardment. However, the people of Porovadi subjected them to such a hail of cannon and arquebus fire that, finding no place to shelter, they began to fear for their lives. Realising that they had bitten off more than they could chew, the infidels backed off and continued their march. The warriors of Islam subjected them to catcalls and whistles and then came out after them. They fought such a battle that it was only with difficulty that the infidels who are as low as the dust were able to save their cannon from their clutches.

The battle beneath the castle called Bedric⁹²

Anyway, they left there and camped at a place called Bedric. However, the castle of Bedric was in ruins, and when Bayezid Bey son of Koçi Bey saw this, he gathered his troops around him for a consultation. ‘This castle’, he said, ‘is in no state to withstand gunfire. Even if we tried to shut ourselves in and fight, it would be no use, and no help is going to come to us from anywhere. The best thing we can do is to go out and strike the infidels so hard with the sword of Ali Hamza⁹³ that it will become the stuff of legend.’ So everyone took leave of their families and went out, commending them to God.

Now let us see what heroes mothers have borne. With a cry of ‘Allah! Allah!’, that lion set about what seemed like an ocean of infidels with more force that words can describe. It was as though the appointed hour of death had come for any infidel who attacked him. He had no hope of ever returning, but went rapidly to hell.

When the infidels saw what was happening, they realised that if the battle continued like this, there was no chance of saving the life of a single one of the infidels who are as low as the dust. So the accursed Yanko gave the order for about twenty thousand men to don their iron armour and advance. Immediately about twenty thousand infidels put on their suits of armour and attacked that royal hero. The warriors of Islam realised that swords were no use against these infidels, and at once grabbed hold of axes, clubs and maces and with these continued the great fight. In the end the warriors were martyred – may God have mercy on all of them – and, what is more, the infidels who are as low as the dust crowded into the castle and seized it and did with it what they had done with Şumlu. There is no pleasure in telling this tale.

So, stage by stage, the infidels advanced towards their goal. The evil-doing King was nevertheless extremely distressed and unhappy. It was the accursed man called Yanko who was a proud and arrogant infidel.

92 Petrez.

93 A reference to the fourth Caliph ‘Alī, successor to the Caliph ‘Uthmān, who shares his name with Osman (=‘Uthmān), the founder of the Ottoman dynasty

The siege of the castle of Varna

In short, they left and went straight to the town called Varna. As, one day, they approached the castle of Varna and were pitching their tents, the King issued a firm command to besiege and capture this fort as well. The infidels dug trenches and the battle began.

But to return to our story of His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World, he set out with all the troops of Islam and, passing by Cimlik village, arrived two days later at the city called Yanbolu. There the people of the city, high and low, great and small, the ulema and the pious, came out to greet the Padishah, slaughtering sacrifice animals for every step he took, and bleating like sheep and lambs. They spread carpets on the roads he passed, saying:

Praise be that he has come, the Khan has arrived,
 The cure for all who are afflicted has come.
 For yesterday we were helpless and bewildered,
 But today – praise be to God! – the decree has come.
 He has come at the very moment, this Jesus
 Whose breath brings life to the dry body.⁹⁴
 Now he is our rising star, bringing good fortune.
 He has come to us like a proof from God.
 Ali Hamza, the successor to Osman has come,
 The one that we longed for is here, that is to say
 Murad son of Mehmed Khan has come
 [Completed with good fortune]

As the Padishah was going in procession on the day he was to arrive in Yanbolu, his eye fell upon someone called Danişmanoğlu. He summoned him into his presence and asked about the troops of Rumelia. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘how is the Pasha? Are the troops of Rumelia ready and prepared?’ Danişmanoğlu replied: ‘Under the sovereignty of my Padishah, your Lala, Şahin Pasha, has crossed the River Maraş and pitched his camp. The troops of Rumelia are all ready and prepared. When they heard that Your Majesty the Padishah had come, the dead among them came to life, and the living became seven-headed dragons. All they are waiting for now is a sign from my Padishah. They want nothing more than to sacrifice themselves for your sake.’

When he heard this the Padishah gave orders: ‘Go quickly and bring the cannon up behind us. We are approaching the enemy and we may need them. With the words, ‘It is for the Padishah to decide’, Danişmanoğlu turned back to collect the guns.

Meanwhile, the Padishah left Yanbolu in felicity and pitched his tents at a place called Hisarlık. At the same time, news had reached Şahin Pasha, who quickly mounted his horse and came to meet with the Padishah. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World bestowed his kindness on the Pasha, who returned to his tent and gave orders to the troops of Rumelia to be on parade that night, ready and prepared. Then, as the Padishah the Refuge of the World mounted his horse and went

94 An allusion to Qur’an 3.48, where Jesus brings the dead to life.

forward, Şahin Pasha drew up the ranks of the Rumelian troops and the numerous azabs, and with these went out to meet the Padishah.

All the commanders and sergeants stood respectfully, while the Padishah greeted each one according to his station. Then, as he came to the halting place and dismounted with felicity, he gave the command and all the pashas and lords of Rumelia and Anatolia came forward to kiss the ground before the Padishah. The Padishah of the World lifted his head and said: 'Now my lords and pashas, you should be aware that if any one of you displays cowardice as you did before and turns his face from the infidels, he should never again appear before my sight or remain within my realm. But if any of you distinguishes himself and smites the enemy in a holy war fought for the manifest religion, then I shall show him even greater consideration than he could wish for, and bestow the highest offices on him.' He made many such admonitions and brought down blessings on all of them. Then he said: 'Today we should advance with great caution. We should cross the mountains and fall upon the infidels who are as low as the dust as soon as possible.'

Next day they all set off. They reached the River Kamçı⁹⁵ and descended into the Nadir valley. On the following day, they encamped in the Misivri⁹⁶ valley and the day after that, by the Great Kamçı river. They left on the morning of the next day for a place called Ala Kilise, where they halted. Here, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World ordered all the lords into his presence and showed each one what he had to do. He placed the governor-general of Anatolia, Karaca Bey, on his right, also allocating to him the troops of the sanjak of Edirne. The Padishah also commanded Isa Bey to cross over and march on the right. To the left he allocated Şahin Bey and the troops of Rumelia, and to the centre Davud Bey and Hasan Bey. When the ranks had been disposed in this way, the Padishah stiffened their resolve and admonished them: 'Let us see you now. Each one of you should stay in his correct position, and each one of you should encounter his own enemy. If the enemy attack me – if they fall upon my ranks – on no account should you break ranks and leave your allocated position.' He repeated this warning over and over again. With the words, 'It is for the Sultan to command', all the lords and pashas went to their tents.

Meanwhile the Padishah commanded all the Janissaries, infantry officers and azabs into his presence. He greeted them all and said: 'You are my companions in every campaign. Let us see how zealously you strike down the infidels who are as low as the dust, the enemies of our religion, for the sake of Islam. You know for certain what the merits of holy war are, and how exalted the status of martyrs. Now, my slaves, just as we were born, so too must we die. It is therefore incumbent on both you and me to fight valiantly, now, while the opportunity is there, and to wage a holy war. Those of us who kill will be holy warriors, and those of us who die will be martyrs. Together let us achieve our desires in this world and the next.' He stiffened their resolve and gave them many such admonitions. Then everyone – Janissaries,

95 Kamçıya.

96 Nesebär.

infantry officers and azabs – said: ‘Do not worry, my Padishah. You will see how we, your slaves, fight against the infidels for your sake and for the sake of the manifest religion. You will see how we strike those enemies of the faith and how many of us are sacrificed for your sake. May you prosper so long as the world remains.’ They comforted the Padishah like this, and then everyone returned to his own tent.

That night the Padishah of the World performed both the night prayer and supererogatory prayers. He lifted his hand and said:

O Padishah of Padishahs!
 My hope is in You, O my God!
 O God who is the remedy for the sorrowful
 And the decree for the helpless.
 With tears I have rubbed my face in the black earth,
 O God, do not abandon me at this hour!
 O Lord of all creation, it is You who are
 The God, the Creator, the Deity, Allah.
 There is nothing apart from Your court,
 God who is the mine of mercy for all sinners.
 For the honour of Your beloved, Muhammad,
 Double your mercy to us, O God!
 The enemies of religion are coming
 And wish to abrogate the Qur’an, O God!
 Make me the means for this holy war
 Grant us the decree, O God!

That night the Padishah offered prayer and supplication until morning, rubbing his face in the earth.

When morning came, everyone took up his position. Mounting their horses, the lords drew up their ranks on the appropriate wings. With their troops drawn up around the Padishah, row upon row, on his left and on his right, before him and behind him, they crossed over the banks of the Divno and marched on in formation, rank upon rank. When the Padishah of the World and the Pasha saw the excitement among the troops of Islam, the Padishah said: ‘Look here, pashas and lords, may God the Praised the Exalted make all of you victorious and triumphant. But be aware that if any one of you turns away from this holy war, he should consider himself dead. But whoever distinguishes himself in battle for the love of the manifest religion, I shall recognise his worth. Whoever brings me the head of the accursed man called Yanko, or who fights him and brings him to me in fetters, whatever office he desires is his, and the horse I ride is his. Let us see what you can do. Today is the day for heroes and for men. There is no place for effeminates or cowards.’ Making admonitions to everyone and as generous promises as possible, he came to the spot known as Harami Deresi and halted there. The army camped there that night, posting sentries on all four sides.

It was the night of Saturday, 1 Rajab,⁹⁷ 848 after the Hegira of the Prophet /14 October, 1444. When the night had passed, at dawn on the following day, the troops of Islam mounted their horses again, arrayed their ranks and set off. This is how they advanced.

An account of the battle between the troops of Islam and the infidels who are as low as the earth

Our story now returns to the infidels who are as low as the dust. In the evening of the day they captured the castle of Varna, they were sitting drinking cups of wine, making merry and bragging. That day, the swine called Çirne⁹⁸ Mihal was on guard. When he saw the troops of Islam, he immediately fled, spurring on his horse until he came into the King's presence. The King said: 'What sort of an entry is this? Was there a serpent after you?' Explaining that the troops of Islam had come, Çirne Mihal said: 'My King, the Turk has arrayed a force such as I have never witnessed before today. Only, my King, I have thought of something which I can tell you.' When the King replied, 'If it makes sense, go ahead', he explained his plan.

'My King,' he said, 'you and I, and all of us, should retreat from here. The son of Osman cannot approach leaving behind his Janissaries, his footmen and his azabs, and if he does come, he cannot strike us. It is at this point that we should turn round, all of us, and strike the Turk. I hope that we can succeed in defeating the Turk like this. Otherwise it will be difficult indeed, even with all the men in the world, to counter the ranks that are marching against us like this.' At this point, the pig called Župan Yanko went down on his knees and said: 'What is this you are talking about? It is impossible to pull our army back. True, all the soldiers will retreat at a single command, but do you imagine that they will turn round and fight the Turks? If they do fight, the Turks will only become arrogant. They cannot be defeated by a single tactic. No, the best thing to do is to saddle up immediately and attack the Turks. We shall drive those proud battalions of theirs into one another and strike them until they do not know what has hit them. I have broken the Turk's nose once, and I shall break it again.'

The King called them to order and said, handing a wine-cup to each of his Bans and Dukes, 'It is decided. Now all we have to do is to draw up our ranks.' At this, Župan Yanko pushed his horse forward and said: 'Now, my King, listen to me. What you must do is to mount with pomp and ceremony and not turn aside. You should advance step by step, never hurrying. Let us see how firmly you stand. I trust that this is how we shall defeat the Turk and then pursue him and go forward to capture Edirne.' After he had spoken at great length, he began to draw up the ranks, saying: 'Çirne Mihal should position himself on the King's left, and Župan Drakul⁹⁹ should march beside him. Ban Şakilat and Ban Tomaş should march with them.' He

97 The date is patently wrong.

98 *Sic.* An alternative form of the name Çirin Mihal (Michael Szilágy).

99 Vlad Drakul, Voevode of Wallachia.

organised the King's left flank like this. Yanko himself was to march on the King's right. Ban Baya, Ban Na and Ban Mirjupane were allocated to the right wing. He made further dispositions, ordering Župan Radul to place himself in ambush, and the Bishop's¹⁰⁰ troops to take up the rear. 'Apart from this,' he said, 'we should link our carts together and get them ready, loading them with cannon and arquebus. Then let the Turks attack us! If we defeat the Turks, fine! But if the Turks are victorious we shall retreat behind our carts. If the Turks then attack us, we shall fire our cannon and arquebus until their world collapses about them.' They drew up their ranks according to this plan and made themselves ready.

The evil-doing King stretched and preened himself and issued the command: 'Give all the Bans and Dukes one more cup of wine, because this is the cup for the final chapter. From what I understand, this time we can no longer hope to achieve anything and to cover ourselves in glory. On one side of us is the sea, and on the other the mountains and, what is more, we have broken our oath. It is always the same. Whoever breaks an oath suffers defeat. But what can we do? We never stopped to think. We never came to our senses. That accursed man the Emperor of Istanbul stirred up this sedition and landed us in this trouble. That wretch led us astray by saying that he would not let the son of Osman cross the sea. Fine! Whatever happens to us and the Turks, today is the day. We either win or lose. But after this is over, I shall drag the wretch called the Emperor before the Pope of Rome and I shall denounce him to the world. If he resists I shall send an army and bring Istanbul crashing about his ears.' He spoke like this for a long time and then, giving his Bans and Dukes a glass each, continued: 'Let us see how you strive for the love of Jesus. Each one of you should muster all his strength into his arms and act like a man. Otherwise, if any of you flee, I shall, for the love of Narnur, break you with the most severe of punishments. I did what I did. I made peace with the Turk and saved my life and my country. But you listened to the words of the infidel called the Emperor and persuaded me. Now let me see what you are capable of!' So saying, he gave each of them another cup.

Now when the Dukes and Bans had each drunk a cup, the King again raised his head to speak: 'Let us see you!' he said, 'When the son of Osman is defeated and takes to flight, you should be careful not to pursue the Turks. When the Turks are defeated and put to flight, you must be wary of leaving what you are doing in order to plunder their goods. First you should destroy the bees, then you can eat their honey. All you have to do is to fight and to keep your eye on the battle. I pray that you are not defeated and take to flight.' He exhorted them at length, and when he had finished everyone departed to his own position. Each one of them drew up his battalion and advanced against the troops of Islam.

When the Padishah of the World saw what was happening, he gave the command to advance. The ranks moved forward on the right and left and joined battle with the enemy. On the right of the Padishah they advanced under the command of

¹⁰⁰ The reference is probably to Simon, Bishop of Eger; possibly to John, Bishop of Várad.

the governor-general of Anatolia, Karaca Bey. Ibn Fenari and Evrenosoğlu Isa Bey advanced with them. Karaca Bey hoped that the troops on the right would distinguish themselves and fight devotedly. How little did he know! Let us now turn to the soldiers on the left wing, where all the troops of Rumelia advanced with the governor-general, Şahin Pasha. Davud Pasha advanced with all the troops from the general levy. Ferizbeyoğlu too went forward, while His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World mobilised the rear. He drew up his men in seven ranks, and they advanced against the infidels who are low as the dust like snow-capped mountains.¹⁰¹

When the infidels saw this majestic army, their hearts leapt into their mouths, and they too set their left and right wings in motion. First Çirne Mihal advanced to engage Karaca Bey. Süleyman Bey was positioned next to Karaca Bey with all the troops of Edirne when, from the enemy side, the pig called the son of Drakul attacked him with all the infidels of Wallachia. As Ibn Fenari went forward from our side, he encountered Ban Sekillet Tomaş. Karaca Bey ordered his ranks in this way. Meanwhile Şahin Pasha advanced on the left wing with all the troops of Rumelia, as the infidel Yanko went forward to confront him from the infidel side. Behind him, Davud Bey advanced with the troops from the general levy. Next came Hasanbeyoğlu Isa Bey with the troops of Zagora and Yanbolu and, behind them, Murad Bey and Malkoçoğlu with the troops of Filibe. Facing them, on the infidel side, were Župan Mire, Župan Radul and Župan Yanko.

Let us now see what happened on the right wing. At the order of the Padishah the governor-general of Anatolia, Karaca Bey, attacked the infidels who are as low as the dust and confronted Çirne Mihal. He too went forward, and the battle opened as the troops on both sides engaged each other along the whole front. But the Anatolian troops were not loyal to Karaca Bey, and what can a single lion achieve against so many infidels? The upshot of it was that the Anatolian wing was defeated and all of them turned to flight. Now Karaca Bey was a male lion. Taking no account of their numbers, he resisted the infidels who are as low as the dust as he and his own soldiers dealt them blows.

Our story now returns to the left wing, where the governor-general of Rumelia, Şahin Pasha, stirred himself and advanced, with Ferizbeyoğlu and the judge of Karin¹⁰² on the edge of his formation. With the single cry of ‘Allah! Allah!’ he advanced with his own ranks, while Hızır Bey, Malkoçoğlu and Davud Bey advanced with theirs. On the infidel side, the accursed men called Župan Nadir, Župan Mire and the Bishop advanced all along the line, until the troops of both sides were caught up in such a *mêlée* as prefigured the Judgement Day. Župan Yanko was clad in steel and exerted himself more powerfully and energetically than words can express. On our side, Şahin Pasha girded up his loins and drove forward the seven ranks. These, it is true, did not take flight from the infidels, but the infidels who are as low as the dust had come clad from head to toe in iron. However hard the warriors struck with

101 The reference is to the white headgear of the Janissaries.

102 Karnobat.

their swords, it made no impression on the infidels who are as low as the dust. When the warriors of Islam saw this, they all took up axes, maces, clubs and battered the infidels with zeal and heroism. For a time, it was such that father could not recognise son, nor son father.

But then it happened that Ferizbeyoğlu, Hızır Bey, Malkoçoğlu and Davud Bey fled the field and took to the mountains. Župan Radul and Župan Mir saw that they had taken to flight and set off in pursuit towards the mountains. When Şahin Pasha saw this happening, his heart leapt into his mouth and he let out a cry: 'Hey, you bastards! Where are you running to? All right, let us suppose that you have escaped from the infidels, but where will you go to escape from the Padishah? Come on, my warriors, let me see you! Today is the time for zeal. Today heaven is open to you!' With these words, he straightened his ranks and, taking up his flashing sword, attacked with such force that none could surpass him. Davud Bey, who had turned and fled, with a great effort of courage turned round to urge his horse against the infidels who are as low as the earth. With the shock of his cavalry, he struck the infidel ranks and drove them into one another. By God, they fought so fiercely that they utterly routed the troops of the infidel called the Bishop and put them to the sword. But now listen to the story of what happened when Davud Bey's steward saw what was happening. Driving his ranks before him, and roasting his liver in the fire of zeal, that warrior Yunus Ağa, that hero, with zeal and ardour turned around Davud Bey's troops and charged the ranks of Župan Vaya, that infidel who is as low as the dust. They wielded their swords until not one man was left alive from Župan Vaya's following. Many and great praises be to God!

The left wing of the Padishah the Refuge of the World was victorious, with all its standards in their proper place. The Padishah himself was standing firm with their support. But listen now to the story of what happened when that pig Župan Yanko and that accursed man the evil-doing King saw this. Saying, 'This is not good enough. We must mobilise our forces at once and attack the son of Osman!', they beat their drums, and advanced against the Padishah of the Religion of Islam.

But let us now return to the story of the right wing, which we mentioned before. After their rout, all the Anatolian troops had abandoned their positions and fled. However, Karaca Bey, the governor-general, had not run away, but instead attacked the infidel called Župan Tomaš. When Karaca Bey realised that he could expect no help from the troops of his province, he stretched himself like a lion and, commending his life to the Creator who made Creation out of nothing, and with a resolve to make holy war against the infidels, he turned his face to God's Court and said: 'O God, the Munificent, the Merciful, the Protector! You are capable of all things. Since there is no help from the men of our province, chance and victory are from You alone. O Lord! Grant me first a holy war and then martyrdom, for I am no longer worthy to stand in the presence of the Padishah and look him in the face.' With a single cry of 'Allah! Allah!' he took his mace into his hand and attacked the ranks of the accursed man called Župan Tomaš, like a hungry wolf among a flock of sheep or a single flame striking a dry reed-bed. He drove Župan Tomaš's ranks into one another, and threw them into confusion. Now behind them there was a valley and as the infidels

who are as low as the dust crowded into it looking for a place of refuge and Karaca Bey urged his horse forward to the attack, he chanced upon the valley. He tried to halt his horse and turn back, but it was too late. He fell straight into the midst of those accursed men and, however hard he tried, he could not find a way out of the valley. At that moment he fell a blessed martyr – may God bestow great mercy on him – and all of the deceased's personal troops fell as martyrs around their master – may God have mercy on all of them.

When Župan Yanko saw this, he said to the King: 'Look, my King. Narnur has helped us. We have defeated the son of Osman's right wing and destroyed a famous man like Karaca Bey. What is needed now is for you to stay where you are and not move. Meanwhile, I, your servant, shall make a single attack with the cavalry – vigorous and sturdy in their coats of mail – on the rearguard of their left wing. If we can move their left wing even a little bit out of position, you can be sure that all of the son of Osman's army will be defeated, and so you should act accordingly.' As that accursed man once again attacked the left wing – that is, Şahin Pasha – with his fresh troops clad in armour, Şahin Pasha addressed the lords and warriors: 'Today is the day, and this is the moment. Let me see how well you fight for the Religion of Islam. Look, my warriors, rams are born for sacrifice. Today paradise is open to you. We were born yesterday, and today we die! This is the hour when manliness and heroism will be revealed.' So saying, he stiffened their resolve and, taking his mace into his hand, gave the command. Once more they cried, 'Allah! Allah!', the kettle-drums thundered, the war-drums were beaten and the two sides clashed against each other. The ground was torn up like cotton. They fought furiously, but the cowards in their midst began to flee towards the mountains in groups. When Şahin Pasha saw this, he placed the soldiers from the general levy and his own azabs in front. The worthy among the Rumelians stood by them and continued to fight more fiercely than can be described.

When the infidels who are as low as the dust saw the Rumelian cowards, they said: 'We have defeated this wing as well. Narnur has helped us.' Then the accursed man called Župan Yanko took his lance into his hand and said: 'Come on now, let me see how you strive for the love of Jesus. For each of you I shall get great favours from the King.' As he was galloping up and down urging on the infidel troops, a warrior on the Muslim side took up his bow and arrow and aimed at the pig Yanko. However it was he fired it, he did not miss. The arrow planted itself straight into the accursed Yanko's eye, so that he was stunned and fell in a faint. A little later he came to his senses, mounted his horse and left the battlefield to have his head bandaged so that he could return to the fray.

Meanwhile, many of the troops of Islam who had been defeated and fled the field collected their wits and saw that His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World was standing firm like a wounded lion, never retreating and never for a moment giving up the fight. Those who foresaw what the end of this would be had returned and were standing in ranks behind the Padishah.

The Padishah saw that the right wing had been routed and scattered, while the left, after fighting for a while, had begun to flee in groups to the mountains. So the

Padishah the Refuge of the World commended himself to God and sent the rearguard into action, placing his Janissaries and azabs in front. They took refuge in God and, as the war-drums were beaten, the kettle-drums resounded and the trumpets brayed, with the cry of ‘Allah! Allah!’ they launched an attack on the infidels who are as low as the earth. When the infidels who are as low as the earth saw this, they too beat their drums and went forward. The two armies clashed all along the line, and that day there was a battle such as words cannot describe. As the fight increased in fury, both the troops of Islam and the infidels displayed such zeal that, in the marketplace of death, father could not recognise son nor son father, and the angels in heaven and the fish in the sea wondered at the fury of the fight. The battle lasted until the afternoon of that day, with heads rolling on the field like rubble.

But see now how the novices among the Janissaries and azabs began to scatter, group by group. The Padishah of the World was distressed beyond measure, but what could he do? Whatever else, the zealous warriors among the troops of Islam struck the infidels so hard that one person’s eye could not see the other. When the battle had reached this stage, the ranks of the infidels who are as low as the dust had also begun to unravel and turn to flight.

By now the Padishah was left with only about three hundred Janissaries, about five hundred azabs and infantry commanders, and his treasurer with the pages of the inner palace. When the Padishah of the World saw this, he immediately dismounted from his horse, rubbed his face in the earth and, at the same moment, raised his hands in fervent prayer to God, the Padishah of Padishahs, the Lord of Might and Power, the Eternal.

Prayer:

I have taken refuge in You, the Possessor of all things.

Do not leave me helpless before the enemy.

You are the Munificent. Bestow Your munificence through Your grace.

I have put my hope in You, O my God,

For You are the Padishah of all people.

If one atom of Your favour should descend,

It would reduce all these infidels to obedience.

O my God, be the cure for my distress,

And help the people of Muhammad.

May the sword of Islam be hung on Your Throne,

For it is You who are the sword of help to Your slaves.

When His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World had prayed for the help of God the Praised the Exalted, he took up a handful of dust and passed it through his collar onto his breast and rubbed his face with his hands. Then he sprang up like a roaring lion and mounted his horse. He took his sword in his hand and, with words of encouragement to the troops of Islam, fell upon the infidels. At this moment, Ishakbeyoğlu Isa Bey came up with his troops and hurled himself against the infidels, and behind him came Şahin Pasha with all his slaves and azabs and attacked from another side. God is most great, there was such a battle that, as the

bloodshed continued, heads and legs, fingers and fingernails, axes and hammers, arrows and lances, shields and weapons poured onto the battlefield like a carpenter's chippings.

Couplet:

The sword of fate struck off the necks of many men
I saw the heads of some lying there and the ribs of others.

When the Padishah began to fight like this, never flinching before the enemy, some of the men who had fled in defeat recovered their zeal and began to come in from all directions and rejoin the ranks. Meanwhile, the ranks of the infidels who are as low as the dust had begun to break. When the King saw this, his heart leapt into his mouth and he had no idea what to do. However hard he tried, it was impossible to reorder his line. While both sides were fighting like this, the King too set to work. As he was galloping up and down, a strong armed warrior from the army of Islam struck the evil-doing King several blows with a mace and knocked him off his horse. The Janissaries and azabs fell upon the King and struck him with their axes. When the infidels saw what was going on, they charged the troops of Islam seven times, but to no effect.

Couplet:

If the jug is broken, the assembly's wine-cup cannot endure
It is a saying, o saqi: if the head is lost, the foot cannot stay upright.

When the infidel Župans and Dukes saw the disaster that had befallen the evil-doing King, they at once turned to flight. Everyone thought only of saving their own skins and, on every side, they fled in groups to the mountains like sheep escaping from the wolf. Nonetheless, innumerable infidels were put to the sword in the field: many and great praises be to God! Now on that day they wielded the sword until dusk, and did the same all night until morning, and on the next day they slaughtered the infidels until the time of the afternoon prayer.

However, His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World was standing there distraught with worry about Şahin Pasha, and saying: 'What has become of my Lala Şahin? Has he fallen in battle or is he alive?' Now there was a famous man called Pençyekçioğlu Isa Bey, who had fought many battles on that day. It so happened that his sword had broken, and so he collected up the fragments and went into the presence of the Padishah to ask for a new one. The Padishah asked him about Şahin Pasha. 'Go and look for my Lala Şahin', he said. 'If you find him alive, tell him to come and join me.' Issuing his orders to the young man, he gave him a sword and many gold coins.

The young man spurred his horse and set off to look for Şahin Pasha. Now Şahin Pasha, in the company of the lords of Rumelia and his own troops, was going in pursuit of the infidels who are as low as the dust and was wielding his sword to such effect that he was bringing them down like autumn leaves. When Isa Bey caught up with him and transmitted the Padishah's order, he turned back with the words: 'It is

for the Padishah to command.' He came into the Padishah's presence and prostrated himself. The Padishah was overjoyed to see Şahin Pasha alive.

Just at that moment the hero called Uzun Alioğlu appeared. It was he who had attacked the evil-doing King's black standard, felled the standard-bearer and seized the standard, and was now bringing it into the presence of the Padishah. The Padishah bestowed plentiful favours on him. Behind him came one of Şahin Pasha's men called Ishak, a white-bearded warrior who had captured one of the celebrated Župans of the infidels who are as low as the dust and was bringing him before the Padishah. The Padishah bestowed abundant favours on him as well.

That day too they continued until evening to put the infidels to the sword. The troops of Islam took more booty than words can describe. Nobody bothered with ordinary things. They took only pure gold and silver coins. The Padishah meanwhile left that place and proceeded in felicity to the spot called Çaşnigir Deresi where he pitched his tents. On the next day, too, the troops of Islam continued without interruption to pursue and slaughter the infidels who are as low as the dust. Some of the warriors of Islam took the infidels who are low as the dust prisoner and brought them into the presence of the Padishah, who ordered them to enslave the young infidels and to put the adults to the sword.

Meanwhile the principal infidels and those who had managed to escape gathered themselves together and formed their carts into a wagenburg. They set up their cannon and stood at the ready, with arquebusiers ranged around all four sides. His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World therefore ordered a few of his lords to lay siege to the carts and to keep watch that night so that nobody could emerge and cause trouble. With the words, 'It is for the Padishah to command', they put the carts under siege at a distance that the cannon and arquebus could not reach, and spent the night on guard. When morning came, the Padishah of the World made his ablutions and performed the morning prayer. Lifting his hands, he prayed to the Lord of the Worlds and gave praise and thanks, rubbing his hands over his face. His next wish was to go to look at the battlefield and the army of the infidels who are as low as the dust.

They at once got ready a horse and brought it to the Padishah of the World, who mounted and rode to the field where the battle had been lost. He saw corpse piled upon corpse and bodies awash with blood. So many infidels had been slaughtered that only God could count their number. From there he proceeded to the camp of the infidels who are as low as the dust, and looked around until he came to the King's tent. He went inside, drove his sword into the King's throne and sat down, giving praise and thanks for the favour and guidance of God. When he left there to return to the battlefield, he looked at the accursed men who had been slaughtered and gave a thousand times praises and thanks to God the Praised the Exalted.

Verse:

So lie his slaughtered enemies,
 Each one's body lies there headless.
 The valleys are so full of them
 That no one can find a way through.
 Corpses are so swimming in blood
 That whoever sees them goes out of his mind.
 The Shah of the World saw a moral in this
 And said: 'Thanks and praise be to God this day!'

Our story now returns to the carts of the infidels who are as low as the dust. Those faithless and accursed men who had survived the slaughter had formed their carts into a wagenburg, set up cannon and placed arquebusiers at the ready. When the Padishah was informed of this, he gave the command, the ranks were drawn up and they advanced against the infidels with the Padishah in their company.

At this point, however, Şahin Pasha said a prayer for the Padishah and spoke: 'My Padishah, your Excellency has given a wise command and we shall strike down the infidels in the carts. But I, your slave, have something to say. I shall speak if my Padishah gives permission.' The Padishah of the World gave his assent. 'Speak', he said. The Pasha began at once: 'My Padishah, the plan is for us to attack the carts with our army from all four sides and, if we are victorious, to plunder the carts. Only it would be better if we surrounded them, positioning ourselves out of range. Then the infidels would surrender the carts of their own accord. If this seems a good idea, let us do it.' The Padishah of the World blessed the Pasha and said: 'You have planned it well. We need a gift for the Padishah,¹⁰³ because we undertook this holy war at the resolve of my son the Padishah, and he needs a few gifts to gladden his heart.' With these words he approved the Pasha's suggestion and, although the command had been given for an assault, another order was issued to besiege the carts, standing out of range of the guns.

With this, the troops of Islam withdrew, rank upon rank, company upon company, wave upon wave. When the infidels who are as low as the dust saw this, they did not know what to do. They realised that there was no way out. Neither cannon nor arquebus could be effective against this host. In despair, the infidels who are as low as the dust raised the white flag and called out, begging for quarter. Dropping all their weapons, they came out from the carts, which were seized at the Padishah's command. Then the Padishah decreed that there could be no mercy in these realms for infidels and so, after enslaving the fresh-faced lads from the infidels who are as low as the earth, they put all their grown men to the sword. Praise be to God and again praise. Those proud infidels themselves suffered what they had intended against the community of Muhammad. May God the Praised the Exalted always, at every moment of every day, make victorious the community of Muhammad and the Padishah of the Religion of Islam and may He render the infidels who are as low as the dust forever defeated and overwhelmed, for the honour of His Beloved, His

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messenger Muhammad Mustafa and for the honour of the revered Qur'an. Amen, amen, O Helper, O Lord of the Worlds.

The Padishah of the World gave the command and they set off that day for Varna, where they pitched camp. The infidels' carts accompanied them and were examined. They made an inventory of all the jewellery and articles of gold and silver that were found, and these were set aside for our Padishah Sultan Mehmed son of Sultan Murad Khan. The troops of Islam plundered whatever other goods and provisions they found and offered prayers for the Padishah.

Our story now returns to the prisoners that the infidels who are as low as the earth had taken when they captured the castles of Şumlu and Bedric and the castle of Varna, so many innocent boys and girls, people's sons, daughters and sisters. By God's command, these accursed and faithless men had departed in fear for their own lives, leaving their prisoners behind. When, by the grace of God, they were freed, everyone rejoiced as they found their sons, daughters and wives. Mothers found their sons and sons their mothers. They bleated like sheep and lambs as they embraced one another: all of them became as new-born babes. That day, the Padishah of the World bestowed lavish gifts on those unfortunates that had been released from captivity. He endowed those indigents with so many gold coins that, although they needed no more than a scrap each, they all became rich and free from want and offered prayers for His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World as they looked forward to setting about their own business.

Then His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World commanded: 'Go and see if any of my lords and pashas have gone in pursuit of the infidels who are as low as the dust, and get them to turn back. They have done enough to prove their manhood. If one or two of the infidels who are as low as the dust succeed in extricating themselves from these lands and these mountains, and escaping from the townsfolk and villagers, let them go. Let them return to their own countries and tell of the miracles they encountered at the hands of the community of Muhammad. Let them be our eulogists.' When he had spoken, they said to him: 'My Padishah, out of all the infidels who are as low as the dust, there is not a single enemy left for us to pursue, who had the good fortune to leave with his ranks intact. My Padishah, it should come to your glorious knowledge that not more than one in a hundred of the infidels who came to these lands can ever leave them. For the last four or five days, they have never once been spared the sword. Even at night they have been slaughtered until dawn.' When he heard this reply, the Padishah the Refuge of the World spoke.

Verse:

He said: ‘Praise be to God who granted us our wish.
 Hearts found their desire, and in this we found our redress.
 Thanks be to God, it was my good fortune that my heart found its desire.
 Because we were granted a way, our whole being was rewarded.
 When God became my helper, my enemy was destroyed.
 Many proved their manhood; as we recognised with heart and soul.
 We took our sword into our hand and wielded it for Muhammad’s sake.
 We slaughtered all the infidels. Our enemy became blind again.’

Then His Majesty the Refuge of the World gave the command: ‘Let messages of good tidings be written to the Padishah. Let someone take a copy of the joyful announcement to the Padishah of the Religion of Islam – that is, Sultan Mehmed – and bring him the good news, so that my son Mehmed Khan may be free from anxiety and his heart glad. Furthermore, letters of good tidings should be written to the lands of Islam, so that all the community of Muhammad may give praise and thanks to God the Most Exalted. Let them rejoice greatly and celebrate until the enemies of our religion – the infidels who are as low as the dust, the accursed people without a faith – weep and wail and render themselves abject and contemptible. This is the letter that was written:

Concerning the letter of glad tidings

It said:

‘My son, may it bring you joy!
 Success was granted me. May it bring you joy!
 God granted me my heart’s desire.
 Spread the news to all quarters. May it bring you joy!
 The Hungarians were destroyed and the enemy defeated.
 My sword struck them. May it bring joy!
 Blood swept away bodies, bodies drowned in blood.
 Those who saw it were struck dumb, may it bring joy!
 Istanbul too has heard the news.
 May these tidings bring them joy!
 Where are the Bans, the Župans and the King?
 He offered us his head. May it bring joy!
 My resolve was holy war, and I have found it.
 When it reaches you, may it bring joy!’

Letters of glad tidings were written like this to His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World – that is to say, to His Majesty Sultan Mehmed son of Murad Khan – and, at the Padishah’s command, delivered to a messenger who set off with the words: ‘It is for the Padishah to command.’ He galloped day and night, until at last he came to His Majesty Sultan Mehmed in Edirne. Placing the letter of glad tidings before the Padishah, he delivered the good news.

When the Padishah showed the letter to Halil Pasha, Halil Pasha said: 'Yes, my Padishah, this is how it is. Give the command for letters of glad tidings to be written to all the Islamic lands. All the community of Muhammad should be informed. Let there be great illuminations and celebrations so that all the community of Muhammad can rejoice, and the infidels who are as low as the dust suffer grief and foreboding when they hear of it.' When he had spoken, Sultan Mehmed gave the command and showered the men who had brought the news with gifts and favours. Then, at the order of the Padishah, letters of glad tidings were drawn up and despatched in all directions, so that the lands of Islam were informed in their entirety, and gave many, many praises and thanks to God the Praised the Exalted. At the Padishah's command, there were illuminations and rejoicing for seven days and seven nights, and prayers for the Padishah of the Religion of Islam.

Now, O believing brethren, know and be aware that God the Praised the Exalted, Glorious in His Majesty, Generous in His Gifts, always helps the community of Muhammad, because heaven preserve us that God the Glorious and All High should go back on His promise. Sometimes He makes a group of the infidels who as low as the dust prevail, but when they pillage and plunder certain lands, it is not with the help and succour of God. Rather, He is luring them to perdition. God has preordained these things and one cannot ask what He has ordained. Rather, what is necessary and important for all members of the community of Muhammad is that, whenever the infidels who are as low as the dust gain victory over the community of Muhammad and seize and plunder many territories, all believers in the Divine Unity should repent and ask forgiveness for their sins. They should shield themselves from sin and busy themselves with piety and worship. At night, when all mankind is sleeping, they should get up, perform their ablutions and perform many, many prayers. They should offer humble prayers and supplications to God the Praised the Exalted. More than that, they should rub their faces in the dust and beg earnestly for help and favourable opportunities, because prayer of this kind is never rejected. May God the Praised the Exalted grant favours to us and to all the community of Muhammad. In His goodness and generosity, may He overlook our disgrace. May He accept our prayers and make the community of Muhammad ever triumphant and victorious, and may He leave the infidels who are as low as the dust overwhelmed and defeated. Amen, o Helper, through the veneration of the Lord of the Apostles.

Then His Majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World returned in joy, victorious and triumphant. Stage by stage, eating and drinking, he approached Edirne, and arrived there at an auspicious hour. All the ulema and pious men, and in particular Sultan Mehmed Khan, came out to receive him. They slaughtered a sacrifice beast for every step he took until, honoured in this way, he took his seat in Edirne.

Meanwhile such of those faithless and accursed men as had been spared the sword somehow or other found their way with great difficulty to Belgrade. They limped along, groaning and moaning, some blind, some lame, bareheaded and barefooted, hungry and thirsty, creeping from valley to valley and peak to peak. Now the accursed men who lived in Belgrade were watching the road, expecting good news from their King. When they all saw what had happened, they had no

idea what to do and feared for their lives. When they heard the news that the evil-doing King had lost his head, they fell into gloom and despair. When the accursed Despot understood the situation, he said: ‘Ah! What I predicted has happened to them. However much I spoke, they would not believe what I said. But I knew that this is how it would turn out.’ He spoke at length and, as the infidels who are as low as the dust busied themselves setting up a new King, they were beset with troubles. May the heads of the infidels who are as low as the dust be forever bowed, and may they always be crushed and defeated.

II

Jehan de Wavrin

From the *Anciennes Chroniques* *d'Angleterre*

How the Grand Turk summoned the Lord of Wallachia to come to talk to him and how he deposed him by treachery

Around the time that we are talking about, the Lord of the Turks was a man called Moradbey.¹ It came to his notice that in Great Wallachia there was a lord called Valaqde Vaivode,² who was renowned for both his courage and wisdom, and whose country was extremely rich and peopled by great and powerful men. For this reason the said Turk began to grow envious, wishing to seize the Lord of the Vlachs together with all his country, and to make them subject to himself and under his dominion. To facilitate this, he sent one of his subashis³ – an extremely cunning and eloquent man – as an ambassador to the Lord of Wallachia. The subashi set off to the land of the Vlachs and continued until he came to the place where the lord was currently residing. On behalf of his master the Grand Turk, he presented him with magnificent gifts, greetings and an amity to be marvelled at, saying that his master the Turk was urgently seeking his close friendship and co-operation. To achieve this, the Great Turk begged him as strongly as he could to join him in the city of Adrianople and, so that he could travel there in greater security, the subashi presented him with a safe-conduct from his master the Grand Turk.

When the Lord of the Vlachs had heard the message which the subashi brought him from the Grand Turk, he received him most honourably, bestowing on him valuable gifts and presents. He consulted the princes and barons of his country over what would be the best thing to do about the subashi's proposal. They strongly advised him not to go there in person, but instead recommended him to send an envoy to find out exactly what this Turk meant by seeking his friendship and co-operation. The subashi-ambassador was not at all happy with the reply that he had received. So he spoke to the Lord of Wallachia on his own, talking to him several times in flattering tones, and swearing that his master the Turk wanted to see him in

1 Murad II. De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

2 Vlad Drakul, Voevode of Wallachia (1436–47).

3 The holder of a large fief, with military and police functions.

person in order to bestow great honours and abundant goods on him. He said that he should not in any way fear or delay coming, because he would guide him safely. Eventually, the fine words and blandishments of the subashi proved so seductive that the Lord of Wallachia abandoned the decision which he had taken in consultation with the high princes and barons of his country and agreed to go with the subashi to the Grand Turk in Adrianople. The latter at first received him with great honour. The Turk and all his army were camped outside the city in a multitude of tents and pavilions.

The day after the Lord of the Vlachs had arrived, the Grand Turk gave a great banquet for him, summoning all his subashis and captains to entertain the Lord of Wallachia. The Grand Turk himself was in a pavilion lined with crimson, sitting as if on a tailor's workbench adorned with rich cushions, pillows of gold and silk cloth. The entrance to the tent had been set up to a height of about ten feet, so that he could see his captains and men. The Lord of Wallachia was sitting outside the pavilion, to the right of the Turk, on cushions and cloth-of-gold carpets. To the Turk's left was his Bellarbay, which is as much as to say 'lord of lords'.⁴ The other nobles were sitting in a wide circle starting on his left and right, so that the Grand Turk could see them eating. When the banquet was over the Turk retired to his great tents and, shortly afterwards, sent the subashi who had brought the Lord of Wallachia to take him prisoner. This he did and cast him into the castle of Gallipoli, situated on the Strait of Romania which we call St George's Arm.⁵ Here he imprisoned him in chains. He had all the people who had accompanied the Lord of Wallachia led back to their country, where they reported the great act of treachery which the Grand Turk had committed against their lord. This greatly troubled his subjects, because they could well imagine to themselves that the Turk had committed this act of treachery hoping that, left without shepherd or guardian, he could conquer them easily. At this time, the Lord of Wallachia had only a single son, aged between thirteen and fourteen, who was not capable of governing such a kingdom, and especially not in time of war. As a result of all this, there was great distress throughout the land.⁶

Their guess that the Turks would wage war on them was correct. This they were to learn by experience since, soon afterwards, the Grand Turk assembled a huge army numbering a hundred thousand men commanded and led by Beirlabey.⁷ With this great army, he crossed the River Danube and entered Wallachia. When the Vlachs knew that it had come, they assembled as many men as they could and appointed a captain called Johannes de Hongnac,⁸ a great lord of that realm whose domains were

4 Turkish *beylerbeyi*. De Wavrin's translation of the term is correct, but his spelling of it is inconsistent.

5 The Dardanelles.

6 The Greek chronicle of Doukas confirms this story, adding that Drakul was released only when he had delivered his sons as hostages to Murad, who imprisoned them in the fortress of Nymphaion (Nif).

7 See note 4. Here De Wavrin seems to understand the term *beylerbeyi* as a personal name. The leader of the Turkish expedition was Mezid Bey.

8 John Hunyadi. De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

in Transylvania, stretching between Hungary and Wallachia. Since the Vlachs did not feel strong enough to give battle against such a multitude as the Turks, they decided to withdraw to the mountains. They announced to everybody in the plains that men, women, children and goods should all take refuge in the mountains, because they had received certain news that the Turks were about to cross the Danube to harry the land. And this is what happened. The Turks crossed the river and captured some Vlachs from whom they learned that the entire army of Vlachs and Transylvanians had retreated into the mountains. The Vlachs, apart from their guards who were up in the mountains, never showed themselves. It was for this reason that the said Beirlabay, on the day after his departure from before the mountains, divided his army into three. He sent one section to harry Great Wallachia, which is downstream along the Danube, the other to Transylvania, which is upstream, and the third he kept with him to guard his camp.

Now Johannes de Hongnac, as you have heard, was with the Vlachs and Transylvanians. Knowing that the Turks were divided into three companies and having a poor opinion of their strength, he decided that he and his men would attack the Turkish camp, where there was neither watch nor guard, at dawn the following day. They did as decided and set out in three contingents, two to attack at each end of the encampment, and the third to attack the centre. Caught unawares by the assault, the Turks were quickly routed and killed. The fugitives, however, set out for the Danube, where some escaped and others drowned.

How Sir Jehan de Hongnac fought with the Turks and routed them

When the Vlachs had overrun the saracens' camp, they decided to put on the dead Turks' clothes. They sent spies to Transylvania and Wallachia to find out when the saracen raiders were returning, and received the report that the ones who had been sent to Transylvania were on their way back. The Vlachs therefore hid a large contingent of their men along the Turks' path, but allowed them nevertheless to pass beyond this ambush. The Turks were heavily laden with booty, and were bringing with them a great crowd of men and women whom they had captured as slaves, together with a great number of animals. Knowing nothing of the rout at the camp, the Turks arrived there in great joy and great triumph, drumming and shouting as if they had conquered the entire country. But the Vlachs who were in the camp dressed up as Turks soon made them forget their joy, as they attacked them, while the men from the ambush surrounded them. The Vlachs did the same to the ones who had gone to harry Wallachia. The rout was so overwhelming that, out of a hundred thousand Turks, more than sixty thousand died. The Vlachs acquired enormous riches and treasures.

The Turks who escaped by swimming the River Danube carried the news to the Grand Turk who was grieved beyond all measure and, as a sign of his great distress, he and all his entourage clothed themselves in black. Then, to avenge himself for the outrage which he said the Vlachs had perpetrated against him, he appointed one

of his subashis as a new Bailarbey and sent him through all his lands to assemble the greatest army that he could muster. He ordered them to cross the Danube and to go to Wallachia and Transylvania. There he was to destroy everything and to put everybody to the sword.

The new Berlabay put himself to great trouble to carry out the Grand Turk's order and, to give force to his fury, crossed the Danube with his great army. The Vlachs, however, had received warning of their arrival. They withdrew their people to the mountains and abandoned the plain in its entirety. Once at the foot of the mountains, the Turks, as they had done before, sent their raiders in great strength in the direction of Transylvania and Hungary. This time, however, the Turks who were guarding the camp were wiser than before. They had drawn themselves up in battle order, so that the Vlachs could not enter without putting themselves in great danger. It was for this reason that the Vlachs and their allies had decided not to fight the Turks until they were re-crossing the Danube, because the Vlachs had taken very good care that the Turks would not find any food in their country, and they knew well that they would never attack them in the mountains.

They waited like this for seven or eight days until the return of the Turkish raiders, who, as I said a little earlier, had gone to Transylvania and Hungary. They brought with them a great number of prisoners – men, women and children – together with as great a haul of cattle and other moveables as men-at-arms can transport in such circumstances. They were rapturously received by the men who were guarding the camp. However, because they had no food, apart from what they could carry with them, they decided to cross the Danube with all their spoils and to return to their country of Bulgaria. Having decided to do this, they departed. When the Vlachs saw that the Turks had decamped and were setting off towards the Danube, they sent their raiders and cavalry in pursuit, inflicting on them great damage. When the Turks reached the banks of the Danube, they began to cross in small boats, making their horses swim over the river. At this point, the Vlachs decided that they would not place any obstacles in their way or reveal their strength until most of the Turks had crossed. This they did, and as soon as they saw that a large number of Turks were by now on the other side of the river, and that the ones left on their side were not too strong for them, they advanced to do battle with them in fine array. They completely overwhelmed them, with more of them dying by drowning than by the sword.

However, the Captain of the Turks, called Beylarbay,⁹ escaped. He returned to the Grand Turk with as much of the spoils seized in Transylvania and the borders of Hungary as he could carry, thinking that the Grand Turk would welcome him on account of the enormous amount of booty that he was carrying. However, the Grand Turk had already heard about how his men had been routed when they were crossing the Danube and at once had the said Baylabey arrested and flung into prison. Nevertheless, he later summoned him and demanded that he render an account of the great army that he had given him to lead, and of which he had brought back hardly a half. This Baylarbey gave a lengthy account of how the defeat had happened. He

9 See note 7 above. The commander of this raid was Şihabeddin Pasha.

excused himself as far as he was able, but to no avail as the Grand Turk said to him: 'I want you to make amends to me for the men who lost their lives through your fault: those who would not have been defeated and killed as they were if you had preserved your loyalty and fought valiantly at their side. Instead, by fleeing and treacherously abandoning them, you caused their death and delivered them into the hands of the enemy and, for this reason, you must suffer the same pains that they endured.' The moment that he had finished speaking, he ordered his head to be cut off, and this is what was done. Then the Grand Turk swore a solemn oath after the Turkish manner that, from this day forward, he would never have a captain-general who went by the name of Beylarbay. He rapidly appointed another captain whom he called Karagabé,¹⁰ who had the same powers as those who, up until now, had, by custom and usage, been called Beylarbay.

Concerning what Johannes Hongnac, Captain of the Vlachs, did after he had routed the Turks, and the deliberations in Hungary to alleviate the distress in the country

Let us now return to Johannes Hongnac, Captain of the Vlachs. These, all of them, thanked our Lord for the handsome and manifest victories which he had secured against their enemies. But in the lands of Transylvania and Hungary, instead of joy there was great weeping and lamentation on account of the calamitous losses which the Turks had caused during their raid, carrying off men, women, children and all kinds of victuals and moveable property. It was for this reason that the great men of these lands assembled a general council of the three estates of these realms at Buda in the Hungarian marches. Johannes de Hongnac was summoned to this parliament, as were several other of the great lords of Wallachia, so that they could give advice and discuss what measures could be taken in future against the devastating Turkish raids. They were also to deliberate on what each of them should do personally if such sudden invasions were to continue. At the council, the lords of Hungary complained bitterly against the Emperor Frederick of Germany, the third of that name, who was holding prisoner their king, Lancelot, the son of Frederick's predecessor as Emperor.¹¹ The three estates of Hungary had sent ambassadors to Frederick on many occasions to negotiate the return of their King and natural lord, but each time the Emperor had refused. Seeing that without a king or a duke, their army could not campaign successfully against the Turkish tyranny, the general council took the decision to elect Johannes de Hongnac Voevode of the land of Hungary, which is as much as to say, in our language, supreme or general captain.

10 Karaca Bey, the beylerbeyi of Anatolia. The passage reflects Jehan de Wavrin's confusion over whether the word 'beylerbeyi' is the name of an office or a personal name.

11 Ladislaus 'the Posthumous', son of Albert of Austria, King of Hungary (1437–39) and Elizabeth, daughter of Sigismund, King of Hungary (1387–1437) and Holy Roman Emperor (1433–37).

How the Hungarians, in the absence of their natural lord, sent an ambassador to the King of Poland to make him their King and Lord

When the council had finished its deliberations, the Hungarians recognised that, although they had fought as hard as they could in this cause, they had no means of releasing their natural lord from the captivity of the German Emperor. So they appointed an ambassador whom they sent to King Lancelot¹² in Poland, a young man of only twenty, but one with the reputation of having the understanding of a forty-year-old. The Hungarians sent word to the King of Poland that, if he wished to come to Hungary, they would receive him as Lord and crown him King of their land, offering him homage and oaths of allegiance, and promising to serve him loyally as good and obedient subjects. They humbly begged him graciously to consent to come quickly to Hungary to lead them and save them from the wicked and villainous Turks, who had already caused such enormous damage with their raids.

When the embassy arrived in Poland, King Lancelot and his followers received it with great honour and respect. Before replying to their proposal, he ordered the three estates of his realm to appear before him on a certain day and there he laid before them the offer which the nobles and community of Hungary had made. The estates counselled him to accept such a noble office. Furthermore, they advised him to assemble a great host of men-at-arms in his own realms and take them with him, as a demonstration of his absolute willingness to help the Hungarians against the Turkish bedouins.¹³ He should, they advised, hold the public good of Hungary in high esteem and depart for the Kingdom of Hungary as soon as possible. King Lancelot of Poland accepted this advice and, as soon as he could, left for Hungary with a great army. There, the Count Palatine of Hungary, the Voevode and the great lords of the country received the King with the greatest respect and honour. They led him to the city of Buda and there, with great solemnity, crowned him and invested him with the Kingdom of Hungary.

The three estates of the Hungarian realm were present at the coronation, together with several counts and barons of the Kingdom of Poland. When the solemnities of the coronation were complete, the new King held a great parliament with the Polish barons and, in addition, several great lords of Wallachia in attendance. His aim was to hear opinions and to hold deliberations about how best in future to organise the resistance against the devious and wicked undertakings of the Great Turk. The King had been assured that the evil Turk, called Moradbay, was amassing a great force in the lands of Turkey, Anatolia and Greece, and that he was intending to invade Wallachia and Hungary in person and to reduce them to total subjection and obedience. In the parliament the new King decided, together with his princes and barons aforementioned, that he would assemble as great a force as he was able from Poland, Hungary and Wallachia, and in general from all the lands subject to his

12 Vladislav III of Poland (1434–44) and I of Hungary (1440–44).

13 If this is the correct translation of *beduins*. The misperception of the Ottomans as bedouins is one that has persisted into the works of some contemporary western historians.

rule. To encourage the men, as well as to find a way of raising the money, it was also agreed to send an embassy to our Holy Father the Pope, and to let him know of the excellent, great and honourable desire of the new King of Hungary to resist the ventures of the Grand Turk, the enemy of the Christian faith, in whose defence and exaltation he wished to become the champion. He humbly begged and requested him to strengthen him in this matter and help him to bring it to a successful conclusion. To achieve this, the Pope should send a legate, armed with knowledge and wisdom, and with indulgences. He should inform him that the King had never wished simply to defend himself against the onslaught of the Turk and his infidel legions, guarding only his own realms and lordships but, the better to protect his lands from oppression, he was determined to cross the River Danube and bring him to battle.

To cut a long story short, eminent ambassadors were chosen to go to Rome, to our Holy Father then reigning, Pope Eugene.¹⁴ He received them with great respect, listened willingly to the proposals of their ambassador, and kindly granted the legates their request. Our Holy Father then held a general council. Here, by the unanimous recommendation of the Cardinals and common consent of all the prelates gathered there, a most eminent churchman, a wise and worthy man called the Cardinal of St Angele,¹⁵ was chosen to make the journey, taking with him plenary indulgences, so as to stir up the people and to encourage them to fight the enemies of the faith. As it was an urgent matter, his needs were seen to quickly and, when he was ready, he set off with the ambassadors to King Lancelot in Hungary, provided with everything he had requested.

Once the Cardinal and the Hungarian ambassadors had departed, they travelled to the King as quickly as they could, since they were receiving daily reports that, in order to accomplish his plan, he had already assembled a great army. They arrived in the city of Buda where the King, counts, barons and all the commanders of the army were assembled. They all of them went out in triumph to greet and honour the new Cardinal. He was received with reverence, and at once expert preachers and qualified priests were chosen to leave at once and go throughout the two kingdoms to proclaim and preach the crusade. They were to carry graces, indulgences and pardons, which everyone could acquire through the campaign, either by going in person or by donating their possessions, in accordance with the means and ability of each contributor. When the preachers broadcast the marvellous graces of the Holy Father, they moved the hearts of the people to such devotion that a number of them, personally and at their own expense, took up arms to fight the infidel Turks and to defend the holy Christian faith. The others gave gold or silver to hire warriors.

When the army was all prepared and victuals had been collected to sustain the troops, King Lancelot set off for the River Danube. There, when he and all his company had received benediction and absolution from the Cardinal, they crossed the water and set off rapidly towards the city of Souffies¹⁶ where, the King had

14 Eugenius IV.

15 Cardinal Julian Cesarini.

16 Sofia.

been informed, the Grand Turk was in residence. The Christians went forward until they encountered the saracen raiders, at which point the two armies realised that they were so close to one another that there was nothing left but to fight. Because the Turk had a huge army and a countless number of men in comparison to the King, he kept to the open plain. The King was advised to keep to the narrower passes, more suitable for his small numbers, and this is what he did. Here, trusting to his numbers, the Turk attacked, and there was a prodigious battle between the two sides. Because such a vast number of the Turk's men were squeezed into the narrows where the Christians had their camp, they – that is, the saracens – could no longer move. The Hungarians and the Poles put up such a resistance against them that they slaughtered them like wild beasts, as those in front tried to retreat, while those in the rear wanted to advance. Thus the saracens were defeated at the cost of very little loss and hardly any resistance. The Grand Turk fled ignominiously, cursing his gods for this misadventure, since it is certain that more than forty thousand Turks died on that day and many were taken prisoner. Those who escaped with their lives did so only through flight. The Christians lost very few men in the battle against great gains in booty, because they acquired all the tents, pavilions, baggage, jewels and silver which the Turks – who had come heavily laden – had brought with them.¹⁷

King Lancelot camped in this spot with all his army, praising and glorifying our Lord Jesus Christ for their great victory. There was a miraculously large tent among the booty, the richest ever seen, since its interior was completely lined with crimson velvet. The Pontifical Legate and the King of Hungary and Poland stayed in the field for three days as befits true victorious champions, and held great deliberations to decide whether they should pursue the Turks or return to their country. The conclusion was that they should return to Hungary, together with the victory and the spoils, a decision which has since done great damage to Christianity, as you will hear. If they had crossed the mountains to Philipopolis¹⁸ and vigorously followed up their victory, they would, without fail, have reconquered all of Greece with very little effort, because Turkey was trembling in fear remembering the recent Christian victories.

When the Legate and the King of Hungary had returned to the city of Buda, the Legate sang mass in the great church and thanked our Lord God for the great victory which He had granted them. It was said that the cold weather had made them afraid to cross the mountains. A general council was then held in Buda, where it was decided that, in the following year, the King should once again assemble his forces and, as soon as August was over, ferry his army across the Danube and set out to conquer Greece. With this decision, everyone took leave of the King, who received promises from all his barons that they would return as soon as he summoned them. When this had been sworn, they all returned to their mansions, while the King

17 De Wavrin appears to be conflating two events: the occupation of Kasim Pasha's camp near Niš and the later battle at the Zlatitsa Pass, both of which he describes below, for a second time.

18 Philipopolis, Plovdiv.

and the Cardinal of St Angele remained in Buda. As soon as they could, they sent ambassadors to announce this splendid victory to our Holy Father the Pope and the reigning Emperor of Constantinople, who were both overjoyed at the news.

How the Emperor of Constantinople and the King of Hungary sent to our Holy Father the Pope to inform him of the splendid victories which our Lord had granted

When the Emperor of Constantinople learned the truth of these matters, he joined the young King of Hungary and Poland in sending a solemn embassy to our Holy Father, Pope Eugene. Through this embassy, they informed him of everything that had happened to make all Christendom rejoice so greatly, and insistently urged our Holy Father to support this undertaking and to invite the Christian princes as well as communes such as Venice, Genoa, Florence and others. Each one of them, they said, should arm a fleet of galleys and other great ships to guard the Straits of Constantinople against invasion by the Turks, and to prevent the Turks crossing from Turkey or Anatolia to Greece. In this way, the conquest of Greece would be easy.

Our Holy Father received the news gladly and readily undertook his duty to inform the kings and princes of Christendom. In particular, he informed Duke Philip of Burgundy and Brabant,¹⁹ whom he knew to be a very Christian and worthy prince, in the hope that he would be willing to do everything he could to help Christendom. When the good Duke received this news, he was overcome by the desire to equip an expedition that would be in praise of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the benefit of Christendom. However, since he did not exactly know how he could or should deliver the help that he wanted to provide, he despatched a knight of his court to Rome, called the Lord of Conté, brother of Cardinal De Therewane,²⁰ with instructions about what to say to our Holy Father the Pope.

When the Lord of Conté departed for Rome, the Duke of Burgundy was at the town of Challon on the Sonne,²¹ accompanied by the Duke of Bourbon, the Duke of Savoy, the Count of Nevers and several other counts and barons. When he was there, an ambassador called Theodore Crystino²² arrived from the Emperor of Constantinople to see the Duke, who received him with great honour. The said Theodore presented him with letters of credence from his lord the Emperor, whose contents you will hear: the Emperor, after presenting his compliments to the Duke, addressed him as a most Christian prince, famous for his active desire to help the Christians against the infidels. He told him, furthermore, about the magnificent victories that the Vlachs and the King of Hungary had achieved against the Turks, and likewise about the wish of the same Hungarians and Vlachs to set out to conquer Greece. He told him about how the King of Hungary had asked him, the Emperor of Constantinople, to

19 Philip the Good (1419–67).

20 De Théroutanne.

21 Chalon-sur-Saône.

22 Karystinos.

do all that was within his power to defend the Strait of Constantinople, so that the Turks could not cross into Greece. The Emperor, however, was not strong enough to resist them without the help of our Holy Father the Pope, the Venetians and other Christian princes and peoples. The said Theodore made plain to the Duke the misery which the Emperor suffered, living under the oppression of the Turk: 'Most noble prince,' he said, 'imagine in your heart. If you and your subjects lived in such a state of want and subjection to the wicked enemies of the faith, you too would beg and pray for help. So, too, our Emperor, and all his Christian people over there beyond are crying out to you, to you as a powerful prince, famous for compassion, for you to help them.' The ambassador addressed the Duke with these and many other fine, sweet words with which he was equipped, moving the Duke to pity and compassion. Then the Duke retired with his council and called the Lord of Wavrin,²³ to whom he had entrusted the protection of the ambassador, and said to him: 'Ask the Legate how I could most effectively help the Emperor and his people.'

The Lord of Wavrin asked the ambassador in the Duke's name. He replied that the best thing would be for the Duke to send the Emperor as many galleys and well-armed ships as he could, in order to assist him in guarding the straits. When the Lord of Wavrin had reported his reply to the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke summoned the ambassador and told him that he had no galleys in his lands. However, he was having three built at Nisse²⁴ in Provence, where he also had a fine round ship and a caravel, which would be a start. Addressing the ambassador, the Duke added: 'Could you tell us where we can procure galleys?' To this the ambassador replied: 'Send men, artillery and money to Constantinople, and the Emperor will deliver four to you.'

At this point, the Lord of Wavrin, feeling that it would be too hazardous to send men and money such a distance, spoke separately to the Duke (because he had been to Venice and seen what a large number of galleys the Venetians possessed): 'My lord, as friends you have the Venetians who do business with you daily in your land of Flanders. If you were to send to the Doge and Signoria with the request that they lend you four galleys for your fleet, they would not refuse. After all, the fleet would be as much for their good as for the Emperor's. You will notice that, when you had offered him the three galleys of Nice, your great ship and your caravel, the ambassador asked only for four galleys armed in Constantinople. With this, my lord, you will be able to take advice and deliberate on whatever it will please you to do.'

At this, the Duke said to the ambassador that he had heard and taken note of everything that he had proposed, and of the request which he had brought from his lord the Emperor, adding that his greatest wish in the world was to help Christianity to the best of his ability. For the moment, he told him, he was withdrawing to his residence.

In order to determine the reply to be given to the ambassador, the Duke next held a number of consultations on the matter. Then, without further delay, he and

23 Waleran de Wavrin, who was to command the Burgundian flotilla sent to guard the straits.

24 Nice.

his council despatched a rider carrying letters to the Doge and Signoria of Venice to find out whether they could provide them with four galleys. A few days later, when the Duke and his council had decided on the reply which they would give the ambassador, they summoned him into their presence. Duke Philip himself spoke to him.

‘You know’, he said, ‘that, to bring aid to Christianity, I have offered the Emperor three galleys and a galliot which I have equipped in Provence, as well as a great ship and a caravel which were originally destined for the assistance of Rhodes. In addition to these, you have asked me to arm four more galleys in Constantinople which, you say, the Emperor will lend me. However, since I know that the Venetians have innumerable galleys and that they are more than ready to oblige me, whether by loan or purchase, I shall arm the four galleys in Venice. That makes, in all, seven galleys, a galleass, a great ship and a caravel. You should tell the Emperor of Constantinople that I shall send them, well armed and well equipped, to the assistance of him and Christianity. To command this fleet, I have appointed the Lord of Wavrin, here present, as my lieutenant and as captain-general of the fleet on the confines of Greece and the Levant. I have determined to entrust to you letters that I have written to the Emperor, which you will carry to him on our behalf.’

The ambassador took leave of the Duke of Burgundy, very happy with this reply. On his departure, the Duke gave him many fine rich gifts, so that he left in high spirits, having also taken leave of the Lord of Wavrin. Then he hurried to Constantinople, where he told the Emperor what he had done and what he had achieved.

How the Grand Turk fled back to the city of Adrianople after his defeat

Seeing that the fortunes of battle had turned against him and that he could do nothing to recover his losses on that day, the Turk took flight. So too did everyone who could escape and took refuge in the city of Adrianople in Greece. The Turk was distraught and in deep mourning, because he had in fact lost the best and greatest men in his army. As quickly as he could, he crossed over the Straits of St George²⁵ into Turkey and into Anatolia. Here, more than once, he took counsel with the wise men of his realm, to discuss how he could recover the severe losses which he had suffered, for he admitted that the Hungarians and Vlachs together formed a great power, and one much to be feared in battle. Everyone whom he had assembled advised him to send to the castle of Nicopolis to summon the Lord of Wallachia whom he had imprisoned in shackles. This he did.

When the Lord of Wallachia arrived, the Grand Turk told him that he wanted to institute a good peace and a concord with him. If he would promise and swear an oath that neither he nor any of his subjects would make war against him, he for his part would promise and swear an oath to send him home to his country, free and at liberty. He assured him in his letters that he would never make war against him and,

25 The Dardanelles.

furthermore, that if he had to wage war against whomsoever it might be, he would bring aid and assistance at his own expense. Now he had already held the Lord of Wallachia prisoner for a miserable four years, causing him to suffer extreme pain and distress from which he had never expected to escape except by death. Consequently, he was overjoyed at this opportunity and agreed to everything that the Grand Turk had asked. In order to satisfy him, the Grand Turk, for his part, swore an oath and had letters drawn up confirming everything that he had promised. Thus the Grand Turk sent the Lord of Wallachia safe and sound back into his own country, where he was honourably and happily received as someone much loved by his people. However, when his men learned the details of the agreement, by which neither he nor they could make war on the Grand Turk during his lifetime, some were very happy and others very distressed: that is, the young who take up arms often and gladly, and the elderly and peaceable who wanted only peace and quiet.

I shall tell you more about the Lord of Wallachia when it is time to return to him, but now I shall tell you about the men whom the Cardinal Legate and the King of Hungary had sent to our Holy Father in Rome and to Venice. These had returned to Hungary, bringing with them the news that the Pope had decided to equip a great fleet and that the Emperor of Constantinople, the Duke of Burgundy and the Venetians were doing the same. They were sending the ships to guard the Strait of Romania, known as St George's Arm. They gave this report of what our Holy Father had said to the Legate and the King of Hungary in the month of April, 1443, and they were greatly heartened by the news.

How our Holy Father the Pope, the King of Hungary and the Venetians decided to bring aid and succour to Christendom

Since the battle, the Legate and the King of Hungary had made great efforts to find out how the Grand Turk Moratbey was faring and what he was doing. They soon had news of how he had freed the Lord of Wallachia, how he was building great fortresses throughout his lands, and asking assistance from all the neighbouring infidel lords, informing them that he had instituted a good peace and a union with the Lord of Wallachia and all his Vlach subjects. His intention was to invade Hungary before the end of August to avenge himself for the injuries that had been done to him, and to compensate himself for the damage and losses which he had recently suffered at the hands of the Hungarians.

When the Pontifical Legate the Cardinal of St Angele and the King of Hungary received the news, they assembled the three estates of the realm and held a great council to discuss what they should do in view of the intelligence given above. They advised that the King should make a more extensive levy of troops than ever before, in Poland as well as in Hungary, in Wallachia and elsewhere, and in other Christian places among his areas of jurisdiction and alliance. Then, when he heard that the Turk had crossed the mountain, he would go with all his forces to encounter him, and not allow him to enter his lands.

The King accepted this advice and so despatched envoys throughout Hungary, Poland, Wallachia and even to Bohemia, to seek the help of some of his friends, several of whom came. However, when the Lord of Wallachia was approached for his assistance, he excused himself, informing the King and the Legate that he could not, in all good faith, do this, in view of the weighty oaths that he had sworn before the Grand Turk never to take up arms against him. He told them that it was by this agreement that he had escaped the dangers of imprisonment and death. When he heard this reply, the Cardinal of St Angele, Legate of our Holy Father the Pope, sent back to him to give dispensation absolving him from his oaths.

Despite this, the King kept his army in readiness to go and meet the Turk the moment he heard that he was coming. The months of August and September passed like this and then, at the end of October, he had news that the Turk was at Philopoly,²⁶ ready to cross the mountains. At this, the King and the Legate advanced with all their mighty host against the saracens. The two armies marched against each other until the Turks had crossed the mountains and lodged in the plain below. The King of Hungary camped a league away, in tents and pavilions. He resided in his own person in the great tent which he had won from the Turk in the previous year. Then the King summoned his herald-at-arms from Hungary, and ordered him to go, clad in the manner belonging to his office, to announce to the Grand Turk that the battle would take place on the following day.

The herald tried to excuse himself, saying that the Turks did not make use of officers-at-arms, and that he did not even know the language. As a result, they would kill him a hundred times over before he could reach the Grand Turk, if such a thing were possible. But the King replied: 'You must go there. I have faith in God that He will guide you.' So, in fear and trembling, the herald-at-arms, dressed in a herald's costume, mounted his horse in obedience to his lord, to carry out the task that he had commanded. However, he had hardly accomplished half the journey when he encountered several Turks, Albanians and renegade Slavs. These took him prisoner and, because the languages of Slavonia and Hungary somewhat resembled one another, the Slavs asked him where he was going and what he wanted. He replied that he was officer-at-arms to the King of Hungary, who had sent him to take a message to the Grand Turk, and requested them to guide him there. They at once led him to the Grand Turk, to whom, after giving greetings and paying respects, he revealed the mission which his master had entrusted to him. When the Turk had duly listened to him, he replied that it was in order to fight his master that he had left his country and crossed the mountains, and that his master the King could certainly have his battle on the following day.

When he had received this reply, the herald-at-arms returned safely to make his report to the Legate and the King of Hungary, and to bear witness, on behalf of the Turk, that next day he would advance against them in battle array. The Legate and the King of Hungary at once informed the princes, lords and captains of their army to make their confessions that night and to put their consciences in order. At daybreak,

26 Plovdiv.

the Legate would sing mass in the great tent and then, when everyone was ranged for battle, he would give them general absolution. So everyone, according to his estate, made his confession and cleared his conscience, the Cardinal sang mass and, when they were arrayed for battle, gave them full absolution for all their sins. With this, their strength and morale increased by half. They were happier than before and eager to discharge their duties in the encounter with their enemies.

The Grand Turk had drawn up his army in three lines of battle, and the King did the same. The Legate had the cross set up and carried before him, while the King unfurled his banner and deployed his battalions against the Turks in the name of Jesus Christ. They clashed one with the other and, as they fought, it was for a long time impossible to tell who would be victorious. But the Christians made such a valiant showing that, although they were few in number by comparison with the Turks, with the aid of our Lord Jesus Christ, they put them to rout. The Grand Turk fled into his mountains, and all who could escape the battle alive followed. Respected knights have reported that more than thirty thousand saracens died in the clash, excluding those who were taken prisoner. The battle was fought in November 1443. The Christians rejoiced greatly at the resounding victory that God had granted them, because they won a great deal.²⁷

Next day the Cardinal sang mass again and everyone received the command to thank our Lord for their good fortune. The King in counsel with his barons took the decision to set out on the following day to cross the mountains and follow up his victory. They were certain that if they could cross the mountain passes they could conquer all of Greece before the Turk was able to assemble a large army. However, as the Turk fled through the mountains, he ordered the peasants living along the way to fell as many trees as they could, so that the defiles would be so obstructed with wood and stone that the Hungarians would have the greatest difficulty in passing through. They set about with a will to fulfil the Turk's command as best they could.

So the Legate, the King and all the Christian army set off to cross the mountains, but the trees, rocks and other obstacles which the Turks had laid across the roads greatly hindered their passage. What is more, dame fortune who until then had been so kind to the Christians turned her back on them. A great cold with wind and frost set in among the mountains, and for three days so much snow fell that neither the Legate nor the King, nor the lords could offer counsel or remedy as to what to do for the best. They did not know whether to advance or to return. The men and horses without shelter died of hardship and cold. For this reason, and taking everything into consideration, the Legate, the King and the lords finally took the decision to retreat in the face of these obstacles, and sent men ahead on foot to investigate the roads. But however wisely they acted, more than half of their men and at least a third of their horses had died before they escaped from this danger. It seemed like a miracle of God that some had survived. For those Christians who perished there in such distress, there was misery, pain and loss. But the mystery must reside with our Lord

27 This passage seems to refer to the Hungarian victory over Kasim Pasha near Niš.

who had tested their devotion and will, and who, as a reward for their sufferings, would, through martyrdom, give them a place in His paradise.²⁸

The Legate, the King and all who survived returned to Hungary, to Buda in two contrasting states: one in joy and exaltation for the great victory won against the Turks, and the other in mourning for their friends who had perished as martyrs amidst the snow and ice. After they had returned, the Legate, the King and the estates of his realm held great councils to discuss the situation. They in the end decided that the Legate, the Cardinal of St Angele, should leave the King of Hungary's court and go quickly to our Holy Father the Pope. In every place that he passed through, he should announce the great victories that he and the King had won against the Turks. However, he was to keep quiet about the losses that the Christians had suffered in the mountains, contradicting anyone who said anything about them.

* * *²⁹

Let us now talk about our Holy Father's fleet, under the command of his nephew, the Cardinal of Venice;³⁰ about the Duke of Burgundy's fleet which his lieutenant the Lord of Wavrin was to lead; and finally about the Venetian fleet under Sir Pierre Leuridan.³¹ Since their galleys were ready before the Lord of Wavrin's, the Cardinal and Sir Pierre Leuridan left the port of Venice on 22 July 1443,³² and the Lord of Wavrin at about the end of the same month. They sailed until they reached Thenedon,³³ a seaport where the Greek princes landed when they went to lay siege to Troy. When the Lord of Wavrin learned that this was the precise port in which the Greeks had arrived, he asked the people who knew the area whether it was far to the spot where the great city of Troy was located. They told him that he could not go through the straits without passing by the port of Dardanelle, which had once been the principal harbour of the great Trojan city, and exactly the place where the Greeks had landed. Now Sir Pietre Vas³⁴ and Sir Gauvain Quieret were present when he asked this, and because, if there were Turks at this port, the Lord of Wavrin was

28 This passage describes the battle of the Zlatitsa Pass.

29 At this point, Jehan de Wavrin inserts an account, omitted from this translation, of Geoffroy de Thoisy's expedition to assist the Knights of St John on Rhodes against the Mamluks in the summer of 1444.

30 Cardinal Condulmer, nephew of Pope Eugenius IV.

31 Pietro Loredan.

32 In fact, 1444.

33 The island of Tenedos, commanding the entrance to the Dardanelles from the Aegean.

34 De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

eager to go ashore and have done with them,³⁵ they advised him to land first at the port of Dardanelle,³⁶ provided this was considered to be feasible.

Now on the second day after their arrival in the port of Thenedon they had a favourable wind. They set off through the straits leading to Constantinople, sailing until they reached the port of Dardanelle, where they cast anchor. There they noticed several Turks coming towards them on foot and on horseback. The Lord of Wavrin gave the command to bring the galleys close to the shore, ready for landing. But the weather was turning dark and gloomy with a rising wind, so the captains and seamen advised against approaching the shore. If a storm blew up, it was obvious that the galleys would be driven ashore and lost. They had therefore to push the galleys' boats out into the water and to land in several stages.

On that day, Sir Gauvin Quieret carried the Duke of Burgundy's pennant, and everyone was ordered to remain in good order close to the pennant. There was a Venetian gentleman called Sir Cristofle³⁷ in the Lord of Wavrin's galley, a relative of the Doge of Venice. The Doge had asked the Lord of Wavrin to take him in his galley as far as Constantinople. Sir Cristofle asked the Lord of Wavrin if he could land with the others, and requested him to make him a knight, which he did. When everyone who had been selected was ashore, those Turks who were on foot advanced to give battle and to fire their arrows against the Christians. Ten archers, six men with hand-held culverins and a dozen or so men from the galleys drew up in order, with the command not to advance ahead of one another. However, an English bowman – a gentleman in the following of Sir Pietre Vas – tried to show off in front of the others, by abandoning his position and going on ahead of the other archers. These, in their turn, wanted to prove that they were as brave as he was and, abandoning the battle order which they had been commanded to keep, began to rush forward to catch up. The Turks saw them advancing in disarray and pretended to flee. The archers and the other companions set off in pursuit, until a Turkish subashi who was on horseback beside the footmen, accompanied by sixteen to twenty horsemen, cut off the road between the Christian bowmen who were pursuing the Turkish infantry and the men guarding the pennant. Among these was the Lord of Wavrin, who had made the aforementioned Cristofle Cocq a knight. They set off swiftly to help their men. The archers and the companions from the galleys conducted themselves so well, that with the rapid and effective help that they received, they compelled the Turks, both the infantry and the cavalymen, to take flight. Two Turks were left dead in the field, together with two companions from the Venetian galleys, armed only with shields. As was discovered later, several Turks were wounded. In addition, thirty of our own archers were wounded, and their jerkins torn by Turkish bowshot, but they captured

35 There was a widespread belief in the fifteenth century that the Turks were descendants of the Trojans. In wishing to land at the Dardanelles, De Wavrin is hoping to re-enact the Greek landing in the Trojan war.

36 Çanakkale.

37 Cristofero Cocco.

five lances from the Turkish cavalrymen, which were neither long nor thick and had iron tips of very poor quality.

Then the Turks retreated and the Christians returned to their galleys. Next day there was a favourable wind and they left the port of Dardanelle, sailing so well that on the fourth day they reached Gallipoli. Here they found the Venetian fleet and the fleet of our Holy Father in a port called Lapso,³⁸ opposite the town of Gallipoli on the Turkish shore. When they saw the Lord of Wavrin arriving with his oared galleys, they came out to meet him and they welcomed one another. Here the Cardinal – who was extremely ill with fever – and the Lord of Wavrin took the decision that, next day, they should leave for Constantinople to see the Emperor. However, they agreed to take only two galleys each. The rest would stay to keep guard before Gallipoli. The Lord of Wavrin appointed Sir Pietre Vas commander of the two galleys which he was leaving behind. When our lords arrived in Constantinople, the Emperor received them with great joy.

How the King of Hungary was amazed that he had heard no news from the Cardinal of St Angele

It is now time to talk about the King of Hungary and the Cardinal of St Angele who, as I said earlier, had gone to our Holy Father in Rome to seek aid and assistance. The King of Hungary had heard no news of the Cardinal or of the fleet which was in preparation in Venice. For this reason, he was terrified that the entire army would be defeated and that he would receive no help from that quarter. Meanwhile the Turk, through the Genoese, knew all about the fleet that was under construction in Venice and was very afraid. He spread a rumour in Hungary that the fleet had been destroyed and that our Holy Father and the Venetians could not come to an agreement. This greatly disconcerted the King of Hungary. Then, as soon as he had spread this tale, the Turk sent an ambassador to the King of Hungary to make a solid peace with him. When the King of Hungary received no news from the Cardinal of St Angele and it was rumoured in his lands that he would receive no help from the Christians beyond the sea, he assembled his council. Here it was decided that he should make peace with the Grand Turk on condition that the Grand Turk cede to the King of Hungary several castles and passes situated on the River Danube. This he did, and so the peace between them was concluded, sworn and signed.

Immediately after the agreement between the King of Hungary and the Grand Turk had been made and sworn, the Cardinal of St Angele arrived in Hungary from Rome and became extremely angry at the news of the peace. He severely reprimanded the King and everyone on his council, and said that such a peace could never and should never be made without the permission of our Holy Father. However, the King and lords of Hungary defended themselves against this accusation, saying that it was he who had been at fault. They had received no news from him, and there was

38 Lapseki.

a widespread rumour in Hungary that our Holy Father and the Venetians could not agree. He had taken too long to let them know what our Holy Father had willed. Furthermore, in view of the great losses of men and horses which they had suffered in the previous year, as has been recounted above, if the Turks were to attack, they would lack the strength to fight and repel them. These considerations had constrained them to make peace when it was sought of them and, anyway, it seemed to them to be a great achievement to have won back the castles and passes along the River Danube.

Despite this, and despite everything else the Hungarians could say to him, the Cardinal of St Angele was still outraged at the peace that had been concluded. He told them repeatedly that the peace was invalid, given that our Holy Father had not agreed to it, and that it could not be made without his licence and authorisation. He regarded the peace as null and void and said that, with the powers which our Holy Father had delegated to him, he would release them from the oath to keep the peace, which they had sworn in the name of God. He ordered them, through our Holy Father the Pope, to treat the peace which had been concluded as invalid and null. He said to them: 'Do you really think that, if the Turk had the strength to encounter you in battle, he would have approached you to make peace and surrendered the fortresses? Certainly not! Our Holy Father has heard from Genoese and Venetian merchants that the Turk is in such an abject state, and has lost so much in previous battles against you and others, that he is at a loss as to how to recover his forces. Now is the time to re-conquer Greece, or never!' He added that the fleets of our Holy Father, the Duke of Burgundy and Venice were already at Constantinople to guard the straits.

The Cardinal of St Angele preached so widely in the Hungarian lands that he persuaded the King and the lords to break the peace which they had made with the Turks. The Cardinal granted them absolution from their oaths and promises. The King sent letters throughout the Kingdom of Hungary, and to Poland and Bohemia, telling them to come at once, fully armed. He informed them of our Holy Father's wishes, and that it was his intention, God willing, to re-conquer all of Greece, since the Turk lacked the strength to give battle. The King made strenuous efforts to assemble as many men as he was able. He sent to the Lord of Wallachia who agreed to send a certain number of Vlachs to accompany the King, but declared that he would not take up arms in person.

This army assembled in the autumn, that is to say after August. The Cardinal of St Angele was afraid that the news of the peace might spread to Constantinople and come to the attention of our Christian fleet that was at anchor there. He was afraid that, if they were told about it, they would each return to their own country. He therefore took special care. He found three men who could speak Turkish, dressed them as Turks and sent them to Constantinople by three different routes, so that if one were to be captured, the other would escape and his message would reach its destination. He gave each of them letters addressed to the Christians who were guarding the sea, informing them that the King of Hungary would soon be coming to Greece in full strength, and that if, by any chance, they heard rumours of a peace

between the King of Hungary and the Turk, they were to ignore it, because it was nothing but a trick.

We shall now leave the King of Hungary and the Cardinal of St Angele for a while, and tell you about the fleet which was under the command of the Cardinal of Venice and the Lord of Wavrin. They were in Constantinople on their way to the Emperor, where they received orders to guard the Strait of Constantinople.

The orders which the Emperor, the Cardinal of Venice and the Lord of Wavrin gave to guard the Straits of Constantinople and of the Black Sea

Orders were given that the galleys of our Holy Father and of Venice, together with two from the Duke of Burgundy, should keep guard at the Strait of Gallipoli, which was the Turks' principal crossing-point. The Lord of Wavrin, with all the galleys which the King of Hungary had armed and sent, was to keep guard between Constantinople and the Black Sea. Immediately after they had all taken up their positions, the Turks came and signalled that they wished to speak to the men in the galleys. The Lord of Wavrin refused to countenance this, saying that they were simply tricksters who wanted to see the galleys, the fleet, and how they operated. However, the Ragusan captain of the King of Hungary's galleys told the Lord of Wavrin that there would be no harm in listening to what they had to say. The galleys were in good condition and they could not but form a good impression of them.

So two Turks were issued with a safe-conduct to come and talk to the Lord of Wavrin. The moment they arrived they asked whose were the galleys and men on board, and who had sent them there. When they heard that they belonged to the Duke of Burgundy, they replied that they were not at war with the Duke, and asked why they had come to fight. To this they received the reply: 'At the command of our Holy Father the Pope, who has sent the fleet here in the straits to bring assistance to the King of Hungary.' They immediately replied that their lord the Turk had made a good peace with the King of Hungary, and that they could fully prove this with the evidence of his seal. They offered several times to go and fetch the letters of the treaty, begging them to have a look at them. The Hungarian captain advised the Lord of Wavrin to let them go and fetch them, saying that he would look at them willingly. The request was therefore granted, and they returned to a castle situated on the River Legro. They came back straightaway, bringing with them the treaty concluded between the Great Turk and the King of Hungary. After scrutinising it at length, the captain of the galleys concluded that the peace had indeed been made, and that there was no reason to go to war. However, he did not let the Turks know this, and gave no indication of wishing to put an end to hostilities.

In the meantime, the Turks had shown the peace treaty to our Christians in the fleet at Gallipoli. The Lord of Wavrin was advised to go to Constantinople to warn the Emperor and also the Cardinal of Venice, legate to the papal fleet, about this piece of news. When he reached the port of Constantinople, one of the galleys from Gallipoli was already there, bringing the same news.

When the Lord of Wavrin met up with the Cardinal of Venice, he found him utterly bewildered by the news of the peace. However, when they were all there together, one of the three messengers arrived from Hungary and presented his letters from the Cardinal of St Angele. After offering salutations, the letters stated, in brief, that if they heard any news of a peace between the Grand Turk and the King of Hungary, they should not believe a word of it. Rather, in October, the King of Hungary would set out with a great army. He would cross the Danube into Greece, which he would re-conquer. Meanwhile they were to keep a close and watchful guard on the straits to stop the Turks crossing. Everyone was delighted to hear this news, because previously they had not known what to do – whether to stay or whether to leave –, but now the content of the letters gave them assurance. There was an immediate order for everyone to return to his watch on the straits. The Cardinal sent the galley which had brought him the news back to the fleet off Gallipoli, to inform them of what the letters from Hungary said, and to beseech them, for the sake of God, to keep a close guard on the straits. The Lord of Wavrin went back to his men, who were waiting for him at the entrance to the Black Sea. He told them the news from Hungary and they were overjoyed.

Soon afterwards, Genoese merchants informed our Christians that the Grand Turk had learned that the King of Hungary had broken the peace, and that he was assembling a great host of men wherever he could find them, preparatory to crossing the Straits of Constantinople from Turkey into Greece. The Lord of Wavrin and the captain of the Hungarian galleys received the information that the Turk was going to cross where they were keeping watch, because the fleet off Gallipoli was too strong, with more than twenty galleys. They also heard that the Genoese were intending to do all they could to help the Turks.³⁹ As you will hear, this turned out to be true because, making a pretence of going fishing, the Genoese delivered two large boats to the Turks, who were in a newly built castle⁴⁰ near to the straits, on a river which flows down there. The Lord of Wavrin and the Hungarians paid no attention to this, since the Genoese pretended to be their friends. As they returned from Turkey to Constantinople, passing through the fleet, they told only lies and falsehoods. Meanwhile, some Venetians crossed to Turkey, pretending to be Genoese. On their return, they reported that at the New Castle, they had seen twenty or more large boats, with well-greased hulls and furnished with oars and other equipment. The Genoese had delivered the boats to the Turks, while the Grand Turk Moratbey had sent word through the same Genoese to Chailly, the Pasha⁴¹ and guardian of his son Machometbey.⁴² He ordered him to come, as soon as he could and with the largest force that he could assemble in Greece, to the near shore of the Straits of

39 The Ottoman–Genoese alliance dated from the 1350s. See Introduction.

40 Presumably Anadolu Hisarı, situated on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus at its narrowest point.

41 The Grand Vizier Halil Pasha.

42 Mehmed II, in whose favour Murad II had abdicated in August 1444.

Constantinople opposite the New Castle, with as many bombards and cannon as he could muster. On the day he came, he would be there with part of his army.

How the Turk crossed the Straits of the Black Sea with his army before our galleys could do him any harm

When the Lord of Wavrin and the captain of the Hungarian galleys heard this news, they inspected the straits, from Constantinople up to the Black Sea, with all their ships, to work out what they could do to prevent the Turk from crossing. They noticed that the sea there was so narrow that a culverin could fire from one side to the other, that is from Turkey to Greece or from Greece to Turkey, and that by day the Turks were discharging cannon whose shots passed over the galleys. Taking all this into consideration, they jointly came to the conclusion that if the Turk came to the Turkish shore in force and his captain Chailly the Pasha was on the opposite side, with all his cannon and artillery, it would be impossible either to stand firm in the strait or to block his passage. Furthermore, the Black Sea is a sea that has only one point of entry, with the result that everything that enters it must also exit that way. Now all the great rivers of the world which flow into that sea produce such a current in the straits that a galley can proceed against the current only with oars, and even then with great difficulty. So they sent Sir Gauvain Quieret, Lord of Dreves, and Jehan Bayart,⁴³ treasurer of the fleet, to the Emperor, to tell him that it was impossible on their own to stop the Turk from crossing, so long as he occupied both shores, that is Turkey and Greece. He, the Emperor, should, for the sake of God, collect all his forces to combat the Turks who were coming to the Greek shore. For his part, the Lord of Wavrin offered to come ashore from the galleys with all his men and be the first into battle. At the same time, they instructed the Cardinal of Venice, who was in Constantinople, to do all in his power to urge the Emperor to provide what was asked for, and to immediately engage the men of Greece in battle, that is Chailly the Pasha, who was approaching in great strength to join forces with the Turk.

When the Emperor heard what was going on, he replied as follows: ‘I possess only this city of Constantinople which has few inhabitants. If I send them into battle, I know that they are not exactly powerful. I do not wish to put myself and my city in danger of total ruin, because once Constantinople is lost, the Turks will easily conquer the entire Greek empire. Do the best you can, and when he comes, I shall send two galleys to your assistance.’ To this, the Lord of Dreves and Lord Jehan Bayard replied: ‘So long as the Turk occupies both shores, it is impossible for the galleys to take up their position in the straits.’ Nonetheless, the delegates could not extract any other reply from the Emperor. They reported this to the lords who had sent them, and all of them agreed to do the best that it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to grant.

43 De Wavrin’s spelling of the name is inconsistent.

As has been said, the Turks enjoyed the services of the Genoese. One night, they found a way of ferrying some of their forces across the straits below Gallipoli without our men in the galleys realising. They advised the Grand Turk himself to cross over the Straits of Constantinople at the New Castle.

On about 15 October 1444, Chailly the Pasha occupied the right-hand shore of the sea – that is, the Greek side – with all the army of Greece, consisting of seven- or eight thousand Turks. They fired at the galleys with the cannon and culverins which the Genoese of Pera had delivered to them. When the crews of our galleys saw them going to and fro among the Turks, they too fired at them, but came off worse, because the Turks, who were on land, could take shelter, while they could not.

Next day in the morning, the Grand Turk arrived on the Turkish side with three- or four thousand soldiers, and lodged in a crimson tent on the shore of the straits, below the New Castle in the direction of the Black Sea. After him, a good five or six camels came down from the mountains, all covered in red and carrying, as we knew, metal from which cannon and bombards were cast on the following night. Next morning they fired these at our galleys. Our men soon noticed that the Turks were boarding the boats which they had received from the Genoese. They raised their anchors and positioned themselves in front of them to block their passage. However, as soon as the galleys approached, they retreated to the shores on the Turkish or Greek side, where the Turks sheltered them, defending them with gunshot and other missiles wherever they were in range. The galleys were too weak to engage them on land, and therefore returned to anchor, since the strength of the current made it impossible for them to hold their position by oar. As soon as the Turks saw that they had dropped their anchors, they once again started to cross, and once again the crews of the galleys lifted their anchors and went after in pursuit. However, because of the people patrolling on the shore, they could do them no harm.

As dusk was falling, it happened that a great storm and a tempest blew up from the Black Sea, and the current coming down from this sea became so strong that the galleys lacked the oar power to go upstream to encounter the enemy. As a result, during the night many Turks were able to board the boats upstream, which carried them to the Greek shore. This tempest and gale was like something diabolical, so strong that the galleys could scarcely stay at anchor. For this reason, when the Turks saw that the storm was on their side, they took it to be a favour of their Gods. They had set up their bombards and cannons on each shore, inflicting great damage on the galleys. Some were holed or splintered and some members of the crews were dead or wounded.

The Emperor of Constantinople had sent two galleys, which were stationed behind the galleys of Burgundy and Hungary. As if by some miracle, the cannon balls passed over the Burgundian ships and struck the ones belonging to the Emperor, damaging them more than any other. The Turk had set up a great bombard against the galleys, throwing a ball of at least forty inches in diameter. It fired three shots near the galleys, terrifying those who were inside but, with God's help, it burst on the third shot without hurting a single Christian. If it had scored a direct hit on a galley,

it would, with the stormy weather, the swift current and the help of the devil, have sent it to the bottom of the sea.

So the Turks crossed in two days and two nights, something which they could not have done in a fortnight if the galleys had been able to go upstream against the current. While our galleys were holding themselves at anchor, a Turk appeared on the sea-wall, raising a little white pennant on the tip of a lance, a thing which, in their custom, indicates security and a wish to speak with someone. The Lord of Wavrin was advised to raise a similar pennant on his galley, and the Turk came in a boat to talk to him in safety. This is what he said: 'The King of Hungary and the Hungarians have perjured and violated their oath. Moratbay is going to do battle against them.' Striking his hand on the hilt of his sword, he added: 'But by this sword, we shall be victorious.' With this he departed.

And so, as you have heard, the pagans crossed from Turkey to Greece. In truth, it is impossible for galleys to guard the straits unless they control one of the two shores.

How the Turk went to reside in Adrianople after he had crossed the straits, there to await the King of Hungary and his army

When the Turk and his army had crossed over the straits below Gallipoli and near the New Castle, he went to encounter the King of Hungary. He took with him all the people of Greece, Christians as well as saracens, all unarmed and of little account. At least this is what the people who saw them reported. The King of Hungary, however, did not have his army ready as early as he had expected, and its strength was only half what he had hoped for. This was because Emperor Frederick of Germany⁴⁴ was waging war against the Hungarians for having elected, as has been said above, the brave King Lancelot of Poland as their governor. The Emperor had in his custody the real King of Hungary,⁴⁵ whom he had refused to hand over to the lords of his country when they had asked. The King of Hungary did not cross the Danube until October, and even then his army was small because he had to leave garrisons to fight the Germans. As a result, he had with him only about eight thousand men, Hungarians, Poles and Vlachs. The Grand Turk, however, spent a long time in Adrianople assembling his men. When he had entered Greece, the King of Hungary followed the Black Sea coast, conquering towns and castles, until he came to a port called Varna where, in days gone by, there had been a port and a castle. It is a fine port on the Black Sea, but by this time there was nothing left of it except the ancient walls. The Turk came to confront him there with all his army.

44 Frederick IV, King of Germany (1440–93); as Frederick III, Holy Roman Emperor (1452–93).

45 Ladislaus V 'the Posthumous' King of Hungary (1440–57) and of Bohemia (1453–57), son of King Albert (1437–39) and Queen Elizabeth (d.1442). Immediately after his coronation in 1440, the infant Ladislaus was transferred to the custody of his second cousin Frederick IV.

On the first night that the King of Hungary and his men were encamped at Varna, they saw great fires in several places on the mountains. The King asked what these might be, and some Greek Christians told him that it could be the peasants setting fire to dry grass in order to have a fresh growth in the spring. However, Johannes Hoignacq, Voevode of Hungary, said to the King: 'Sire, never believe me again if these are not the Turks coming to do battle with you.' Then he mounted his horse and set off to discover the truth. He continued until he could quite clearly hear drums and, this done, he returned to tell the Cardinal and the King that they could be certain that it was the Turks, and that tomorrow they would give battle. When they heard this, the King and the Cardinal had it announced to the army that all good Christians should confess and clear their consciences. In the morning the altars would be covered and prepared for singing mass and for administering his Creator to everyone who wished to receive Him.

As had been said, so it was done. Then, when the masses had been said, everyone took up arms and prepared for battle. The King's scouts had gone up into the mountains to find out where the Turks had assembled and when they were going to attack. Some of them now came back to the King to tell him that they could see no sign that the Turk intended to move from where he was. The King of Hungary, therefore, sought a decision to cross the mountains and to attack the saracens. However, others were of the opinion that the King should await them there. After long deliberations as to which would be the better course of action, the decision was made that the King should wait for them where he was. This was because Varna is in a valley, and the Turk could not come down from the mountains to fight except through narrow passes, and especially by a wide paved track along which, in times past, carts had carried goods to and from the port. Since the King had heard from his scouts that there was still no sign of the Turks giving battle, he ordered everyone to have a drink and to eat whatever he had, since it was already the midday, before St Martin's Day.⁴⁶ About two hours later, some more of the King's mounted scouts came back to tell him for certain that the Turk was coming to fight him with three squadrons, one mounted and the others on foot. The King of Hungary was therefore advised to draw up three similar squadrons. The Voevode of Hungary, who has since been called the White Knight, was in the van and detailed to guard the large road which came down from the mountains to the port. He at once laid down rocks and brushwood across the road. The King and the Cardinal led the second squadron, and two great Polish lords commanded the third as a rearguard.

The Grand Turk, as was discovered later, entrusted his vanguard to a saracen called Caraiabay⁴⁷ – which means lord of the host, or of the army – to whom he gave the command of everyone on horseback. The Turk did battle in person, with the Janissaries on foot. These are renegade Christians and slaves, all archers and all wearing white hats. A Turk called Baltaugly⁴⁸ commanded the third squadron, which

46 11 November. The battle was fought on 10 November.

47 Karaca Bey.

48 Baltaoğlu.

served as a rearguard. It was made up of all the people of Greece, Turks as well as Christians, in all a large body of men.

How the Hungarians and the Turks massed before Varna

This is how the battle was fought. Caraiabay commanded a good thirty thousand cavalymen. When he went up the mountain and saw that the King of Hungary's army was so small, he rated it for very little and, spurring on his horse, shouted to the Turks to follow him. He pressed on to the main road, galloping downhill, with the saracens thronging after him, each one hoping to be the first to follow him. Johannes Hongnac the Voevode was below at the start of the road. He charged them and, with a great lance that he was carrying, hurled Caraiabay to the ground together with all the men who came up first. The Turks had such a hard reception at the beginning of the battle that they turned to flee. However, those in the rear were coming at such a speed that they drove them back against the Hungarians, who killed them with their great knives and long swords. Now when the Voevode of Hungary saw the Turks' misfortune, he sent some of his men up the mountain towards the end of the road, where they killed the Turks amidst great confusion. Lacking in direction and leadership, the Turks who had been the first to enter the great road wanted to go back, while those in the rear wanted to go forward, with the result that they collided with one another. Consequently the Hungarians did good business killing them. In my opinion, it was a great favour of God to give such a victory to a small band of Christians against such a multitude of Turks, because when Bartoglius,⁴⁹ the commander of the men from Greece, saw the Hungarians – who were no more than three thousand in number – fighting so valiantly, he took flight to save his own skin. But the Grand Turk still stood calmly on a mountain with his retinue.

This battle lasted more than two hours, and many Turks were captured or killed. The King of Hungary asked the prisoners if his enemy, the Grand Turk, was either a captive or dead. They told him no, and that he was stationed on a mountain, which they pointed out to him, with the Janissaries.

Now the King and the Cardinal wanted to go and fight him on the mountain but, when the Voevode came, he told them how, by the grace of God, he had defeated the Turks, and advised the King against attacking the Turks on the mountain. 'Sire,' he said, 'the day is yours. Do not put yourself at risk by going to fight these archers on the mountain, because they will kill your horses and send your men to perdition.' However, many of the knights, esquires and men of substance from both Hungary and Poland said to him: 'Sire, the Voevode has fought his battle and has the honour of it. This second battle should be ours.' The Voevode said to the King and to the Cardinal: 'My lords, do not lose what you have won. While he is on the mountain, the Turk can do us little harm, and if he comes to fight you here, the advantage is yours. Keep yourself in good order. Tomorrow he must either flee or surrender to you. Most

49 Baltaoğlu.

of your men who have fought are tired. They have lost lances and weapons. The sun has set and night is falling. You will be at a great disadvantage if you fight or attack people at night, who are waiting for you calmly on foot. When they see that you are climbing up the mountain when they, to their advantage, are all fresh and rested, they will defend themselves courageously. For the sake of God, do not put yourself in a position to lose everything that has been gained. The strongest part of all the enemy army has been routed.' To this, some of the Hungarian knights replied: 'Since most of the Turkish force has been defeated, let us follow up our victory by attacking what is left of them, for now is the hour. If the Turk escapes from our clutches again, he will return to battle. But if he is defeated or killed, it will be easy to re-conquer Greece. Let us strike when the iron is hot.'

In the end, the King and the Cardinal concurred with this advice. The Cardinal had heard the Voevode and, fearing that he would not follow the others, had the cross carried ahead of his march and cried out aloud that he would excommunicate anyone who did not follow the King to battle. Then the King and all his army climbed up the mountain, preparing, with great boldness and courage, to attack the Turk and his Janissaries who had formed a circle around him. The Hungarians and Poles set about them like tigers, mauling the ones at the front of the circle no matter how bravely they defended themselves, and no matter how many Christians and horses they wounded and killed.

However, the King and his Hungarians went so far ahead that there was even a rumour that the King intended to engage the Grand Turk in hand-to-hand combat. As a result, a Janissary cut a leg of the King's horse, causing him to fall and to have his head cut off. Despite this setback, the Hungarians and Poles continued, until the night became pitch black, to fight so hard that it was unclear which side could claim victory. First one side fled and then the other, believing each other to be defeated. Here a hundred reassembled and there two hundred, here thirty and there forty. However, some Hungarians have always maintained that the King and the Cardinal escaped the battle. They rallied a number of their followers and resolved to depart, with everyone they could gather, for the Danube and home. Once this decision had been made, everyone, both Hungarians and Poles, set out. The Hungarians say that the King was lost during the course of this flight, as he went through the forests and mountains. The Cardinal of St Angele was robbed and drowned by the Vlachs as he crossed the Danube.

The Voevode of Hungary, however, assembled his men separately and, with all of them, crossed the Danube safely and in good order, rallying to himself many Hungarians and Poles. He returned to Hungary, bringing with him the unhappy news that was so grievous to the Kingdoms of Hungary and Poland. The people who lived around the battlefield said that it was three days before Turks or Christians showed themselves there. It was discovered that the corpses of the Turks had been eaten by pigs which, however, had not touched the Christians.⁵⁰

50 The same topos appears in the Chronicle of St Denis, in its account of the battlefield of Nicopolis (1396).

When the Christians were fleeing, the Turks took some of them prisoner and, of these, the Genoese purchased several noblemen in the city of Adrianople. They took them to Constantinople, where they told the sad story of the fatal day. This was grievous news to the men in the fleet and to loyal Christian hearts. They were questioned, but each gave different answers which did not correspond one with the other, and they could not say anything about the King and the Cardinal. Everyone was in despair about this, for some said that the King of Hungary had returned to his country victorious, while others said that his head had been cut off.

At this time, news came from Sir Pierre Leuridan, captain of the Venetians who were on guard before Nicopolis,⁵¹ that the Turks had asked him to send a delegation to them at the castle of Gallipoli, where they would show him the King of Hungary's head. This they did, and the Turks displayed a man's head with long blonde hair in a box full of cotton. When they returned to their captain, they told him what had happened and what they had seen. At this point, several slaves said that they had seen the King of Hungary on many occasions and that he had black hair. As a result, no one had any idea what had become of the King.

So the Lord of Wavrin and the Cardinal of Venice asked the Emperor of Constantinople to give them an armed galliot to go to Messemble,⁵² a place belonging to the Emperor, to discover the truth about what had happened. When the galliot returned, it reported to the Christians what the people at Messemble had said. These had heard it from a number of Greeks who had visited the battlefield. There were many more Turks dead than Christians, and pigs were eating the bodies of the Turks, which they could recognise because they were uncircumcised, leaving the bodies of the Christians.

At the same time that the galliot returned, Sir Geoffroy de Thoisy⁵³ arrived in Constantinople and, with him, Sir Regnault de Confide,⁵⁴ both of whom had helped to defend the town of Rhodes, as has been described below.⁵⁵ Now in view of the news that was arriving daily, the Emperor of Constantinople was very reluctant that the Cardinal of Venice and the Lord of Wavrin should return. Knowing that the galleys had arrived, which the captain-general, the Lord of Wavrin, had sent to help Rhodes, he ordered the Lord of Wavrin to come to him, bringing the lords who had come from Rhodes. They all went. When they appeared in his presence, he placed before them several of his concerns, the most serious of which was the news that the Turks were coming to besiege him in the city of Constantinople. The Lord of Wavrin asked for a day in which to deliberate before giving him his reply. His request was granted, and our people gathered to discuss the matter. After much consultation and discussion, they decided that the Lord of Wavrin should tell the Emperor that he and his men would, to the best of their ability, help him to defend his city. The Emperor

51 *Sic*, for Gallipoli.

52 Mesembria, Nesebăr.

53 De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

54 De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

55 This section has been omitted in this translation.

and all the Greeks in the city were overjoyed at this reply. However, the Emperor was told that he should send ambassadors to the Grand Turk to make peace with him, if this were possible. He agreed willingly, fearing that the galley fleet would otherwise depart. This was done without the knowledge of the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin, who were greatly aggrieved to have been mistreated like this. It seemed to them that twenty or thirty galleys could certainly guard the Straits of Romania, called St George's Arm, which extends for two hundred French leagues, but that it would be impossible to hold it unless there was a powerful army on land to guard one of the shores.

The Cardinal, the Lord of Wavrin and the Venetian captain saw how things stood and that the season was as far advanced as Our Lady of Advent.⁵⁶ Since the galleys could not put to sea until spring, they decided that, all things considered, they should spend the winter in Pera and Constantinople. While they were there, they heard that the King of Hungary had returned to his realm and was assembling large numbers of Hungarians and Poles to return to Greece in the summer. All this news was false and without foundation. Others said that some Greeks had saved him and removed him to a strong castle where they were holding him in secret. Some of the great lords of Hungary believed this rumour more than any other, and urged the Lord of Wavrin to go to the Black Sea in the spring and to visit all the fortresses belonging to the Christians to discover whether the King of Hungary could ever be found.

The Lord of Wavrin was eager to do this and, one day, finding himself in the company of the Cardinal and of the Captain of Venice, raised the subject with them in order to reach a joint decision on what to do. It turned out that the Venetians had already decided with the Cardinal that they would return to the Archipelago,⁵⁷ where the Signoria of Venice had several castles which the Turk now held. When he heard this news, the Lord of Wavrin returned to his lodgings and sent for the Hungarians who had been re-purchased from captivity, to ask them if it would be possible for him to go up the River Danube to Hungary with all his galleys. They did not know what answer to give. So he summoned two sailors who were from Greece and who had previously been up the Danube, and asked them, in the presence of the Hungarians, about the river, and whether one could use it to reach Hungary. They said no, but that one could go as far as Licososme⁵⁸ or Brilago,⁵⁹ and from there one could safely set out for Hungary by land.

The Lord of Wavrin, in consultation with the Hungarians and with his knights and gentlemen, decided to go to the Black Sea and search all the castles on the frontier as far as Licososme which belonged to the Lord of Wallachia, to see whether he could find out anything for certain about the King of Hungary. He would, at his own expense, take all the Christian gentlemen and knights who had been captured in the battle as far as that point. If the King was not found, but news was nonetheless

⁵⁶ 8 December 1444.

⁵⁷ The Aegean Archipelago.

⁵⁸ Licostomo, Kilia. De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

⁵⁹ Brăila. De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

received about whether he was dead or alive, he would send with them Sir Pietre Vastz and his secretary, Master Robert Lobain. He would write letters to the King, if he was alive, and to the lords of Hungary, to say that if they wished to equip an army and to cross the Danube again, he would join them with seven or eight galleys, even before they could go up the river in safety.

After reaching this decision, the Lord of Wavrin went to the Cardinal and told him that he had resolved what to do. The Cardinal greatly commended him for this, adding that, if the Hungarians assembled in force, he should inform him, and he too would go.

How the Lord of Wavrin assembled his council in order to discuss how they should go into the Black Sea with a view to entering the Danube

The Lord of Wavrin returned to his lodgings, delighted that the Cardinal had approved of his plans. Next day he summoned the knights and gentlemen of his company, together with the captains and master mariners. When they had all assembled, he told them that he wished to go into the Black Sea, taking with him the Hungarian knights and gentlemen who had been captured in the battle. At their insistence, he was going to visit all the Christian castles on the shore of the Black Sea to discover if there was any way of finding the King of Hungary. Furthermore, he intended to go up the Danube as far as the castle of Lycososme in Wallachia, to find out for certain what was happening in Hungary and there to disembark the Hungarian knights and squires. From there too he would send Sir Pietre Vaast as ambassador to the great lords of Hungary, to urge them to arm themselves powerfully, ready to return to Greece, and to let them know that, if they did this, the Lord of Wavrin and the Cardinal of Venice would join them.

When everybody had heard the commander's proposals and received assurances that this is what the Cardinal had recommended him to do, they willingly agreed to accompany him. So orders were given for the commanders, overseers and sailors to put the galleys in order, and to Jean Bayart, treasurer of the fleet, to buy victuals and everything necessary to equip the galleys for the journey.

It was now the season of Lent, and the captains and sailors said that it would be impossible for the galleys to be ready before Easter. They advised the Lord of Wavrin to wait until after Easter because if he wished to do things properly there was no other way he could possibly proceed. He agreed to this willingly. Eight days before the celebration of Easter, the Lord of Wavrin once again assembled his knights, esquires, captains and sailors. He told them that, since so many Christian galleys were leaving together, the Turks would never come to attack them. For this reason it was decided that he and Sir Pierre Vast would take only two galleys into the Black Sea, since it seemed to him that if the Turks knew that there were only two galleys sailing round the Greek coast, they would be more likely to come to attack them than if there were more. Sir Geoffroy de Thoisi and Sir Regnault de Confide, together with three galleys, would enter the Black Sea and go around the coast of Turkey

towards Trebizond. In this way they would all set off to cover the entire Black Sea as far as the Sea of Tana,⁶⁰ with one group searching one coast and the other group searching the other. In this way it seemed to them that if the Turks wished to fight them at sea, they would this time appear on one of the two shores, that is either the coast of Greece or the coast of Turkey. The Turks were too powerful on land, and all the galleys together were too powerful by sea. This would make it impossible for the Turks and Christians to fight one another. The only way that the galleys could be of use on land would be for the crews to land when the Turks were unaware, to grab whatever they could as quickly as possible and to return to the galleys.

These proposals were acceptable to everyone in the fleet. The Lord of Wavrin and all his company celebrated Easter in the town of Pera opposite Constantinople. As soon as the festivities were over, the Lord of Wavrin and Sir Pietre Vast each boarded a galley with the Hungarians who had been held prisoner and set off into the Black Sea. They continued as far as the castle of Messemble, where they sent out for victuals and stores. When the Greek commander who was warden of the castle on behalf of the Emperor knew that it was the Lord of Wavrin, he came out to meet him. He produced such victuals as he could supply and said that, two months ago, a Hungarian who had escaped from the Turks had come to his castle. He had taken him in and concealed him, and now asked the Lord of Wavrin to take him on board his galleys, because he no longer dared to keep him, for fear that the Turks would come and besiege the castle.

When the Hungarians on board the galleys heard this news, they begged to be allowed to go and fetch the Hungarian, imagining that it could be their King. They found, however, that it was not. It was a gentleman of their country whom they took with them on board the galleys. Next day our Christians left that spot and, with a good wind, came to a place called Panguala.⁶¹ It was a curious place. People believe that Penthesilia, Queen of the Amazons, had it built after Hercules and Theseus had secretly entered the kingdom and fought with Hippolyte and Melanippe. The port consists of a great wall which is in the sea, and thirty or forty feet wide. The port is between the wall and the land. In times gone by, no one could enter the realm of the Amazons – which is known today by a different name, the Kingdom of Scythia – unless they went between the land and the wall, which continued for a good twenty French leagues. Today, however, the wall is in ruins and has collapsed in many places. Many ships, on many occasions, have been wrecked there during storms. But you can still see how the wall and the port used to be. It is also said that, on the other side, on terra firma, the kingdom is surrounded by such high mountains that virtually no one can enter except at great risk.

Our Christian lords left on the next day, and continued by sea until they came to the mouth of the Danube, a miraculously great river that flows into the Black Sea. They entered the river and went up it until they reached the castle of Lycosme. Here they met the Vlachs, whom they asked for news of the King of Hungary and

60 The Sea of Azov. Tana (Azov) was a Genoese colony.

61 Mangalia.

also about the battle. In fact they knew nothing, and all told different stories, most of them claiming that the King was in Hungary. Here the Lord of Wavrin decided to disembark Sir Pietre Vast and the crew of his galley, including the Hungarian captives. These advised him to write letters to Johannes Hoignac, Voevode of Hungary, inviting him to collect a new army ready to return to Greece, and promising that he would come up the Danube to join them with six or seven galleys as soon as possible. The Lord of Wavrin assigned his secretary and a gentleman called Jacques Faucourt to Sir Pietre Vast. The Hungarians and Vlachs advised him on how long it would take to make the journey. They reckoned that it would be at least a month before he could return. For this reason, it was decided that the Lord of Wavrin should return to the Black Sea and go round the entire coast from the point where they had entered the Danube as far as Caffa on the Sea of Thane.⁶² Within a month, he would without fail come back here, to a town called Brelago, there to await the return of Sir Pietre Vaste.

How Sir Pietre Vast and the Hungarians went to Hungary, and how the Lord of Wavrin returned to the Black Sea with all his galleys

When the Lord of Wavrin had given his letters to Sir Pietre Vast and charged him with going to Hungary, they took leave of one another. The Lord of Wavrin returned with his two galleys to the Black Sea to try his luck in finding and combating the Turks. He came one day to a port called Moncastre,⁶³ where the town and the castle belong to the Genoese. Here he found a number of ships belonging to the Trapezuntines and the Armenians. He made close enquiries as to whether the Turks had a fleet at sea. They said no, and told him that the Turk had forbidden all Turks to go to sea, because he had received authoritative reports that the Christians were still at large on the Black Sea. They told him that they had seen three of the Duke of Burgundy's galleys going towards Trebizond. From this the Lord of Wavrin understood that they would never run into the Turks. So he set out straight for Caffa at the extremity of the Black Sea, hoping to find there the three galleys which, as has been explained, he had sent to Caffa by way of the coast of Turkey. On the journey, he encountered three Turkish ships laden with wheat. He seized them and brought them with him to Caffa, where he found two of his galleys and Sir Regnault de Confide and Sir Geoffroy de Thoisy,⁶⁴ who told him their news and what they had done. They told him how they had visited the Emperor⁶⁵ and how De Thoisy had disappeared off the coast of Georgia.⁶⁶ He had heard that a large ship full of merchandise was going

62 Tana, Azov.

63 Moncastro, Akkerman, Cetatea-Albă.

64 This must be a mistake. At that moment Geoffroy de Thoisy was a prisoner in Georgia, and his galley had not yet arrived in Caffa.

65 The Comnene Emperor of Trebizond.

66 The mishaps of the Burgundians in Georgia may have been occasioned by a desire to emulate the exploits of Jason and the Argonauts in bringing back the Golden Fleece from

to pass by and he hoped to capture it. Although the Emperor of Trebizond had told them that they were Christians, he nevertheless did not wish to abandon his plans, claiming that his orders were to fight all schismatics who did not obey our Holy Father. However, some Greeks from Trapezonde had informed the people of the country who, when they saw the galley coming, took up arms and waited in ambush. They allowed Sir Jeffroy to land at the port of Vaty,⁶⁷ all eager to plunder the village, but as he approached the ambush, they jumped on him, killing many of his men and taking him prisoner. The ones who managed to escape fled to the galley and reported that their master had been taken prisoner. The skippers had observed this and, not knowing whether he was alive or dead, put a black awning over the poop of the galley as a sign of mourning. This galley arrived in Caffa three days after the Lord of Wavrin, and told him everything. He was greatly distressed at what had happened. He suggested that Sir Regnault de Confide should immediately return to Trebizond with three galleys, and beg the Emperor in his name, for the sake of God, to send to Georgia to find out whether Sir Geoffroy de Thoisi was alive or dead. If he was alive, he should strive, for the love of the prince to whom he owed allegiance,⁶⁸ to have him set free and delivered into his hands.

Once this had been decided, Sir Regnault left Caffa with the three galleys and went to the Emperor of Trebizond, to whom he delivered the message and handed over the letters from the Lord of Wavrin. The Emperor was quick to send to Georgia and, by these means, Sir Geoffroy was returned to him, and put safely on board the galley.

This done, the Lord of Wavrin left Caffa, as he wished to keep the promise that he had made to Sir Pietre Vast and the lords of Hungary. Going by the Black Sea, he entered the Danube again and went as far up it as the port of Brilago. Three days later, Sir Pietre Vast arrived with a Hungarian knight. They told the Lord of Wavrin how they had arrived in Buda and were dismayed when they received no news of the King. They were advised, however, that the Count Palatine, the Voevode of Hungary and all the lords of the country were gathered in Buda to hold a great parliament. Sir Pietre Vast informed them that he had come on behalf of Duke Philip of Burgundy's captain-general and the lords sent for him with the utmost respect. When he had appeared before them and offered his greetings, he said: 'My lords, believing the King to be here in his kingdom, I was bringing him letters from the Duke of Burgundy's lieutenant-general in this region. In his absence, I present them to you.'

When the lords had received the letters, they asked the knight to retire into a chamber. When they had read what the letters had to say, they called him back and began to ask him about how the Turk had crossed the straits. He told them the truth and explained how, because the Emperor of Constantinople had deceived all the

Colchis, supposedly situated in Georgia. De Thoisi and De Wavrin were knights of the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece.

67 Poti.

68 Philip, Duke of Burgundy.

fleet, the captain-general had left Constantinople for the Black Sea to find out the truth about the King of Hungary. The captain was at their service with six or seven galleys and, in case they wished to assemble a new army, he would join them on the Danube even before the galleys could set out. He also told them about the reports of the great losses that the Turks had suffered in the battle.

Then the Hungarians set aside a day to reply to what the letters said. Afterwards, Pietre Vast attended their deliberations on several occasions. Among other things, they asked him what assurances they would have from the captain, if they were to prepare an army on land, that he would precede them on the Danube with his galleys. To this Sir Pietre replied: 'I have my secretary here with me. He has blank papers bearing seals. On these we shall write such promises as you wish him to make, provided they are legal and reasonable. You, for your part, will give us assurances concerning the number of armed men you are going to put together, and the place where you will rendezvous with us.'

They set aside a day to think about these things and to discuss what they should do. They questioned the Hungarian knights that Sir Pietre Vast had brought with him, and these gave them great faith that everything that Sir Pietre had said was true. They discussed this in private and then, when they had finished their deliberations, called Sir Pietre back. They told him that they wanted to have the Captain of Burgundy's sealed undertaking that, in mid- August, he would come up the Danube with eight galleys to the town of Nycopoly in Bulgaria. This is the town which Emperor Sigismund of Germany and Duke John of Burgundy were besieging when they had their fatal encounter with the Turks.⁶⁹ They told Sir Pietre that they would give their sealed letter to the captain, promising him to be in front of this town with eight- to ten thousand soldiers on the day agreed. They also begged Sir Pietre Vast that, on his way back, he should visit the Lord of Wallachia and invite him to assemble a powerful army to be before the said town on the agreed date. They also requested him to go as far as Constantinople and do all that he could to promote a Turkish lord called Saoussy,⁷⁰ son of the elder brother of the Turk called Morathbay.

So Sir Pietre Vast delivered the letters of the Hungarian lords. On his return, he also talked to the Lord of Wallachia, who gave him his word that he would assemble as many men as he could to join the Hungarians on land on the appointed day, provided only that the Captain of Burgundy stay at Brilago until they had harvested their wheat. But first of all, he wanted to talk to the Captain of Burgundy and, because Brilago was a long way off, he promised to send his son to see the captain there, as later he did. Then Sir Pietre told the Lord of Wallachia that he had to go to the Emperor in Constantinople to ask for Soussy, the Lord of Turkey and, with him, five or six galleys. However, if he wished to station himself four or five leagues from Brilago and send horses to the captain, he would, on his return, be sure to lead the captain to him.

69 The reference is to the Battle of Nicopolis (1396).

70 Savcı. De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

When Sir Pietre Vast told all this to his captain, both he and everyone else in the company were overjoyed. He said that he acknowledged everything that had been promised in his name and that, God willing, he would accomplish it without fail. In order, therefore, to carry out all the promises and agreements that had been made, the Lord of Wavrin at once wrote to the Cardinal of Venice, telling him everything that Sir Pietre Vast had done in Hungary and Wallachia, as I have described. He begged him in the name of God, to keep the promise that he had made on leaving and to come to the Danube with as many galleys as he could find. He also wrote to Sir Gauvain Quiriet, whom he had left ill at Pera, and to others, to join him with their galleys.

There was a small ship in the port of Brilago, which had brought merchandise from Constantinople and was now returning there. Sir Pietre Vast boarded it in order to go to the Emperor of Constantinople. The captain charged him with bringing back a bombardelle which was on the great ship, together with the balls and powder for firing. Sir Pietre Vast did everything as asked, and the Cardinal came to the Danube with three galleys. However, because Sir Geoffroy de Thoisi had returned to the Duke of Burgundy, he found only two galleys, together with the one which the captain had left there with Sir Gauvain Quieret who had also returned to the Duke. He also brought the Turkish lord, in a party of thirty, together with the bombard, balls and powder. He arrived in Brilago a week to ten days before the Cardinal and the other galleys.

As soon as he arrived, the Lord of Wallachia's son sent to his father to ask for horses and, at around the end of July 1445, he and Sir Pietre led the captain to the Lord of Wallachia. There they concluded their plans with the men from Hungary. The Lord of Wallachia promised the captain to give him enough wheat and carts for his men, because the country had been peaceful during the harvest and the Turks had not made any raids. They decided that, when all the galleys had come, he would go on land and the galleys by water, to attack a city called Triest,⁷¹ which the Vlachs had once captured and destroyed. It had hardly a wall intact, but had been heavily rebuilt and repopulated and provided a crossing-point which was the cause of great harm to Wallachia. The Lord of the Vlachs promised that he would provide forty or fifty boats called *manocques*.⁷² These are all in one piece, long and narrow like a pig-trough, with a number of Vlachs in them, many in one, fewer in another.

When the Lord of Wavrin had dealt with the Lord of Wallachia in this way, he once again sent Sir Pietre Vast to Hungary to tell them that the galleys were already in the river, preparing to go upstream, and to confirm that the Lord of Wallachia would accompany them with a large army. Because Sir Pietre Vast had promised the Turkish lord, Saoussi, that he would not hand him over to anyone except the lords of Hungary, the captain allocated a galley to him and his followers, on which the Turk put a red banner, with a large gilt pommel and, over it, six vermilion ribbons fluttering in the wind. In this way Sir Pietre Vast took him to Hungary. Within two

71 Silistra.

72 From Greek μονόξυλον ('canoe').

days of his departure, the Cardinal, Sir Regnault de Confide and Jacot de Thoisy⁷³ arrived with five galleys. Added to the three belonging to the captain, this made eight altogether, which was as many as had been promised.

As soon as the Cardinal arrived, the Lord of Wavrin went to meet him and, as they were talking, informed him of the decision that he had taken with the Lord of Wallachia. The latter had sent his son to our lords in Brilago, with five or six notables, to sustain them in their good intentions. At the same time, a messenger arrived from Hungary to tell them that the Voevode was assembling as many men-at-arms as he could, but that he would not be appearing before Nicopolis until Our Lady in September.⁷⁴ For this reason our lords, together with the Lord of Wallachia's son, decided to go and attack all the towns and fortresses to be found between where they were and Nicopolis; that is, Triest, Tour Turcain,⁷⁵ Georgye⁷⁶ and Rossico.⁷⁷ The Lord of Wallachia, with all his army, would march along the river beside the galleys, to provide them with help and victuals. They fixed a day to assault Triest, which is in Bulgaria on the Greek side of the river. However, the Turks had spies in Bulgaria and knew what was being planned, as you will hear.

The Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin had the galleys properly fitted out and equipped. Because the Hungarians had delayed the rendezvous until after Our Lady of September, they did not leave until just after mid-August, and took a long time going up river against the current as far as Triest, because it was a good three hundred miles, equal to about a hundred full French leagues.

During the journey, the Lord of Wallachia often came with his army to talk to our Christian lords. Finally one day, he told them to drop anchor, as they were approaching Triest. If they started from that point tomorrow, they would be in front of the town in two hours. They dropped anchor and assembled in council to discuss whether they should attack the town on the next day. All the captains and galley skippers were summoned to the council, as were all the Vlach lords who had been assigned to them as guides. When they had thoroughly discussed the matter, they decided at the earnest request of the Cardinal, that the Lord of Wavrin should carry the banner of the Church – the Cardinal also assigned him all his men – and that Sir Regnault de Confide should carry the banner of the Duke of Burgundy. The Lord of Wavrin would leave an hour ahead of the Cardinal as he was to be the vanguard, and he would take care of the Vlachs, because he was known to them. He was to inform them that the assault on the town was fixed for the sixth hour of the following morning.

The departure went as planned. The Lord of Wavrin arrived in front of Triest at sunrise, and found the Vlachs already encamped in tents and pavilions on the riverbank. Some of them came to the Lord of Wavrin straightaway, to ask him where

73 Cousin of Geoffroy de Thoisy.

74 8 September.

75 Tutrakan.

76 Giurgiu. De Wavrin's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

77 Ruse.

the Cardinal was. He replied that he would soon be coming and pointed to the sails of the galleys as they approached. As soon as the Cardinal had arrived, they took the decision to begin the attack.

The people in the town showed no sign of fighting or of being afraid, and fired no cannons or other weapons. Shortly afterwards, the Lord of Wavrin and the Vlachs saw the Cardinal's galleys taking in their sails. The Vlachs were astounded at this and demanded to know why it was that they were not going forward. The captain replied that he did not know, and that it was contrary to what they had all of them decided. He said to them sorrowfully: 'When you appoint a priest leader in war, no good can come of it.' They decided to send the galley's boat to the Cardinal to find out what the delay was. When it reached the galley, which was about a French league away, they saw a man being pulled up the mast, with his hands tied behind his back. Because this is a punishment commonly inflicted on miscreants on board galleys, the captain said to the Vlachs: 'Look, the Cardinal is punishing his men when he should be attacking the town.' The captain and the Vlachs were so upset that they did not know what to say. It was nearly the ninth hour, and the sun was already burning hot. They would do themselves harm attacking in such a heat and, what troubled them even more, is that they could not see the boat returning.

The galleys watched until they saw them hoisting their sails to advance. At the same time, the captain was cursing the crew of the boat which he had sent there, for staying so long. When the Cardinal came, he passed in front of the Lord of Wavrin's galley and, as he looked at him, began to laugh. De Wavrin, however, looked at him with an angry and hurt expression. He and some of the Vlach lords immediately climbed into a boat and, as it approached the Cardinal's galley, he cried out loud: 'Monsignor, is it time to attack the town?' The Cardinal replied with a smile: 'I shall give you some other news.' As soon as they had come on board his galley, he said to them: 'God saw us, and does not wish us to perish just yet. This morning the Vlach boats called manocques entered a little river. They captured a Turk who was fishing and took him away to interrogate him. He confessed that there were at least thirty thousand Turkish horse in Triest, and that all the subashis of Bulgaria had assembled there. He said that he was ready to suffer the most painful death possible if this was not the truth.' He brought the Turk to the Vlachs, who interrogated him, and he named all the subashis in the town.

When the Turks realised that there was to be no assault, and that somehow their ambush had been discovered, they began to fire cannon and serpentines. By the grace of God, none of the galleys was hit, but they had to withdraw and anchor further away. It was decided that everyone should go away and eat, and not attempt an assault unless they heard some different news. However, the Turks in the town made a mistake, because they set fire to one end of it, forcing the women and children to run out of the town, screaming loudly. The Vlachs said that it was the custom of the Turks to do this, in order to tempt the Christians to attack the town. However, they retired to their tents to dine. The men from the galleys also went to take a meal.

While they were dining, a Turk on horseback sallied forth from the town, dressed all in red, with a short lance and a little pennant, and galloped a few times up and

down the riverbank. Soon afterwards, a good three- or four hundred sallied out, with a red banner, and began to patrol the riverbanks and the countryside around the town. Then a great vermilion banner came out of the town, topped with a golden pommel with six ribbons, exactly like the Turk Saoussy's. Then several more ensigns emerged. The Vlachs said that, in their estimation, and from what the saracen prisoner had said, there could easily be twenty-five- to thirty thousand Turkish horse there.

The Turk Saoussy was in his galley and, when he saw the banners streaming out of the town, because he knew them well, he asked to speak to the Lord of Wavrin. He did this immediately, saying to him: 'I know the Turkish captains and subashis here well. It seems to me that if I could only speak to them, I would convert them to my cause.' The Lord of Wavrin replied that, so far as he was concerned, he was quite happy with this, but that it would be necessary to inform Monsignor the Cardinal. The Lord of Wavrin went off to tell him straightaway, and he was delighted at the news, saying: 'Please find a way of allowing him to speak to them.' So the Lord of Wavrin returned to Saoussy immediately and sent for Sir Regnault de Confide, who advised him to have the oars of the galley at the ready, and that he and the Lord of Wavrin would go with the Turk. Then our lords asked Saoussy how to ensure their safety during the negotiations. He replied that he would see to it, and immediately had a white flag raised up on a lance. When the Turks noticed this, they raised another and, when Saoussy saw it, he announced: 'Let us go boldly. We have security.'

As the galleys rowed towards the land, to within a bowshot of the shore, all the Turks came to line up in four or five battalions along the riverside, while the subashis went forward to meet the galley captain with their great banner. Saoussy at once put on a garment bordered in blue. He climbed high up onto the bench, with a white Turkish hat and a gold band on his head, so that all the Turks around him – at least thirty thousand, all of them archers – could see. Saoussy then commanded that the boat be lowered into the water to go and fetch the men who had been appointed to negotiate. Four of the highest ranking Turks climbed into the boat and quickly came to a halt before Saoussy. He spoke to them loudly and clearly in Turkish: 'Go to these subashis,' all of whom he named, 'and tell them that I am the Lord Saoussy son of the elder brother of father Morathbay and, for this reason, the Turkish Empire belongs to me. Ask them to recognise me as their lord, and tell them that I promise to do them more good than they have ever seen from Moratbay whom they have recognised as lord in my absence. I shall pardon them for whatever harm they have done to my lord and father and to me.'

Then the rowing-boat went rapidly away towards the Turks. But as they were departing, Sir Regnault de Confide called out to the Lord of Wavrin: 'Sir Captain, can't you see what I can see?' 'How can I know,' replied the captain, 'if you don't tell me?' 'I can see these Turkish bastards,' he said, 'bringing up cannon and aiming them at us.' The captain asked him what he thought was the best thing to do in the situation. 'You have four cannon in your galley,' he replied, 'and I have as many in mine. We should aim them at this battalion of Turks. If they fire at us, we shall be ready to fire at them, and they will have the worse of the engagement.'

When the boat was half a stone's throw from land, it stopped, and there Saoussy's servant told the subashis what his master had charged him with saying. When this mission was over, they went aside and were in discussion for a good quarter of an hour. They then returned to the banks of the Danube and one of the subashis said to Saoussy's messenger, loudly enough for him to hear as well: 'Return to your master and tell him that we have a lord whom we have long served and obeyed. We do not recognise another lord, and we cannot have two.'

When the Lord Saoussy heard this reply, he changed colour and countenance, showing signs of grief. It was obvious from this that he was not pleased with the reply. He had with him an interpreter, who told the Lord of Wavrin everything that had been said on both sides.

The moment the negotiations had finished, the saracens began to fire cannon against the men on the galleys. In return, these fired on the Turkish battalion, whose members fled in droves as quickly as they could, like sheep scattered by a wolf. Our lords then returned to the Cardinal and told him what they had achieved.

This done, the Vlach lords went to Saoussy and persuaded him to go on shore with them. He sent for the Lord of Wavrin and declared to him that he wanted to land with these lords, to which the captain replied: 'What! And you made me promise that I would not deliver you to anyone except the lords of Hungary! Do you want me to break my oath?' The Lord Saoussy replied treacherously: 'Am I not at liberty to go where I please? Do you take me for your slave?' The Lord of Wavrin replied to him: 'Come with me to the Cardinal with the Vlach lords, and release me in his presence from the promise I made to you. Then go wherever you want.' This he did and then, straightaway, he and his Turks went on land and departed in the direction of Wallachia.

Because so much time had been lost before the town of Triest, and because there were so many Turks there, they took the decision to weigh anchor and go up the river to join the Hungarians in front of Nicopolis as soon as possible.

Because they had been at sea for so long, there was a lack of biscuit on board the Lord of Wavrin's galleys: they had only the wheat and flour which the Vlachs had delivered. So the Lord of Wavrin agreed with the Cardinal to leave one or two hours ahead of him, and to continue until he had found somewhere to make large fires, and to make charcoal to bake the flour, because they had no bread except the flat loaves which they made daily over the charcoal. Often the company and crew ate only cooked wheat.

When the Lord of Wavrin had left, the Lord of Wallachia's son followed him, skirting the land in his manocques. It so happened that there was a favourable wind and, not knowing where he was, the Lord of Wavrin arrived at a place near a Turkish castle called Castle Turquant,⁷⁸ where he found wood and a suitable spot to make charcoal. They landed there to refresh themselves. The Lord of Wallachia's son, who could not go as fast under oar as our men could under sail, came up behind. When he saw the captain at anchor, he sent some of his leading Vlachs to him to tell him:

78 Tutrakan.

‘The son of the Lord of Wallachia is at your service, and wishes you to know that you are anchored two miles from Castle Turquant. He asks you to be ready to attack it with him tomorrow morning, and informs you that he has a good five hundred Vlachs with him.’

By now the sun had set. When the captain saw that he had been here for more than three hours, and that there was no sign of either the Cardinal or of his galleys, he became distinctly alarmed. It was past the time when he should have arrived, given the favourable wind, which had in fact increased since he had dropped anchor. He did not know whether to reply yes or no to the Vlachs, because he was unsure of what could have happened to delay the Cardinal for so long. He therefore sought the advice of the men of quality who were in his galley, and they said to him: ‘These Vlachs are offering to attack the castle with you tomorrow. If you refuse, it will be held against you as a great dishonour and act of negligence. Even if the Cardinal is not here yet, it cannot be long before he comes this evening.’ Hoping that the Cardinal would arrive because, without him, he could achieve little or nothing, the Lord of Wavrin replied to the Vlachs: ‘I am hoping that Monsignor the Cardinal will still be coming tonight and, with him, my other galleys. I shall then be ready in the morning. Send to me when you want to set out, and I shall go to attack the castle with you.’

The Vlachs departed and night fell, leaving the captain and everyone in his galley extremely disturbed about the Cardinal and their other men, of whom they had heard nothing. They were, however, quite unaware of the hazardous events which I shall now relate. When the Cardinal set off to follow them, his galley ran aground and they were delayed for four hours unloading and reloading to get it off the land. The Turkish force that was in Triest thought that they were playing a trick on them to see whether they would follow on land the first galleys to set off, allowing the three galleys to return suddenly and capture the town. The Turks decided together to return to the town to guard it overnight. And, as you will hear, this was the reason why Castle Turquant was captured. If the Turks on land had pursued the first two galleys as far as there, it would never have fallen because, like Triest, the castle was in Bulgaria on the Greek shore of the river.

The captain commanded the men on the galleys to keep watch all night, arms at the ready. He himself slept fully armed on the deck. Next morning at daybreak, as the Vlachs crossed the river in their manocques, they sent to the Lord of Wavrin to remind him to keep his promise to them. He straightaway had the trumpets sounded and anchors weighed to follow the Vlachs as quickly as he could. However, the Vlachs had hurried on to land before him and, when they went ashore, the hundred and fifty or so Turks in the castle drove them back to their manocques. The Lord of Wavrin, however, had prepared his men with the utmost care. He advanced with his two galleys and came to the rescue of the Vlachs with crossbowmen, culverineers and cannoneers, allowing them to reassemble and to come ashore in the way which follows. The Lord of Wavrin gave the Duke of Burgundy’s banner to an extremely brave esquire called Dyeric of Vyane, a native of Holland. The men-at-arms and galley crews followed this banner, under which the Lord of Wavrin always fought.

On their first approach, they pushed the Turks into their service courtyard with such vigour that they took it by assault.

Situated on the River Danube, Castle Turquant consisted of four stretches of wall in a rectangle, such that each of three corners had a small tower, while the fourth corner of these stretches of wall had a large square tower, which was solid and at least ten feet high. The Turks climbed up by a wooden stairway, which was covered by large unfortified vaults made of wood, cut when the trees are in sap. Above, there was a large machicolation, with big walkways of wooden planks, from which the Turks put up a strong defence. The service courtyard, which surrounded the tower and the three stretches of wall, was behind, surrounded by great ditches and wooden palisades. Nonetheless, as you have heard, this was captured at the first attempt, following the ignominious repulse of the Turks. These were pursued with such vigour that they did not have the leisure to defend it, so quick were they to hide away in the castle and the tower.

It was not obvious how to attack the castle, since the tower presented an obstacle which effectively defended the walls. The Turks who were in the machicolation and wooden walkways were hurling down great rocks and timber, with the result that nobody dared approach. So the Lord of Wavrin sent for eight cannons from the galleys. He aimed them at the machicolation and the outside walkways. He positioned culverineers, crossbowmen and archers in the same place, and they shot so vigorously that none of the Turks was so bold as to stay there. Then they made a vigorous assault on all four sections of the castle wall, and captured everything except the great tower.

When they entered, they found the wooden stairway, completely covered with vaults constructed from trees. This was quickly demolished, because they had bent the iron tips of spears into hooks and, with these, dragged everything to the ground. The Turks in the tower were left with no defences except the machicolation and the wooden walkways, and the cannon, crossbowmen, culverineers and archers kept them away from there. However, they defended their stairway well, because of an opening and two barbicans of well-cut stone. As a result, the people attacking the stairway and trying to climb up were often thrown down and their shields broken. Several were wounded in this way. An assault was out of the question, because it was impossible to take the tower by the stairway. In order to begin mining and not knowing that the tower was so massive, the captain sent to his galleys to bring back large iron crowbars with cleft tips. However, a Vlach told him that when the tower was built, he had been a slave of the Turks, not their prisoner, and that he had carried stones and mortar to the site. For this reason, he was certain that the tower was absolutely solid, and that was before taking into account the height of the stairway. This dismayed the assailants, who said that it would be impregnable.

Meanwhile the Turks were negotiating with the Vlachs, pretending that they wished to surrender. However, they did this only in order to stop the attack, because they never held to anything they promised. It seemed that they were expecting help at any moment, so the captain and the Vlachs decided to remove the wooden palisades around the service courtyard, and to make everyone carry as much of the wood as

they were able and pile it against the section of the wall that was sheltered from the wind. They were to stack it up until it reached the machicolation that was also made of wood. The Lord of Wavrin and the Lord of Wallachia's son were the first to begin carrying up the wood. As a result, the others worked spiritedly to cart as much as they could, and in less than two hours they had transported an astounding quantity, both in bundles and otherwise. They piled it up as high as the machicolation, completely at their ease and without suffering any disturbance. They could do this easily, because none of the Turks was so bold as to show himself at the defences or to stay in the galleries, as these were under fire from the cannons and culverins, and there was no other place from which to defend the tower.

The assault began at sunrise on the eve of St John Decollace, 1445. The Lord of Wavrin and the Vlachs arranged that only half of their men should be in action at any one time, while the others went to recuperate and tend their wounds in the boats. When they had recovered, they returned to the assault while the others went to rest.

When the wood had been laid against the section of the wall, as far up the tower as they could throw it, they set it on fire, until eventually it presented an overwhelming and terrifying spectacle. To make it burn still higher, they threw on bundles of beans and oats, until the flames reached the top of the tower, which was roofed with shingles. The roof and the barbicans began to catch fire, and at this the Christians all shouted 'Noël!' The captain and his entourage, including the master of his galley – a very valiant man – went to stand in front of the stairway to the tower, to see whether the Turks would jump down by this route. This they in fact did because, when the fire began to overwhelm them, they came to unlock the tower door. It seemed, to judge from the sound of the bolt, that the Turks were in a great hurry to come out. When the door opened, the subashi marched calmly out, dressed in a robe of scarlet damask with a collar of *janne* cloth thrown over the shoulders, giving the Christians a malicious look. Then, quite calm and collected and without saying a word, he took hold of the two sections at the front of his robe, thrust them into his belt and drew his sword. Jumping down from the steps, he came forwards with the intention of striking the Lord of Wavrin on the head. However, the paymaster of his galley was behind him and stepped forward to hit the Turk on the neck with a halberd that he was holding in his two hands. The Turk was knocked onto the paving-stones and killed at once. In this way, all the Turks in the tower were soon dead or captured.

At this point a great misfortune befell the Christians, who belonged to several nations. They now fought over the prisoners, and the Lord of Wavrin had great difficulty in separating them and calming them down. When he saw that he could not separate them as he wished by striking his sword in all directions, he shouted that the Turkish prisoners should be killed. Those who had none, or had not been engaged in capturing any, did this gladly. They killed them in the possession of their captors. But the moment the Turks were killed, they once again began to fight over the spoils, tugging the Turks' clothing in all directions, with everyone carrying off his piece. They then fought over the swords and scimitars, with some getting the blades and others the sheaths, one a bow and the other a quiver.

The Lord of Wavrin was extremely distressed and very angry to see a quarrel like this breaking out among the Christians, which he could not settle as he would have wished. The fighting eventually stopped when there was nothing left to take, and everyone departed with whatever he could carry, either to the galleys or to the manocques.

By this time the sun had set, and there was a thick mist on the river. The Lord of the Vlachs came to the Lord of Wavrin and complained bitterly about the men from the galleys, who had stripped his people of their spoil. The captain replied that his men were likewise complaining about the Vlachs, believing that by saying this, he could get away to his galley in order to rest and recover from his exertions. But the Hungarians and Vlachs are men of high and haughty words, and kept the captain talking, even though, in the meantime, he had taken off his armour. As a result, he felt very cold, and began to suspect what in fact was to happen to him later. So he said to the Vlachs: 'It is dark. If the Turks come, they will capture us, our galleys and our artillery. Go back to your manocques. I am returning to my galley, and tomorrow we shall force our people to make it up to one another.'

After the negotiations, he left them. He went into his cabin on the galley, where he undressed with some difficulty because of the sweat, and washed himself the best he could. Then he put on new linen, with a sable cloak girded on. Climbing up on to the deck of the galley in the company of the doctors, surgeons and physicians, he went to visit the sick and injured and had them treated in his presence. Out of his two galleys he had easily thirty or forty wounded but, of the gentlemen in his household, only Dyeric de Vyanne who had carried the Duke of Burgundy's pennant had suffered injuries. When the treatment was finished, they went off to dine on such blessings as God provided, because the only provisions that they had on board were the bread cakes which they had made the day before, and to drink, only sour wine or water. Their good wines had either run out or turned to vinegar because they had spent so long on the water.

Seen at night through the thick mist, the fire which raged both outside and inside the tower looked like a single lump of coal, so red were the walls. The men of Picardie said that, for St John's night, they had never seen finer fire.

That night the captain anchored his galleys at more than a bow's shot from the land, setting up a careful watch and making all the men sleep with arms at the ready. He himself slept fully armed on the poop of his galley. During the night the watch heard loud cries and piteous weeping coming from the direction of the castle, but could not make out what it was through the darkness and fog. At dawn, they were able to see several Turks kissing the bodies of the dead and lamenting over them. When it was fully light, they noticed a great multitude of Turks lying down on the mountain and in the valley bottom, with each one holding his horse by the bridle. The watch announced this to the Lord of Wavrin, who got up immediately. When he saw their standards, he realised at once that they were the men from Triest. He aimed his cannons at them and fired them all at once. This well and truly woke them up, and they straightaway fled to safety over the mountain.

Several of the Vlachs went ashore, where they found a number of subterranean granaries. I shall tell you how. In these lands, they dig large, dungeon-like pits, where they store wheat, oats and grain of all descriptions, and then cover the pits with large rocks. On the morning after such a foggy night, the soil above the pits was not damp, and it was this that indicated where to find the subterranean granaries that belonged to the village of Castle Turquant. Here there were broad beans, peas and wheat, all of which reached the galleys in good condition and provided for everybody. It seemed to everyone like manna from heaven.

Immediately after sunrise, Monsignor the Cardinal, Regnault de Confide and the other galleys arrived. It was obvious from the Cardinal's manner that he was very upset that the castle had fallen in his absence. The Lord of Wavrin greeted him as he passed in front of his galley, but the Cardinal turned his back. The Lord of Wavrin was puzzled as to what this might mean and what had made him not reply to his greeting. The Cardinal anchored a long way from the Lord of Wavrin, who quickly summoned Sir Regnault de Confide. When he saw Sir Regnault going off to the Cardinal, he too got into his boat with the galley commanders and set off. When he boarded the Cardinal's galley and greeted him, the Cardinal told him that he had committed a great act of treachery, which he would announce to our Holy Father the Pope and all the Christian princes. He threatened the Lord of Wavrin's two captains whom he had brought with him and said to them angrily: 'You're the cause of the treachery. I shall inform the Doge and the Signoria of Venice.'

The Lord of Wavrin was completely taken aback at this behaviour and, bowing humbly, said to the Cardinal: 'Monsignor, please be so kind as to tell me how it is that I have committed treason, and I shall reply at once.' The Cardinal told him that it was because he had come to conquer Castle Turquant without his knowledge and without asking his permission. In reply, the Lord of Wavrin excused himself by saying that, when he had left the Cardinal, he knew next to nothing about the castle and had not gone ahead with the intention of attacking it. What he had done had been at the instigation of the Vlachs, who had sought his help and had been the first to land. The Turks had already driven them back when he arrived. For this reason, it had been as necessary as it was appropriate to help the Vlachs in their enterprise, and he had therefore committed no fault or act of treachery. Furthermore, since he did not wish it ever to be said that he had been blamed for or accused of treachery, he was ready to prove the contrary, with his body against the Cardinal's as befitted a nobleman. The Cardinal replied that he was a priest and neither willing nor able to engage in combat. The Lord of Wavrin replied that the offer that he was making was not made to him personally. However, if he should ever wish to inform the Pope and all the Christian princes, he would receive more honour than blame. 'And if you think about it,' he said, 'what I have done redounds more to your glory than mine, since you are my commander.'

When the Cardinal had heard the Lord of Wavrin speak, his anger abated somewhat, although he still spoke a little insultingly. However, the Lord of Wavrin did not keep him long before taking his leave. He went back to his galley, where Sir Regnault de Confide came to see him. He said to him by way of a complaint:

‘Did you hear the hurtful words which the Cardinal spoke to me? You belong to my redoubtable lord, the Duke of Burgundy, and receive his wages. I am your captain. You did not support my word with yours, as you should have done. I can assume from this that you are as angry with me as the Cardinal.’ To this Sir Regnault replied: ‘I would not have known what to say, apart from the reply that you gave. The Cardinal and all of us are annoyed that we were not there at the capture of the castle.’ Whereupon the captain demanded: ‘What stopped you and the Cardinal from following me immediately, as was decided when I left?’ And he told him the truth of the matter, explaining how the Cardinal’s galley had run aground, how it had been necessary to unload everything and even to attach all the other galleys to his in order to pull it back into the deep water. All the time, the Turks had been waiting for them in battle order, and it was not until the end of the day that they departed from before Triest. The Lord of Wavrin replied that it was, in fact, by the grace of God, that the galley had run aground: ‘Because if you had left at the appointed time, the Turks would have been at Castle Turquant before us. They would have guarded it closely and we would not have dared to put a foot on land.’

Now the guardian of the Friars Minor in Constantinople was on the Cardinal’s galley, a respected man, a doctor of theology and a good churchman. When the Lord of Wavrin had left, he reproached the Cardinal for having spoken to him so cruelly and so angrily: it could have a bad effect on the whole army, and doing a good act would compensate for his delay. The guardian’s words had such an effect on the Cardinal that he sent him on his behalf to present malmsey, bread and biscuit to the captain, who had none of these on board his galley. When Sir Regnault de Confide saw him there, he said: ‘Sir Captain, I can see that there is peace between Monsignor the Cardinal and yourself. I shall go back with Monsignor the Guardian and tell Sir Cardinal what you told me about how it was by the grace of God that his galley ran aground.’

As soon as these lords had left the captain-general, the Lord of Wallachia, whose men were encamped in tents and pavilions on the riverbank, sent to him to inform him that there was a castle called Georgie⁷⁹ one day’s journey away given a following wind. It was four times bigger than Castle Turquant and situated on a large island. It would be possible to go either to lay siege to it or to assault it, without any danger from the Turks. The captain replied to the messenger: ‘Go to Monsignor the Cardinal, tell him the news, and find out what he wants to do about it.’ This he did. When the Cardinal had closely questioned the messenger about this, he said: ‘We need the Lord of Wavrin before we can decide on the matter, but I am sure that he will not want to come. I gather that when he left me just now, he said that he would not be back for a long time.’ Nonetheless, he at once summoned the guardian of Constantinople and said to him: ‘Go back to the Lord of Wavrin immediately, and tell him that I am asking him to come here to discuss with me the matter that the Vlachs have spoken about, because I do not want to decide anything without him. And speak to him in such a way that he agrees to come.’

79 Giurgiu.

The guardian was ready to obey the Cardinal's command. He straightaway went to the Lord of Wavrin and delivered the message that he had from the Cardinal. To this the Lord of Wavrin replied: 'There is no need for me to go there. The Cardinal can decide whatever seems best to him, whether to lay siege or to storm. I shall follow him anyway because, from now on, I am giving him and his men the privilege of entering the assault or the battle first. Then he will always enjoy the honour and I shall not have to suffer the insults I had to put up with on this occasion.' The guardian was not happy with this answer, and in reply said that this was no time to talk like that, despite his anger at what the Cardinal had said.

The guardian pressed so hard that eventually he was able to lead Sir Regnault de Confide and the Lord of Wavrin to the Cardinal. Once they had arrived there and exchanged greetings, he told them what the Vlachs had said and asked the Lord of Wavrin for his opinion on the matter. The Lord of Wavrin replied: 'I have never seen the place. It is obviously necessary to ask the Vlach lords their opinion, since they are informed about the matter.' When they had been asked, they gave their opinion. The best thing, for the good of Christianity, would be for the Cardinal and the Captain of Burgundy to go, at the request of the Prince of the Vlachs, to lay siege to Castle Georgie. They said that the Prince had already had two large bombards brought up precisely for this purpose.

The Lord of Wavrin was very anxious to make the journey and said to the Cardinal: 'We can only go or not go. If you wish, I can accompany you with all my galleys, and do the best I can. But if you want to go on to Nicopolis, just say what it is you want doing. This, in short, is what I would say about the matter.' To this the Cardinal replied: 'Now, noble lord, if you, like me, were the Legate of our Holy Father and I, like you, were the Captain of Burgundy, what would you decide to do?' 'I', said the Lord of Wavrin, 'would go to inspect the castle and do my very best there, seeing that the Vlach lords tell us that it is a place that causes a great deal of harm to the Christians. Given the strength of the Vlachs, who have six thousand men and two large bombards – and, most importantly, I have a very good one as well – we shall very rapidly either succeed or fail in capturing the place. They say that there are only about three hundred Turks there inside the castle. I am very keen to have it.' 'Very well,' said the Cardinal, 'may it be in the name of God who guides us! Come on, let us depart at once. We have nothing to do here.'

Having taken this decision, each boarded his own galley. The Vlachs had demolished and mined two sections of the wall of Castle Turquant and were returning to their manocques. The galleys then set sail with a following wind.

How the Christians left Castle Turquant to go and besiege the castle of Georgie

Two days after the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin had left Castle Turquant, they arrived at the island of Georgie. Here there was a strongly fortified rectangular castle, with four great stretches of wall, with a very large square tower at the corner of each

section. The smallest of these was larger and stronger than the one at Castle Turquant, and similarly fortified with wooden machicolations and crenels. Towards the river, it had two little stretches of wall which left the castle and came right down to the water. At the end of these there were two towers, each of them with machicolations like the others.

When all the Christians – both the Vlachs and the men from the galleys – had landed, the three hundred or so Turks who were in the castle made a sortie against the Vlachs, injuring some of them straightaway. In the end, however, the Vlachs drove them back into the castle. The Lord of Wavrin and the men from the galleys deliberated on how to approach the castle and make the assault. Now it so happened that they had found several small, four-wheeled carts on the island. They decided therefore to make large wattle-hurdles out of strong wood, which they put on the carts, held up by big wooden forks. Around the carts, there were further hanging hurdles. The carts so equipped offered them very good protection, as they pushed them towards the edge of the ditches. There, crossbowmen, culverineers and archers defended them against the men in the crenels who were throwing stones with slings. When the Christians had come so near, they could not harm them with their cannon or large weapons, since the towers and the wall had no openings in their lower section, and could only be defended from above. So the castle was besieged, with the Vlachs on one side and the men from the galleys on the other. The Lord of Wavrin had great trenches and ditches dug behind the protection of the carts. Next, he sent for the cannons from the galleys, to set them up against the machicolations and barbicans of the towers and walls. On the same night, he also had the bombard unloaded from the galley, and had the men drag it up on a sledge. He had three large wattle mantlets carpentered to protect the bombard. That night, it was all set up to fire and do its work next day at dawn, with the cannoneers being instructed to aim straight and true between the tower and the wall.

When the day dawned bright enough to allow the men to take aim at the castle, the bombard began its work, firing balls of light, soft Brabant stone. It struck the spot between the tower and the wall, exactly as the captain had commanded. The stone was reduced to powder, creating a great amount of smoke for a long time, so that for a while the tower and wall were hidden from view. Our men believed that the ball had gone straight through and gave a great shout. However, when the dust settled, they could see a great crack between the wall and the tower, and were quite sure that it was the stone that had been responsible. However, this was not the case. Rather, this is how the tower had settled and broken free from the stretch of wall when it had been built, since all the towers were massive and more than twenty-four feet high. Believing that it was the ball that had done this, the Christians reloaded and fired at the same place. This produced the same dust-cloud as the previous shot. When it had settled, everyone agreed that the crack was indeed larger than before. They again gave a great shout, which reached the ears of the Lord of Wallachia. When he asked what it was about, he was told that the bombard from the galleys was working miracles, and was reported to have knocked down the tower in the space of one or two shots. On hearing this, he mounted his horse and went to see how this could

have happened. As the owner of the castle – it was his father who had built it and, although he had been inside several times, he had never noticed the crack – when he saw it, he too was of the opinion that it was the bombard that was the cause. He therefore asked them to reload and fire it in his presence. Now because it was breakfast time and the Lord of Wavrin had still not eaten that day, he told the Lord of Wallachia: ‘I am putting the bombard and the cannoneers at your disposal. Get them to fire it as you wish. I am going to eat in my galley.’ He took Sir Regnault de Confide to have breakfast with him.

Shortly afterwards, the Lord of Wallachia had the bombard loaded and fired as he wanted. After the gun had fired and the dust had settled, it seemed to him too that the crack was larger and even that the tower was leaning. So he had it reloaded and fired another shot. Once again, it seemed that the crack was growing wider and wider and that the tower was leaning.

At this, Sir Regnault de Confide, who was breakfasting with the Lord of Wavrin, said: ‘This Vlach is going to fire our bombard so often that it will burst. We must send someone to tell him to let it cool down, and not to fire again until you get there.’ However, before the messenger had even arrived, the Vlach fired again and broke two of its hoops, killing two sailors, both of them good and valiant men according to their station. There was much grieving and lamentation over them. When they heard what had happened, De Wavrin and De Confide were extremely angry, but the galley-master told them that, provided only two hoops were broken and provided the staves were not damaged, he could repair them satisfactorily.

Immediately after breakfast De Wavrin and De Confide went to look at the bombard. However, the Lord of Wallachia had already returned to his own area of operation to fire two very large bombards which he had brought up. However, each of their barrels, excluding the chamber, made up only three-quarters of their length, so that when the ball was placed, it took up one-eighth of the length of the bombard. Nor did the cannoneers know how to aim at the castle, with the result that the balls always went too high.

When the overseer of the Lord of Wavrin’s galley came to look at the bombard, he tied it securely with a rope at the places where the hoops had broken, and then fired two shots. But at the second one, two other hoops and a stave broke, killing one of the mariners from the galley. This was a great loss, and so the captain at once had it loaded back onto the sledge and dragged back to his galley.

While they were dragging the bombard towards the galley, the Turks made a sally against the Vlachs who were guarding their artillery. The Vlachs killed three of them and the others fled. The Turks spiked the best of the two bombards belonging to the Vlachs, but these, being very large people, reassembled and drove the Turks back into the castle. Soon afterwards, a Franciscan from the galley, who had been in Jerusalem, de-spiked the bombard without doing it any damage. This is a wonderful skill but, nonetheless, he made a mistake and suffered a broken arm.

When the Lord of Wavrin realised that the Vlachs’ bombards were not doing any damage to the castle, he met with the Lord of Wallachia to tell him: ‘We shall not conquer the castle with our bombards. The only way that we shall be able to capture

it is the way we took Castle Turquant. In my opinion, the best thing would be for everybody to make faggots and bring as much wood as he can to pile up out of the wind, against the wall and towers, and then to set fire to it so that the flames leap up into the castle.' Everyone, both the Vlachs and the men from the galleys, agreed with this idea, and everybody received the order to bring as many faggots and as much other wood as possible to heap up against the castle wall.

Now the Lord of Wavrin had lost the use of an arm as a result of being hit by a stone at Castle Turquant. To stop people muttering against him that he was pretending to be more ill than he really was, he too went to fetch wood and did not allow the surgeons to put any dressing on it so long as he was before the castle of Georgie, no matter how ill he felt. Rather he came and went and made such an effort that he was always at risk of breaking his arm. He claimed, however, that the main cause of the pain was the chill from the drizzle that was falling when he was taking off his armour before Castle Turquant. So now the effect of his labour was that the pain of two paralysed fingers in the palm of his right hand struck him in the heart. Sir Regnault de Confide took him back to his galley, very ill, and sent for the physicians and surgeons. When they had examined him, they said that they would not operate until tomorrow morning when they had seen his urine. So the Lord of Wavrin asked Sir Regnault de Confide to act as his deputy, and he ordered all the men in the galleys to obey him as they would himself. This is what was done, and Sir Regnault de Confide acquitted himself as a valiant knight in the absence of his captain. That night he was terribly ill. He was racked by gout raging through all the limbs in the body. All the fingers of his right hand bent in towards his palm; his legs and arms crucified him. He had no limb that he could use, and all he did was to cry out from the great pain that he was suffering. The physicians and surgeons from the Cardinal's galley – famous doctors in physic and surgery – asked him what he thought was the cause. He told them, as stated above, that it had all happened before Castle Turquant, as a result of the stone, the heat, the sweat, the cold and the fog.

When morning came, the doctors put large cupping-glasses on his shoulders, on the small of his back, and at the end of the spine. They cut the flesh with razors and drew blood with the cupping-glasses, weighing it on a scale to know how many ounces they had drawn. But what they principally told him was that, when a captain or war-leader feels himself to be in any way wounded or exhausted, he should not put himself in any danger, but rather be careful that it is not the cause of some greater misfortune which could harm a whole people, army or country.

I shall now leave the Lord of Wavrin, who was gravely ill, and tell you about Sir Regnault de Confide and the Lord of Wallachia, who were gathering as many faggots and as much wood as possible. The men-at-arms did their job so well and amassed so much that it provided them with a safe shelter against the Turkish defence. When there appeared to be enough, the command was given to throw it all into the ditches, which were only about four feet deep, until they were full. The rest they piled as high as possible against a section of a wall and tower. Then everyone, apart from those charged with keeping watch, received the command to go and look for more.

The Turks saw the men going to collect the wood to pile up even higher on top of what was already up against their wall. Then, despite the cannon and culverins discharging against the walls and battlements, they risked death by letting down with ropes baskets full of fire onto the wood piled against the walls. But it was too late. If they had set the fire the moment the wood was thrown against the wall, the place would never have been captured as it was, because as quickly as the men threw on the wood, it would have been burned up and consumed even faster than they were able to replenish it. Instead, the fire which they let down in baskets ignited the wood so effectively that the flames shot right up to the battlements, which also caught fire. As a result, the fire spread and jumped into the castle and into the towers, which were covered in wood, advancing much further than the Turks intended. They made strenuous efforts to put it out with water, which they fetched from the postern, while the culverineers and crossbowmen exerted themselves in the defence.

The subashi saw that resistance was futile and that, so long as they stayed there, they would all be captured or killed. So he negotiated with the Lord of Wallachia that he would surrender to him on condition only that their lives would be spared, along with such few possessions as they had in the castle. He begged him to stop the bombardment so that they could put out the fire and hand the place over to him whole and intact.

The Lord of Wallachia was extremely anxious to have the place undamaged rather than burned down, and so took the subashi hostage as security for the surrender, together with thirty of the best Turks. He then approached Sir Regnault de Confide, who was shooting vigorously at the men who were trying to extinguish the flames. He begged him, for the sake of God, to stop the bombardment, because the Turks had surrendered to him on condition that he spare their lives and property, and because he had already taken custody of the subashi of the castle and thirty Turks as hostages. He repeated several times: 'For God's sake, let them put out the fire so that my fortress is not burned down. It is the strongest one on the Danube and, so long as it is in the hands of the Turks, it can harm all the Christians on the other side. Whenever the Turks want to harry Wallachia or Transylvania, they and their horses cross by this island. They go over by the castle bridge on the arm of the river leading to Wallachia, and bring whatever they have captured back across the same bridge. When the Vlachs pursue them to recover their possessions, the castle prevents them from doing any damage. However, when the Turks used to go straight across the river, the Vlachs always caught up with them and attacked their rearguard, killing many of them or taking them prisoner.' When Sir Regnault de Confide had taken in what it was he needed, he said to the Vlach: 'Go to our Lords Cardinal and De Wavrin to find out what their wish is in this matter, because I shall do as they say.'

The Lord of Wallachia spurred his horse and galloped off to the Cardinal. He explained the situation exactly as he had explained it to Sir Regnault de Confide, but telling him in addition: 'If I can have my castle – which my father built – back in one piece, it will not take more than the women of Wallachia with their distaffs to conquer all Greece.' But it seemed to everyone who heard him that he would say anything, provided he could have his castle back safe and intact, because he also

added that there was not a stone in the castle that had not cost his father a rock of salt, which in Wallachia is excavated in rocks, in the same way as one excavates stones in the quarries of other lands.

So the Cardinal sent to the Lord of Wavrin, who was grievously ill, with all his limbs paralysed apart from his tongue. Nonetheless, he was delighted when he heard about the surrender of the castle, saying that he shared the Cardinal's pleasure. The Cardinal therefore gave orders to extinguish the flames and surrender the place to the Lord of Wallachia, who was overcome with joy. When the fire was out, the Turks evacuated the castle with their horses and baggage. By their agreement with the Vlach, he was to bring them, together with their possessions, safely across the Danube to Bulgaria. The Lord of Wallachia therefore requested the Cardinal to give them a safe conduct, which he granted immediately.

Meanwhile, the Lord of Wallachia's son went to the Lord of Wavrin and, after greeting him, told him through an interpreter that he was planning an enterprise against the Turks, and that if he promised not to reveal it, he would tell him his secret. The Lord of Wavrin willingly swore to this, whereupon the interpreter, on the instructions of the Lord of Wallachia's son, said: 'My father summoned me to make a request. He told me that if I do not, on his behalf, exact vengeance against the subashi of the castle of Georgie, he will disown me and not regard me as his son. This is because it is he who betrayed him. He took him to the Turk under the same Turk's safe conduct, and then led him away to the castle of Gallipoli, where he kept him for a long time with both legs in irons. Now these are the conditions on which he and his saracens have surrendered to my father. Their lives and goods are to be spared, and they have to be led safely into Bulgaria. I am going to cross the river two leagues from here with two thousand Vlachs. I shall lay ambushes on the roads, so that when they imagine they are going to Nicopolis, I shall be in their way and put them all to death.'

The Lord of Wavrin did not reply to this one way or the other, and the Lord of Wallachia's son left to put his plan into action. Two or three hours later, the Cardinal sent his safe-conduct, sealed for the Turks, to the Lord of Wavrin, so that he too could append his seal. He replied that it was not for him to add his seal to the Cardinal's, given that he was the commander of the whole army. He promised, however, that since such a safe-conduct had been issued, he and his men would respect it. The Cardinal was happy with this reply, and the safe-conduct was delivered to the Turks, together with the boats to cross the river.

When the Turks saw that they had been dismissed, they first of all took the saddles off their horses and put them into a little boat which had been brought up in front of the castle. Then they tied their horses tail to tail, and attached the first horse to the boat which was propelled by oars. This is how they crossed the river and, to judge from the horses, it seems that they had done this often enough before. The Turks boarded the other boats, which were manocques, with all their baggage. When they passed in front of the galleys, they looked at the Christians with villainous and thoroughly hostile intent. They carried their bows flexed, with arrows in their hands

and shields on their shoulders, looking as though they were ready to fight if anyone said anything to them. This is how they crossed the Danube and entered Bulgaria.

When they had crossed the water, the Turks mounted their horses ready for the journey. They had hardly set off when the son of the Lord of Wallachia surprised them with his ambush and put them all to death. However, the subashi who, as recounted above, had betrayed his father, was led before him alive. After he had recalled his treachery to him, he cut off his head with his own hands. As soon as the Vlachs had collected the corpses of the Turks they laid them out naked along the riverbank, making a forbidding sight for the men of the galleys as they passed by.

I shall now leave the story of the Lord of Wallachia's son and instead talk about us Christians, that is the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin, and how they left to attack a castle called Roussico,⁸⁰ situated on the banks of the river in Bulgaria.

How the Turks set fire to the village of Roussico and to the castle, when they saw the galleys coming

When the Christians had taken the castle of Georgie and restored it to the Lord of Wallachia, who was its rightful owner, he was overjoyed at what had happened. He intimated to the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin that, further up the river on the way to Nicopolis, the Turks had a castle called Roussico, situated in Bulgaria and rather like Castle Turquant. Because the river by the castle was narrow, the Turks often crossed over at this point to harry Wallachia, causing great damage. What is more, they would soon do it again if we were to let them, in order to avenge the slaughter of their men. He asked us very sweetly whether we would like to go there to besiege it because, if we did, it would be very easy to capture. He added that he had certain news that the Hungarians were coming in great strength and had forced their way into the town of Nicopolis. The Cardinal passed the news to the Lord of Wavrin, who was gravely ill. He replied that he could not himself give any help, but that he entrusted everything to the Cardinal, the Lord of the Vlachs and Sir Regnault de Comfide, who was his representative in this matter. Nonetheless, he said that, unless the place was stronger than Castle Turquant, he would strongly advise attacking it. However, he also begged the Cardinal not to forget the day that he had given the Hungarians to be before Nicopolis, that is our Lady of September. Nor should they default on the promise which he himself had sworn and confirmed with his seal. It must have been about six miles from Georgie to the castle of Roussico and, as a good wind was blowing, they would be there in less than two hours. By rowing they would do it only in a day and a half.

So the Cardinal ordered the anchors to be raised, and they set off under sail and oar to the castle of Roussico, arriving there in less than two hours. The Turks saw the galleys coming and, since they had heard about the fall of the castles of Turquant and Georgie, and how all the saracens were dead, they were terrified of the Christians. In

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fact, they were so scared that, when they saw the galleys coming, they fled, having set fire to the castle and the entire village. The galleys cast anchor and stood before the burning castle and village for the rest of the day and the following night.

The news of how our men had conquered the heathens spread about the country. The Christians who lived as tributaries in Bulgaria roused themselves and, after consulting together, said that they no longer wished to live in subjection to the Turks. Having made their decision, they loaded their women, goods and children onto wagons and carts, took all their animals with them and went to submit to the Lord of Wallachia and the men of the galleys, as there seemed to be enough of them to withstand any encounter with the Turks who had remained behind. These Christian Bulgarians announced their arrival to the Lord of Wallachia and the Cardinal, begging that they receive them for the honour of God. The Turks, however, knew that the Bulgarians were in revolt, and about eight hundred or a thousand of them went in pursuit. They followed them for about a local league to near Rossico, where they laid siege to them on a mountain. When he realised what was happening, the Lord of Wallachia had his horses swim across the river, and crossed with four thousand men to help the besieged. The Turks were not expecting this and, when they discovered that he was coming in such force, ran away every man for himself. The Bulgarians submitted to the Lord of Wallachia, and humbly requested him to help them across the Danube and to bestow on them a place to live in his country.

Now the Lord of Wallachia had a broad and spacious country, sparsely populated in some of its territories, and he gladly acceded to their request, receiving them liberally as his subjects. He led them to Rossico and there asked the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin to help him transport these Bulgarian Christians across the Danube until they were all in his country and out of captivity. It took three days and three nights to take them across, since there were at least twelve thousand people – men, women and children – together with their baggage and animals. Everyone who saw them said that they looked like gypsies. When they had all crossed the river, the Lord of Wallachia seemed delighted to have won such a numerous people, saying how valiant the men of the Bulgarian nation were. He thanked the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin most sincerely for the favours which they had already done him, adding that even if the fleet of the Holy Father and the Duke of Burgundy had achieved nothing by the expedition, apart from saving eleven- or twelve thousand Christian souls and releasing their bodies from captivity at the hands of the saracens, it would still seem to him to be a great achievement.

The Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin decided between themselves to leave for Nicopolis next morning at daybreak. The departure took place as planned. The galleys took five days to reach a place where the Turks, who were expecting them, had positioned several cannons and bombards on a sandy spot outside the town. The men in the galleys were expecting this, and so had placed their artillery on the prows of their vessels. It is impossible to describe how terrifying it was to hear the weapons firing from both directions as the galleys went past, since there was not a Turk there who was not firing the guns. However, by the grace of God, the galleys went past

without suffering too much damage. Three of them were hit, but none in a place that would have made them vulnerable.

Firing weapons against their enemies and sounding trumpets and bugles, the men in the galleys passed in front of Nicopolis, from which the Hungarians had been expelled. They anchored in front of a large round tower, surrounded by walls in the manner of braves, and situated on the riverbank of the Wallachian shore.⁸¹ The town of Nicopolis is long and narrow, and located in the mountains with a castle above. On both sides of the town are two long stretches of wall, going down from the castle to the river. The walls are well fortified with large, round towers. Along the river there was only a big wooden palisade which stretched from one section of the wall to the other. Here there were six galleys, or rather galliots, which the Turks had sunk into the water next to the palisade, so that only their sterns were visible out of the water. On the night the galleys arrived before Nicopolis, the Lord of Wallachia informed the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin that the Hungarian nobles were coming in great force and were less than two days' journey away.

The Lord of Wavrin was extremely pleased to have arrived before the Hungarians, considering that it was already four days after Our Lady of September. Next day, after dinner, Sir Pietre Waast arrived, having made a great effort to bring the lords of Hungary there in arms. He went first of all to his captain, the Lord of Wavrin. He was greatly distressed to see him suffering so badly from the illness, telling him that it had come at a bad time, as the Hungarian lords had intended to welcome him and to feast him with great honour. As soon as Sir Pietre Waast had finished telling his captain at length about what he had achieved in Hungary, the Lord of Wavrin said to him: 'Sir, go to Monsignor the Cardinal to deliver your message. I do not think that he will be unhappy that you went to him first.' So Sir Pietre hurried off to the Cardinal, who received him gladly and asked: 'When are the lords of Hungary coming?' Sir Pietre replied: 'They will be here within two days at the latest.'

Then the Lord of Wallachia went to see the Lord of Wavrin as well, making as though he was greatly distressed at his illness. He said how much this misfortune had upset him, and how distressed the lords of Hungary were, who had heard him talk about it. Then he said: 'You see this great tower in front of Nicopolis, which the Turks are occupying? Every year they use it – and it is built in my country – and cause me immense damage. I beg you, please, to help me capture and demolish it.' The Lord of Wavrin replied: 'You can see that I do not have a single limb that I can use. Go to Monsignor the Cardinal. I shall send Sir Pietre Vaast and Sir Regnault de Confide with you. They are both intelligent and both men of war. You can decide with them and the Cardinal how to attack and capture it. I cannot help you with my body, but I shall give all I have, and more, to assist you.'

The Lord of Wallachia went to the Cardinal in the company of the two valiant knights, Sir Pietre Vaast and Sir Regnault de Confide, whom the Lord of Wavrin had sent in his name. They decided between them that the tower should be besieged on

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all sides, by the Vlachs on land and by the galleys on the river. They would try to approach the tower as closely as they could.

The Turks in Nicopolis were afraid, and noticed that the Christians were intending to lay siege to the tower. During the night they launched a small galliot, well equipped with oars, and loaded it with victuals and artillery. That night there was a thick fog, and at dawn the galliot left Nicopolis. It was so light that it seemed to fly across the water as it passed in front of the galleys. Those who saw it cast off and went quickly in pursuit. However, it went into the postern of the tower, which was on the water, and the men in the tower defended it with arrow-shot and stones, forcing the pursuing galleys to return. However, one of the galleys was ordered to keep on the watch for it, so that, when it returned, it could be run down.

The tower was put under a close siege, right up to the false brayes which surrounded it. The Lord of Wallachia had brought up his bombards and fired them vigorously against the tower. However, they did no damage apart from shattering and bringing down most of the roof. As the bombards were firing, the tutor of the Lord of Wallachia's son, a man of at least eighty, came to see the Lord of Wavrin and told him: 'It is fifty years or thereabouts since the King of Hungary⁸² and the Duke of Burgundy⁸³ laid siege to the town of Nicopolis which you can see before you. The place where the battle⁸⁴ was fought is three leagues from here. If you can lift your head and come to this window, I can show you the place and what the battle was like.' So the Lord of Wavrin, dressed in a nightgown, had himself carried to the little window. The guardian said to him: 'You can see there where the King of Hungary and the Hungarians were stationed. The Constable of France was there, and Duke John there.' The Duke was up against a great round tower which, as the guardian said, he had mined. It was all ready for firing on the day that the news of the battle arrived. He also said that, at that time, he was a servant of the Lord of Coucy, who always retained a following of high-born Vlachs who knew the strategic sites of Turkey. The governor praised the Lord of Coucy highly, saying that, on the day before the battle, he had fallen upon a good six thousand Turks who had come with the intention of surprising the Christian foragers. In short, he told the Lord of Wavrin all about the battle, and how the Turks had taken him prisoner and sold him as a slave to the Genoese, in whose custody he had learned the language that he was speaking. The Lord of Wavrin was glad to see everything that the guardian showed him, and to hear everything that he had to say. Meanwhile, as the Vlach was talking to him, he heard the men in the galleys shouting: 'Look! The Hungarians are coming!' At this, the Vlach all of a sudden left the Lord of Wavrin to join his master, who had himself to meet the Hungarian lords.

When the lords of Hungary had arrived and encamped on the riverbank, the Voevode of Hungary, Johannes Hoignacq, dismounted and immediately boarded a small boat and went to see the Lord of Wavrin, dressed in full armour in the Hungarian

82 King Sigismund (1387–1437).

83 John the Fearless (1371–1419).

84 The Battle of Nicopolis (1396).

manner. With him was Sir Pietre Vaast. Since his armour was very broad at the shoulder, he could not get into the Lord of Wavrin's little cabin. He immediately left and went to see the Cardinal, saying that he would come back to see the captain when he had disarmed. This he did and, when he entered the cabin, he gave every sign of showing great sympathy for the illness and for the pain which he saw him suffering. When he had had a good look at him and touched his limbs, he said through his interpreter, who spoke good French, that he could bring him some comfort, because he had seen people who were similarly ill, but who had soon recovered their health. When the two lords had been together for a while, with a lawyer as intermediary, Sir Pietre Vaast had stuff brought from his master's pantry, with which the galley was well provided: large bowls of green ginger, sweetmeats and various kinds of drug. The Voevode was given something to eat and provided with good malmsey to drink. Then the Voevode took a knob of ginger and presented it to the captain, asking him to eat it for his sake. The captain suspected that this would do him more harm than good, but the Voevode did not allow him to refuse, and so he agreed. When he saw that the captain could not raise his hands, he pushed it into his mouth and he swallowed it. When he had eaten it, the Voevode begged him to drink some malmsey. This seemed quite wrong to him, but he did it in order to humour the Voevode. This done, the Voevode told him that green ginger and malmsey were very good for him, whatever anyone might say. Immediately afterwards, he took his leave and returned to his lodgings, where he and the Lord of Wallachia decided to make every effort to assail the tower and capture it, as they had done at the other places.

They collected an abundance of faggots and threw them with a lot of other wood into the false brayes, as high as seemed appropriate. The Turks could not prevent this, because the Christian culverineers and crossbowmen stopped them even daring to take up their positions at the barbicans, with the result that they could not hinder them from setting fire to the wood piled up around the tower. However, because the tower was round, when the flames were alight on all sides, they merely licked around it and, because they did not mount upwards, did no harm to the people within. It became clear, therefore, that the tower would not be captured in this way. When they saw this, the Hungarian and Vlach lords took the joint decision to mine the brayes which surrounded the tower and bring them down. They did as planned, thinking that the men inside the tower would surrender when they saw the brayes demolished. However, they did not do this and remained as arrogant as before. And every day the Turks were appearing in great strength above Nicopolis.

The Christian lords realised that it would be a long time before they could capture the tower. They had already been held up for a good fifteen days, and St Michael's Day⁸⁵ was the latest time the river could be crossed if they were to give battle to the Turks this year. They decided jointly to depart and row upstream until they came to a river which flows from Transylvania into the Danube.⁸⁶

85 30 September.

86 The Jiu.

The day after they had made this decision, the galleys weighed anchor, prepared to sail, and rowed up the river. On the right bank, the forces of the Hungarians and Vlachs kept up with the ships on horseback and, on the left, the Turks with a large force in five battalions. There were many more of them than there were Christians. It so happened that, that night, the Hungarians and Vlachs camped on the large meadows by the riverbank, where they pastured their horses. The Turks camped opposite them on the other bank. In the evening, at the time known as ‘between dog and wolf’, when the angelus is often sounded in the lands of France, the Vlachs and some of the Hungarians who had put their horses out to pasture in the meadows where they were all camping, let out a loud and hideous cry. It sounded as though the Turks had got in among them. When they heard this noise, the men in the galleys gave the call to arms and the order for everyone to disembark, because they were anchored nearest to the bank. Nevertheless, the Hungarian and Vlach lords had ordered some of their people to inform the men in the galleys about the cry, which they did very inadequately. First of all they arrived late. Then, they had not even arrived when the noise broke out, but shouted out from a distance: ‘It’s nothing! It’s nothing!’

When they had come on board the galleys, they said that the Hungarians and Vlachs were sending a message to the sailors not to be frightened of the noise, since they shouted like this only to calm their horses which were pasturing round about. They did this to stop them running away. They also said that, if they could reach them, the Turks would happily attack the Christians at this hour, and that when they are at arms in the field, they give three shouts at dusk and do the same at dawn. The Lord of Wavrin asked the men: ‘If the Turks happened to attack you at a time like this, how would you know for certain whether it was a signal to defend yourself or simply a signal to calm down your horses?’ They replied: ‘You would know by the sound of trumpets and drums, and there would be a far louder din than there is now.’

The galleys took six days to sail to the place where the river mentioned above flows down into the Danube from Transylvania. Every night the Hungarians and Vlachs camped on the meadows on their side of the river, while the Turks always did the same opposite them on the other bank. Every night the Turks lit amazingly large fires, to all appearances for at least a league along the riverbank. At night this gave the impression that there were more of them than there really were. For this reason, Sir Regnault de Confide came to the captain and said: ‘We cannot call ourselves men of honour if one of these nights we do not wake the Turks up.’ ‘But how?’ said the Lord of Wavrin. ‘I shall tell you, my lord,’ said Sir Regnault. ‘If’, he said, ‘you can persuade the Cardinal to let you have the three boats that are in his galley and the two trumpets, we shall take these, together with the boats from your five galleys. In each of these we shall put two hand cannons and a competent culverineer and, in addition, a trumpet and six oarsmen or boatmen to row them. The night will be dark. I shall go up river to the place where the fires begin, and from there I shall send a boat down river, following the shore. This will require only one oar to keep a straight course. When I know that it is one or two arrow-shots away, I shall release another in the same way and then, following the same procedure, all the others. When the first

boat has reached the end of the fires and the edge of the Turkish army, the crew will fire the cannons, sound the trumpets and shout loudly. The people in the other boats will do the same, wherever they are, as soon as they hear the first salvo. Like this, the noise will be heard all at the same time throughout the Turkish camp. They will think that the Christians have landed. If we do this, it seems to me that no Turkish louts will ever have such a fright as these ones will now.'

The captain agreed to this and sent to Monsignor the Cardinal for his three boats and his trumpets. He sent them gladly when he knew what they were going to be used for. Then the Lord of Wavrin said to Sir Regnault de Confide: 'Go and put your plan into action. However, I would suggest that three or four of my galleys should very quietly go forward on the anchor, at an equal distance from one another, all along the riverbank where the boats are going to pass by the Turkish camp. Then, when the boats let off cannon fire, shouts and trumpet calls, the men in the galleys should add to this clamour by giving an almighty cry so that the noise and the terror are all the greater.'

The enterprise was accomplished at about midnight, just as it had been planned. The Hungarians and Vlachs were alerted to it so that they would not be alarmed. Everyone in the boats and galleys performed their task of letting off cannon, shouts and trumpets magnificently. The tumult and commotion lasted for a good quarter of an hour and, immediately afterwards, it was noticeable that the Turks' fires were growing smaller and eventually going out. From this it was clear that the Turks had fled. A number of Vlachs and Hungarians who were prisoners of the saracens and knew how to swim risked jumping into the water and swam across the river. They reached the Christian army, where they announced that all the Turks had fallen over each other to run away. They left more or less all their baggage behind, so that if two- or three hundred men had been landed, they could have taken an immense amount of booty.

When the ships set off next morning, rowing up the river, they could see neither the horses nor the Turks that they had grown accustomed to seeing on the riverbank. It was only a good four hours after dinner that they reassembled and drew themselves up in battle order, on a narrow stretch of the river where they had positioned a number of cannon and serpentines which fired at the galleys. All the Christians on land and water hurled insults at them, mocking them for their cowardly nocturnal flight. On St Michael's night, the galleys reached the confluence of the Transylvanian river and the Danube. Here they found the Hungarian boats mentioned above, which had been assembled for the river crossing.

On the Turkish side of the Danube, there was a small town situated on the riverbank, which had been in ruins ever since Emperor Sigismund of Germany and Duke John of Burgundy had fought the Turks before Nicopolis. When our Christians arrived there, they decided unanimously that the archers, crossbowmen, cannoneers and culverineers from the galleys should land at this ruined place with their weapons and ammunition. A lot of the wall was still standing, and there they set up their weapons to fire at the Turks while the Hungarians and Vlachs crossed.

As they crossed over, they took up their positions in this place, with bowmen and artillerymen always in the van.

They took two days and two nights to cross and, when everyone was over, they formed themselves up in a splendid battle order. As they prepared to encounter their Turkish enemy, who were a good French league away, the Voevode of Hungary, with twelve well-mounted horsemen around him in a group of about a dozen, began to ride between the two armies to see how the Turks were positioned and how they intended to fight. When the Turks saw the Hungarians and Vlachs, to say nothing of the Christians from the galleys, armed and ready for the attack, they calmly and with no sign of fear began to turn their backs to return to their own country. Then, believing that the Christians were bound to pursue them, they set fire to everything – villages and stores – that they passed on their way. When the Voevode of Hungary saw what the Turks were doing, he turned to his people and ordered them to cross back over the river, as he realised that they could not do anything.

Then he went to the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin and said: ‘I confirm that I have fulfilled my sealed promise, and I declare that the captain-general of the Duke of Burgundy is quit of his covenant. We have crossed the River Danube and offered ourselves in battle against the Turks. These have now departed, burning all the supplies in our path, believing that we were bound to pursue them. But this is impossible for us, because I have no provisions with me that will last for more than two days. I know them well, and I know that, if I pursue them, they will continue to flee ahead of me, to lure me more deeply into their country. Then they will exploit this advantage to surround me, so that I am unable to retreat except at great peril and with great losses. I am mindful of last year, and of how we lost our King at the Battle of Varna, along with a whole host of lords and men of Hungary. The kingdom, nobility and people are now in my charge, and I do not wish to put them at risk because if I were struck down the kingdom would be lost. Anyone who wishes to conquer the Turks must fight them cunningly in an underhand way, because they are a crafty people.’

The Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin were dismayed when they heard such remarks. They asked the Voevode what he thought they should do, and whether there was a suitable town up river where they could safely stay with their galleys until spring. He said not. There was neither a town nor a castle where the galleys would be secure. Furthermore, when the river was frozen, the Turks would come and burn them. St Remy’s Day⁸⁷ was already past, and the season was approaching when the river usually froze. He urged them to go back as soon as they could because, as he said, it would be best for them to be out of the river before it froze over. As it was, the signs were already visible on the banks.

Then the Cardinal and the Lord of Wavrin, who really did not know what to do, took leave of the Hungarian and Vlach lords, angry and sad that they had not been able to do better. They rowed out of the River Danube as quickly as they could on account of the extreme cold. They entered the Black Sea and returned to

87 1 October.

Constantinople, which they reached on the day after All Saints,⁸⁸ when all souls are commemorated, in the year 1445. Here they were honourably received by the Emperor of Constantinople, who welcomed them with the greatest respect.

How the Cardinal of Venice and the Lord of Wavrin took leave of the Emperor of Constantinople and returned to Rome

As you have heard, the Cardinal of Venice and the Lord of Wavrin, who had recovered somewhat from his illness, were honourably received and feasted in the city of Constantinople. The Emperor presented the Lord of Wavrin with a number of fine and sumptuous gifts which, however, he refused. Instead, in view of the journey and of what he had done in the Emperor's cause, and because he realised that, as matters stood, he was not for the moment in need of anything to prosecute the war against Turks, he asked the Emperor if he would give him some worthy jewels or holy relics to commemorate his journey. The Emperor gladly acceded to the request and gave him, among other things, a piece of our Lord Jesus Christ's precious and holy robe, which the glorious Virgin, his mother, had created and woven with her own hands. For this noble gift, the Lord of Wavrin thanked the Emperor over and over again.

Our Christian lords stayed several days in Constantinople, restocking and provisioning their galleys with whatever was necessary, and repairing their equipment and weapons. Then they took leave of the Emperor and the great lords of his court, boarded their vessels, weighed anchor and set sail. They crossed the sea with a favourable wind and reached Venice without encountering a single mishap. Here they were splendidly entertained and honourably received by the Doge and by the Signoria and people of Venice. When they had rested and stayed for a few days, they took their leave and mounted their horses, because they had left their grooms, pages and horses here.

On arriving in Rome, they went to our Holy Father then reigning, Pope Eugenius, and were warmly welcomed, both by him and by the Cardinals. Among the latter, the Cardinal of Therewane,⁸⁹ called Master Robert le Josne, entertained them most sumptuously. He was the son of Master Robert le Josne, then governor of Arras, and a native of Lens in Artois. There our Christian lords recounted their adventures, as set out above, to the Holy Father in the presence of the Cardinals. The Lord of Wavrin in particular pleaded that if he had been able to serve in the defence of Christendom earlier, and that if things had turned out better with regards to the Hungarians and Greeks, he would gladly have devoted himself to the cause earlier. He humbly prayed and begged the Holy Father to accept the service which he had performed in the name of his dread lord, the Duke of Burgundy. Our Holy Father the Pope and the Cardinals very happily thanked him for this. The Holy Father in particular charged him with carrying on his behalf heartfelt thanks to the very Catholic and very valiant

88 1 November.

89 Th  rouanne.

prince, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, for the effort, work and expense that he had put into this expedition.

Afterwards, and in consideration of the service that the Lord of Wavrin had rendered to the Church, our Holy Father gave him certain indulgences, which he carried back with him, and which benefit all who visit the church of Lille. Here too, after his return, the Lord of Wavrin deposited the relics of the robe of our Lord Jesus Christ, encased in a golden cross and richly adorned with great pearls and precious stones. Then the Lord of Wavrin took leave of the Holy Father and the Roman court. After receiving the apostolic blessing, he left Rome and returned, without encountering any incidents worth recording, in stages to his country, to his prince, the very noble Duke Philip of Burgundy, whom he found in his good city of Lille. After he had informed Philip about the outcome of his journey, as is set out in detail above, the Duke received him honourably and feasted him in the spirit of goodwill, as did the nobles and barons of his court in general.

III

Michel Beheim

This Poem Tells of King Pladislavo,¹ King of Hungary and How He Fought with the Turks.

Lines 1–10 What people say about kings, princes, counts and freeborn men, and how they dare to rule, seems a mere trifle to me, because I know of the achievements of one who behaved like a prince. Disgrace was something that he detested. He was there wherever people had to be. He never spared himself when there was battle to be done against the heathen.

11–20 He was a king from Poland called Bladislaus. After the death of King Albrecht,² he was elected King of Hungary. This angered many lords, who earned his hate. Lady Els,³ the Queen and many lords in the kingdom were all against him, as I understand.

21–30 The war lasted for a good two years,⁴ and during this time Lady Els, King Albrecht's wedded wife, died. During the conflict, the Turkish people gathered in force to attack Hungary. When the King realised this, he made peace with the lords and ordered a campaign. He went with most of them to Wardein.⁵

31–40 He gathered with his army and, with the help of the Hungarians, brought together fourteen thousand men. They were all good, warlike people. They passed by the domain called Tütenrib.⁶ Their route was along the Danube towards Bulgaria. The capital is called Soffia,⁷ situated in Bulgaria.

1 Vladislav, King of Poland (1434–44) and Hungary (1440–44). Beheim's spelling of the name is inconsistent.

2 Albert, King of Hungary (1437–40), King of Bohemia (1438–40) and Emperor (1438–40).

3 Elizabeth (d.1442), daughter of the Emperor and King of Hungary Sigismund (d.1337) and wife of King Albert.

4 The reference is to the civil war in Hungary between 1440 and 1442.

5 Várád/Oradea.

6 Tüdőrev.

7 Sofia.

41–50 He gave battle outside the capital and it quickly submitted to his command. Then he burned it all and had all the Turks he found inside slaughtered. Then he left and went on for four days, burning everything that lay in his path and all around.

51–60 On the fourth day, he came boldly to a river called the Nisch, expecting battle at the town until, on the fourth day, the Emperor Murat⁸ came to a river. It was only three miles from the Hungarians. It was called the Maricza, as I have heard.⁹

61–70 He assembled his army by the river. His brother-in-law Halal Pascha¹⁰ had with him a good hundred thousand men, whom he had brought with him across the sea from Great Turkey. The Emperor Murat had with him a good two times a hundred thousand men, whom he had acquired with the help of his brother-in-law and whom he maintained and led.

71–80 The Emperor and his brother-in-law went up a mountain. The Emperor took counsel on how he could oppose the enemy, who were overwhelming him. His brother-in-law answered him: ‘Things will get better. We shall overcome them without any trouble, and no one will be able to resist.

81–90 In my domain I have more buffaloes than there are of these Christians. Dear brother-in-law, grant me the honour and glory of slaying them. That would rejoice my heart.’ Murat, Emperor of the Turks, gladly granted his brother-in-law his wish. It pleased him that he wished to do such a deed.

91–100 So, as you see, the Hungarian king had reinforcements of four-and-a-half thousand horse which the Despot of Serbia¹¹ had brought him. Halal Pascha took himself off to the Emperor and allowed him to come and join his men. He then set off with his own army of a hundred thousand or more, as I have said before.

101–110 The Hungarian king lay so far away from this river that the Lord of the Turks could position himself in between with his men and could also start the battle when he brought them across. The battle was fought most nobly on both sides. It lasted for three hours before the enemy gave way.

8 Murad II (1421–51).

9 Beheim’s geography is confused. Niš is a town in Serbia on the River Morava; the Maritsa is a river flowing through Bulgaria and Thrace and into the Aegean.

10 The reference is evidently to the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha. It was Halil Pasha’s brother Mahmud, and not Halil himself, who fought in the campaign of 1443. Mahmud was married to Murad II’s sister.

11 George Branković.

111–120 Good fortune came at last, because the Christians broke through and the enemy's banner was cast down. Halal Pascha fled and all his best men with him, but he was captured later. A number of them stole away, but could get nowhere because of the snow. They ran back and surrendered to the Christians.¹²

121–130 There was more snow than there had ever been before. It was Christmas. The Turks, if they had not run away, were nearly all killed or captured. The best captives were given to the Despot George, the commander and his companions. To the Emperor Murad, he wanted

131–140 to send Halal Pascha, having previously blinded him, and cut off his mouth and nose, because the same Emperor had imprisoned his two sons and blinded them¹³ without delay. The Despot asked Halal Pascha how his two sons were, and he said that they were in good health.

141–150 He therefore wanted to blind him for saying something that was not true. When the King heard this, he and some of the Hungarian lords – Hunadienusch¹⁴ and others – spoke these words: 'Do not be so quick to take revenge! Your sons will not be able to see because of this. You should hand over the prisoners to the King. Do not do such a shameful thing!'

151–160 He obeyed and agreed to give the prisoners to the King. He took them away to Veirwar,¹⁵ to the prison there. Veirwar is called Greek Weissenburg in German. I understand that he later recovered several castles: Taubenburg,¹⁶ one called Sendre,¹⁷ and other castles.¹⁸

161–170 The King crossed the River Nisch with his men and continued to the River Maricza. The Turk was stationed by a mountain in front of it, which he had fortified and chosen. He took flight further, and this is where he was found. The

12 This is a confused account of the capture of Mahmud Bey, brother of the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha, as he pursued the Hungarian army after the battle of the Zlatitsa Pass.

13 Murad II blinded Branković's two sons, Gregory and Stephen, and imprisoned them at Tokat, apparently in 1441. The Greek chronicle of Doukas attributes Murad's action to the influence of the vizier Fazlullah.

14 John (János) Hunyadi.

15 [Nándor]fehérvár (Belgrade). The German Weissenburg ('white castle') is a calque on both the Hungarian and Slavonic names.

16 Golubac (Slavonic: 'dove-cote'). The German name Taubenburg ('pigeon-castle') is a calque, as is the Turkish name for the town, Güğercinlik ('dove-cote').

17 Szenderő (Smederovo).

18 Beheim is referring to the castles recovered by George Branković under the terms of the Treaty of Edirne (June 1444), confirmed at Várad (15 August 1444).

mountain was called Altintach in Turkish, Gora in Hungarian, Slada in Serbian and Guldinperg in German.¹⁹

171–180 Since he had no castle nearby from which he might expect help if he ran away, he positioned his infantrymen all around the mountain so that nobody could take it. He moved to the river with his transportable equipment. I am singing about it to you and not lying – no one got any further.

181–190 The Christian army lay on one side, and on the other, in immense force, lay the Turk with his troops. Neither side asked the other to go ahead, because nobody dared to attack the other. On the third night, there was an alarm among the Christians, and many of them took up arms, thinking that the enemy was making a surprise attack.

191–200 When they looked, they saw that this is not what had happened. Some horses had broken away in the darkness. There was an alarm and fighting, as they attacked each other, believing the disturbance to be the enemy. In the morning, at daybreak, some of the lords spoke: ‘We cannot stay here. The cold is driving us away.

201–210 If we do not have the courage to attack the enemy, we should leave the field tonight. It is too cold to stay here.’ A number were ready to fight and mounted their horses. They wanted to drive the Turk and his forces away. The trumpets were sounded, the army assembled and there was a great tumult.

211–220 They leapt into the river, the Maricza, which we have mentioned earlier, some riding and some swimming. When the enemy saw this, they took to flight, not one but all of them. The Christians pursued them. They seized horses and clothes, a great hoard of booty with rich pickings, which nobody talked about.

221–230 One in particular who ran away was Voevode Niclos,²⁰ who was captain in the rearguard. The battle lasted a day and a night. The Redniczner,²¹ a captain, ran away before him, I think. The Emperor fled with his men into the Guldinperg. The Christians approached and let none of them out.

231–240 Seven thousand Turks were killed in this flight, who would rather have run away. I am telling you, they besieged the mountain for half a day. They

19 Altindağ (Turkish): ‘golden mountain’; gora (Slavonic): ‘mountain’; zlátna (Slavonic): ‘golden’ (f.); Guldinperg (German): ‘golden mountain’. The name of the battle site – the Zlatitsa (Slavonic: ‘golden place’) Pass – seems to have inspired this passage.

20 Nicholas Újlaki.

21 I do not know the meaning of this word.

would like to have captured it, but could do nothing there, as the mountain was a firm stronghold, well defended by Janissaries, and fenced around and blocked.

241–250 They fought at the mountain, but no artillery or hand-held weapons helped, and they let them be. The army massed together, the trumpets were blown and they hurried back across the river. The King and a number of lords were there and would gladly have left, but could not get any further.

251–260 Horses and men died of hunger. They suffered great hardship because of the cold. They had nothing to eat. Because everything had been burned after them, they could find no provisions and so left there. The King went to Oven.²² The Raškans²³ stayed in Serbia and the Vlachs in Wallachia. The King was quiet for a while

261–270 and rested until St Jacob's Day.²⁴ Then he announced that he was marching against the Turks, because he intended to drive them all across the sea with his army. They began to flee from him and, I tell you, were so terrified and fearful, that great burghers and merchants took to flight.

271–280 A number of them had fled in haste from Adrianople and Gallipoli. They crossed the sea to a city which is called Prussa²⁵ in Turkish, and which has the name Burssa in Italian. The King of Hungary went on like this to the city of Wardein. His servants travelled with him, young and old.

281–290 He decided very quickly on a day, and the lords came and gathered in the town. He went to a nearby castle called the Tumelspurk²⁶ where the lords joined him. The King stayed there quietly until the eleventh day, ordering his affairs for the best. That was the King's wish.

291–300 Then he crossed over the Danube at a castle called Arswö.²⁷ He commanded them to bring the carts to a place called Serim,²⁸ and they were brought across straightaway, because they could do nothing against the mountain towards which they were going. When the carts arrived there and the people assembled, they set themselves up outside a town.

22 Buda.

23 The Serbs.

24 23 June.

25 Bursa.

26 Temesvár/Timișoara.

27 Orșova.

28 Severin.

301–310 It was taken quickly and directly on the first day, and whatever Turks were in there were all killed. They continued until the fourth day, with no trouble at all. They burned whatever they came across – villages or huts – and dealt with all the Turks they found in them.

311–320 On the fifth day, they came to a large place in Bulgaria. There was a castle situated there called Badon²⁹ in Hungarian. It is called Vidin in Turkish, because it is occupied by the Turks. They conquered this town on the seventh day. The chief men were massacred, because they were Turkish cowards.

321–330 The common people were Christians. They surrendered, and nothing was done to them. They followed the army. The town was burned to the ground. Shortly afterwards, the great Voevode of Wallachia, called Drakal,³⁰ came to help with a powerful force. Seven thousand men came up as the city burned.

331–340 The Bishop of Wardein³¹ also brought a good four-and-a-half thousand cavalry. The banners were put in order. Each one had two thousand men. The first was the banner of St George, which was the guardian of the others. The flag in the first rank was carried by a lord called Patrist Ven.³² The other was the King's, carried by Latschau Lasslaue.³³

341–350 The third flag or banner belonged to a legate of Rome.³⁴ Under it were the people who, through the will of God, were carrying it without any pay. The same people were beneath it, as the song told us. The Bishop of Wardein was chosen to carry the fourth, the Bishop of Erlach³⁵ the fifth, and Drakel the sixth,

351–360 the great Voevode of Wallachia. Raffei,³⁶ a far-famed duke, carried the seventh banner. The eighth belonged to the Transylvanians, the ninth to the Zekellander.³⁷ The tenth belonged to a lord called Hunadienusch. Orosdiortsch³⁸ was the name of the eleventh, and Tschornÿm Mihel³⁹ brought the twelfth, both of them famous lords.

29 Vidin.

30 Vlad Drakul, Voevode of Wallachia (1436–47). Beheim's spelling of this name is inconsistent.

31 János, Bishop of Várad/Oradea (1440–44).

32 Stephen Bátori (d.1444). Chief Justice of Hungary between 1435 and 1440.

33 Ladislaus of Lassanz.

34 Cardinal Julian Cesarini.

35 Eger.

36 Raphael, Bishop of Bosnia.

37 The Székely of Transylvania.

38 George Orosz.

39 Michael Szilágy (d.1460), Ban of Macsó.

361–370 Then they set their army in motion and started out once again with plundering and burning. On the fourth day they soon arrived before a strong city called Schiltern.⁴⁰ There were many Greeks in it and a huge number of Turks. The Greeks jumped over the wall and joined the Hungarians.

371–380 The city was conquered on the fifth day and completely burned and razed to the ground. The Turks whom they knew to be in there, and who had not escaped into the citadel, were all later killed and massacred. While they were there, the Pope sent a message: ‘You should not become disheartened.

381–390 I have enough people against the Turks. I can defend the sea so that no one can cross over.’ On the first day, they came to a castle called Rāhantsch⁴¹ which they destroyed. As the Christians approached with their forces, all the Turks together fled from it on the first night.

391–400 They burned the castle to the ground. The Christian folk rested and stayed there for two days. Then they moved off in a body towards Turkey proper, plundering and burning. They slaughtered men, women and children, killing all the Turks they found there.

401–410 They were on the march for two days. On the third day, they came to a market town with a citadel, called Jengepasser, or Newmarkt in German if I remember rightly.⁴² The Christians besieged it, and it was lost on the fourth day. Whatever Turks were in it were all slaughtered.

411–420 Many people had taken refuge there, and all suffered the pain of death. The Christians cunningly killed people and cattle. Whatever they could seize, suffered. No one could put his foot down on the ground, without treading on dead people wherever he went. This apart, a huge number of Turks were slaughtered.

421–430 The Christians, men and horses, rested until the fourth day. The castle and town of Jengepassar were burned. Then they set off again through markets and towns. Whatever these were called, many of them were destroyed. They went on further and came to a castle. I have heard that it was called Schemle.⁴³

431–440 It lay upon a cliff and a mountain and no ordinary equipment could easily conquer it. Many Turks had fled inside. The Christians besieged the

40 Nicopolis.

41 Orjahova.

42 Novi Pazar. Beheim is remembering correctly. ‘Jengepasser’ (Turkish: Yenipazar) does mean ‘new market’.

43 Shumen.

castle well and truly. The King was indefatigable. He attacked it for the whole day and lost more good men there than he had ever lost before any other castle.

441–450 They suffered fear and distress before the castle. On the third day they captured the keep by assault. When they had taken it, they slaughtered many Turks. The commanders ran away from the army into the tower. A lot of men fled with them, so that there were about fifty there. They stood ready to defend it.

451–460 They had to make a special effort. They went forward with scaffolding and especially with cannon. They breached a hole and shoved in straw, wood and whatever was combustible. When the Turks saw this, they threw down their shields and bows and would gladly have surrendered, but the Christians refused.

461–470 But it did not help them one little bit. They were all going to perish, and there was no peace or mercy to be had. They fell to their deaths from the tower. However many Turks there were there, none of them could resist.

471–480 King Pladislau lay there quietly until the seventh day. As I understand, five hundred baggage-men were sent to a town called Ternave.⁴⁴ The people of the town were emboldened and struck down three hundred. Many Turks suffered the same agony and two hundred of the Christians came back empty-handed.

481–490 The King set off and went on further. He came to a heath and, as he crossed it, neither men nor animals had anything to drink for a night and a whole day, because no water was found. So he went on and, in the morning, found a river. A castle called Taschasseir⁴⁵ lay on the river.

491–500 It was called Steinpürk in German.⁴⁶ Many Turks had fled into it. It had a forecourt and a ditch. The ditch went deep through a cliff, with the same river running through it. The castle itself was high up, nicely cut into the cliff. The steps went through the stone. Whoever wanted to go into the castle had to go up the steps.

501–510 Then they stormed the castle. They conquered the forecourt where a great many Turks were slaughtered. A number of them fled into the keep that was hewn into the defile. Many clothes of the very finest quality lay there. Several of the Hungarians loaded some of these onto horses and onto themselves, with the result that they could not easily get out of the castle.

44 Tärnovo.

45 Taşhisar.

46 Steinpürk ('stone castle') is a translation of Turkish 'Taşhisar'.

511–520 King Bladislau watched this and blocked the gates in the castle. He despaired of their greed and said: ‘Throw this away from you! We did not, if God wills, come here to see this!’ He piled all the goods and clothes there were against the tower. Dry wood – everything that burns easily – and fire were laid against the tower.

521–530 The Turks would gladly have surrendered. It was far too painful in the heat. Whenever anybody looked out of the keep, close on a hundred arrows flew towards him. The fortress was delivered and the Turks expelled. So the castle was conquered and destroyed. They stayed for two days, until they had demolished the castle.

531–540 They went on for a day and found another town. In it there was a keep built on a high mountain. No feeble cannon or simple siege-engine could terrify it. The town and castle were surrounded by ditches hewn into the rock, which ran full of rainwater, and it could be well defended.

541–550 It was known as Petrus in Turkish, and was called Petersburg in German.⁴⁷ They positioned themselves in front of it. The King of Hungary and his men set up their guns there, measured out by string. When the siege was at its height, Trakel of Wallachia arrived. His siege ladders were brought up and they climbed up against the castle.

551–560 When the Turks realised this, they hurried to the spot and pushed them from the wall. A good thirty men fell to their death from this cliff. They suffered pain and anguish. The King and his men very soon opened a breach in the wall, which killed twenty-five people. This is how he entered the castle.

561–570 The Turks had a hidden passage through this rock, which went secretly through the earth. Voevode Trakal was stationed before it, but as yet knew nothing of this hole. The worthless Turks also knew nothing about it. Many of them penetrated into the passage, believing that they would come out at the place that was known to Trakol.

571–580 Whatever Turks he found coming out of it, he had summarily executed. When the Turks saw this, they fled back into the keep. Many Christian women called out that they should not be defiled. They were captive Christians. They should honour the Christian faith and save them from this death, so that they might remain alive.

47 Petrez. The castle is called Bedric in *The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad*. Beheim understands the name as being Petrus (‘Peter’), hence the German Petersburg (‘Peter’s castle’).

581–590 The King forbade his men to shoot, and yet the castle was captured. Any Turks that were in it were thrown down from the castle into the moat, fifty altogether. If one of them got up and blew bubbles in the water, a good twenty arrows were shot at him before he could stand up properly.

591–600 They razed the castle to the ground and slaughtered innumerable Turks. They travelled for a day to a castle called Mihelitsch⁴⁸ and, that night, all of them besieged it with great ferocity. They stormed it in the morning. All the Turks were outside. They swept them out of the way with great losses and so conquered the keep.

601–610 They were four miles from the sea. On the next day the King set out there with his army. The Greeks quickly brought the keys to four castles and gave them to him. He went on to the castle of Warnan,⁴⁹ doing nothing else there but resting.

611–620 They brought to him a message that the Emperor was coming with a great army. The King gave the command that every man should be ready to fight and stand by his weapons; that no one should leave the field, whether he was a baggage-man or anyone else; that every man should keep his armour on overnight;

621–630 and that the horses should be left saddled. He sent five thousand horsemen onto the roads and kept watch. They saw nothing except fires where the Turks were spending the night in great numbers. In the morning the great Voevode of Wallachia came galloping up, bringing with him a good hundred horsemen. He was called Drakol.

631–640 He brought the King the news that the Turkish emperor Murat had set out with his forces, and was now approaching with his army. There were a good three hundred thousand Turkish barbarians. The King, the Legate and this Hunadienusch rode about the army admonishing the people that they should not lose

641–650 the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that they should prepare themselves for battle. This was quickly done. If anyone had not confessed, the Legate would give him a blessing and absolution as if he had confessed. Their sin was lightened through this campaign and war.

651–660 The Christians gathered themselves together as the Turkish army approached and came closer to them. This was on St Martin's Eve.⁵⁰ They

48 Mualich, Mihaliç.

49 Varna.

50 10 November.

advanced over a mountain and hurled themselves against the enemy. The enemy attacked as well. The battlefield, with a good sixteen thousand men, was in front of the wagenburg. They carried a red banner.

661–670 Then, when the Christians saw this, they went to attack them at a distance, away from the protection of the wagenburg. They sent St George's banner ahead, so that I could see the red cross there in the white flag. The Christians and the heathens clashed in a fine encounter. In my opinion, both sides fought excellently in the battle.

671–680 You could hear both sides playing instruments. Numerous trumpets resounded among the Christians. At the same time, in the Turkish army you could hear the kettle-drums being beaten furiously and thundering in the distance. There was a great clamour. You could hear stabbing and, above all, blows ringing out from both the armies, as they furiously attacked one another.

681–690 There was such a tournament of spears, it was as if the world was shattered. There was a jabbering of bows, as though all the storks in the world had gathered in one field. It was like a thunderstorm. Arrows began to fly like grasshoppers from out of the grass. It darkened the daylight, as clouds darken the sun.

691–700 Many proud heroes were felled in both armies, but before a Christian fell, many Turks lay dead. The heat of battle lasted for an hour, with neither side prevailing. In the end the Christians broke through the Turkish army. As their flags and weapons fell to the ground, the Turks took flight.

701–710 They were all struck dead. A thousand escaped and fled to the mountain where the Turkish emperor stood with the force that was under his command. His honour had faded away. When the Turks saw this, they went against them in force over the mountain. They were going against the Christians.

711–720 As soon as the Christians saw this, they quickly and with one accord came out of the wagenburg, and drove them from this field of battle back up the mountain. They slaughtered many Turks. Because the Emperor was losing and had achieved no victory, he took flight into a valley that he had found.

721–730 It was well fortified with cliffs. He took refuge in it with his foot-soldiers, Janissaries who stood by. Again the cavalry pushed its way in a company up the mountain and, with one accord, came down again against the Christians. Listen how, with cunning, they forced them back up the mountain.

731–740 Many of them, a countless number, were killed. When the Emperor heard what great losses his men were suffering, he sent a message to Trakal: if he did

not stop fighting before more messages came to him, he would kill his two brothers whom he had captured. He would do this if he did not show restraint in battle.

741–750 With one accord, the Turks quickly came down the mountain. While they were fighting there, the great Voevode went off, leaving the Christians in great distress. Yet they defended themselves, together with the bold knights who could not be driven away.

751–760 They pursued them up the mountain again, as if they were little dwarves, and killed many of them. Then the King of Hungary spoke: ‘Since God is granting us so many victories, I do not want to give up unless I see the Emperor himself.’ Hunadienusch advised him against this, as if on the Emperor’s behalf.

761–770 He spoke: ‘My lord, you know nothing of the Emperor’s and the Turks’ customs, and how they seek out opportunities. Let us stay here together and fight only with the people we have here in front of us.’ He did not begin to make an impression: the counsel seemed absurd to him. He recommended battle to Hunadienusch and

771–780 to the Legate who had come from Rome. Out of the lords, he chose five hundred of the best horsemen. He did not want anyone else at all, and plunged into the valley where the Turks were holed up. The King caused great damage in the valley, he and his men. The Turks died on the battlefield. Nevertheless, he was hard pressed

781–790 and heavily outnumbered. There were twelve thousand or more of the Turkish emperor’s men. The King of Hungary and his men were all left in these circumstances. None of them came back. This is where they suffered death. Meanwhile, all around, the other Christians were also fighting the enemy,

791–800 when, for the seventh time, they drove them from the battlefield, back up the mountain. The Turkish emperor heard that King Pladislaus was lying there in the valley, and heard, by the same reports, that the Voevode of Wallachia had abandoned him.

801–810 He collected the people that he still had into the same place, and issued a new command and battle order. His Janissaries and foot-soldiers paid not the slightest attention. From the mountain, he sent them into battle against the Christians, spread out on both sides and arranged as two wings.

811–820 The cavalry was in between. This is where they met. All the Christians and all the Turks encountered each other, each in full strength. Meanwhile, the foot-soldiers came on, and they hurried towards the wagenburg. It was much too early for the Christians. They took in all their arms.

821–830 With force of arms, the Christians fought their way through the Turks onto the mountain. The wagenburg was now lost. The protection and advantage to be had from it was their security. Many Christians fled from there. The Legate kept quiet there, and so too did Hunadienusch and several thousand men.

831–840 They sent to the Christians who had fled to come back, but none of them wanted to do this. So they ran away, and later found a ditch on the mountain that was so steep and overgrown that any horse that wanted to go over it would slip onto its backside.

841–850 The Turks did not dare to come up the mountain to the Christian defences, since they were near despair. The Christians were halfway over, before the Turks caught up with them and pursued them. Now the Christians too had to take flight. Whoever got over the ditch, fled as best he could.

851–860 So many of them perished and the ditch was so full of the dead that you could ride over it. This is when the people who had gathered there on foot or had come on horseback were taken prisoner. They followed the Christians who were riding there right up to the ditch. The Christians did not let themselves be taken prisoner. They did not wait for the Turks.

861–870 The cavalry departed. Whoever was on horseback fled. It is thought that three thousand of them died in this ditch. Many more than three thousand of them were taken prisoner. I have heard it said that seventy thousand Turks were slaughtered. Thus the battle came to an end.

871–880 The Legate and many other lords were taken prisoner in the throng. It was evening, at the time when the sun was setting. They were captured late in the day and – believe this – taken to the Emperor.

881–890 Early in the morning, he had the prisoners brought to him. He had anyone who was twenty years old or more treacherously beheaded. His anger was unbounded. Nonetheless, many of them had secretly stolen away. To honour the Sultan,⁵¹ he gave him twelve knights and twelve squires.

891–900 The knights were led up as though ready for battle. They were left alive. The Great Kam⁵² was honoured with the gift of twelve knights and twenty-four squires. He gave them as a gift and sent them to honour him. Similarly, he gave six knights and six fine squires to the Karaman in order to assuage his anger.

51 The Mamluk Sultan.

52 The Khan of the Crimea.

901–910 Whatever other Christians he had taken in this place he distributed throughout his lands, for them to be distributed further. After that, he left the field. He had the King beheaded at once. He sent the head to the Sultan – believe this – as an honour. The villain, rogue and scoundrel

911–920 arranged with the Greeks for him to be buried in a Greek chapel. This was done immediately. The Legate was led away quickly to the city of Adrianople, because they wanted to skin him when he was still alive. With this, he gave up the ghost for the sake of the Christian faith.

921–930 No one was more guilty than the Venetians for the loss of the battle. The Pope had commanded that no heathen be allowed to cross the sea. They went out onto the same sea in order to prevent anyone coming or going. The Pope paid them for this, but he was betrayed.

931–940 When the heathens approached them, they took a gulden from each and ferried them across the sea. Twice a hundred thousand was the number the Venetians ferried over with their weapons. If it had not been for Venice, all of Turkey on this side of the sea would have been won. They could never have survived against any army.

941–950 The wicked and terrible heathens came to the rescue of the Turks. This battle-song that I have composed is as Hans Maugest gave it to me, who was himself in the battle. He was a prisoner of the Turks for a good fifteen years. I, Michel Beham, am relating to you what I have been told.

IV

Miscellaneous Texts

1. From the Decree of the Council of Florence: The Greeks Recognise the Primacy of the Pope

(6 July 1439)

Item: we determine the Holy Apostolic See and Roman Pontiff to have primacy throughout the world, and the same Roman Pontiff to be the successor to St Peter, leader of the Apostles, and to be the true Vicar of Christ, head of the whole Church and father and teacher of all Christians. We determine that full power has been handed down to him from our Lord Jesus Christ, for feeding his flock in the name of St Peter, and ruling and governing the universal Church, just as is contained in the acts of the ecumenical councils; and in addition renewing the order handed down in the canons of the other venerable patriarchs, namely that the Patriarch of Constantinople should be second after the Most Holy Roman Pontiff, the third should be of Alexandria, the fourth of Antioch and the fifth of Jerusalem, that is to say, with their privileges and right laws intact.

Given in Florence, in the public session of the synod celebrated in the Great Church, in the year of the incarnation of our Lord 1439, the day before the nones of July, in the ninth year of our pontificate.

2. From the Chronicle of Uruç Bin ‘Adil El-Kazzaz: John Hunyadi Defeats Two Ottoman Raids (1441–42)

Item: Sultan Murad resided in Edirne. He sent out a raid under the marcher lord Mezid Bey. He went through Wallachia to Hungary, but did not keep watch for the Hungarians. He was over-confident and released the raiders. These fanned out in all directions, while Mezid Bey was left alone. The Hungarian army arrived. There was an infidel called Yanko,¹ who had been in the following of ‘Ali Bey son of Evrenos and so knew all the Turks’ tricks. He fled from ‘Ali Bey and became an intimate of the King of Hungary, becoming his governor-general. The accursed Yanko found Mezid Bey on his own and attacked him when he was off his guard. Mezid Bey

1 John Hunyadi.

and the men who were with him gave battle, but in the end the late Mezid Bey was martyred. Many of the *dovicas*² were also martyred. The raid did not succeed and our army was routed. In the year 845/1441–42.

Item: Sultan Murad Khan resided in Edirne. He sent out Şihabeddin Pasha who blockaded Belgrade.

Item: Together with the army of Rumelia, the raiders and two thousand Janissaries, he entered Hungary through Wallachia. Like Mezid Bey, he too was over-confident. Thinking, ‘God disposes, so what does it matter?’, he sent out the raiders. Just as Yanko and the Hungarian army had caught Mezid Bey off his guard, they found Şihabeddin Pasha off his guard as well. Placing armoured infidel foot-soldiers in the van and cavalry in the rear, he attacked Şihabeddin Pasha with this majestic army. Many sanjak governors, including Firuz Bey and Mizakoğlu Yakub Bey – in all, fifteen great lords – were martyred. Most of the Janissaries were lost. Only Şihabeddin Pasha escaped. Our army was routed. In the year 846/1442–43.

3. From Neşri’s History of the Ottomans: The First Ottoman–Karamanid War (1443)

The Karamanid was overjoyed when he heard that the infidels had routed the people of Islam, and set out to pillage the land right up to Emirdağı. He abducted the Muslims’ women and children and, setting off for Beypazarı, did even worse things there. In short, wherever he trod, he wrought havoc and destruction that was greater even than whatever cruelties the infidels might inflict. In brief he plundered right up as far as Kütahya, and destroyed as far as Ankara, sparing neither Sivrihisar nor Bolvadin, and ruining Akhisar, Akşehir and Beyşehir. Sultan Murad heard this and set out, taking with him whatever infidel troops were subject to him. When he reached Konya, the son of Karaman fled into the mountains. Prince Alaeddin son of Murad Khan set off to destroy the realms of the Karamanids. He attacked Larende and, in short, reduced Larende, Konya and all their territory to rubble. Terrible atrocities were committed, such as no Ottoman lord had ever committed before. The Karamanid Ibrahim was the cause of these atrocities. Eventually the Karamanid sent his wife, who was Sultan Murad’s sister, together with his Vizier, Kara Server, saying: ‘Ask the sovereign to forgive me. I vow by God that I shall never do such a thing again.’ These two went and fell at the sovereign’s feet. As they humbly begged him, the sovereign said to Server: ‘Will you take it upon yourself never to do such evil again?’ To this Server replied: ‘My fortunate Sultan, I had no part in his previous error, and I did not consent to this error of his either. It all happened because the Turgud tribe³ led him astray. He himself has admitted his fault and said to me, your

2 An officer in command of the *akıncıs* (‘raiders’).

3 A Turcoman tribe of the Taurus mountains. The tribe was one of the foundations of Karamanid power.

slave: “Go and persuade the sovereign to forgive me my offence.” The sovereign forgave him and returned.

These events happened in the year of the Hegira 846/12 May 1442 to 30 April 1443.

In this year, Sultan Murad’s son Prince Alaeddin, Yusuf Bali son of Fenari, and Zeynelabidin son of Kadi Burhaneddin passed away.

4. From an Ottoman Chronological List of 1445: The Wars With Karaman and the Campaign of the Zlatitsa Pass (1443–44)

Murad Khan crossed over from Rumelia and attacked the Karamanid Ibrahim Bey. Ibrahim Bey fled. After Murad Khan had sacked the cities of Larende and Konya and harried his lands and territories, he made peace with the Karamanid Ibrahim Bey and departed.

Vilkoğlu,⁴ Yanko and the army of Hungary came and devastated the lands of Rumelia. Murad Khan confronted them with a huge army and fought great battles with them. The infidel armies left and Murad Khan came to the city of Edirne and mounted the throne. He seized Turahan Bey and sent him to the castle of Tokat.

The Karamanid declared war and plundered Beyşehir, Akşehir, Bolvadin, Germiyan⁵ and Sivrihisar, and harried the countryside around them.

Murad Khan made peace with the infidel kings, the Hungarians, Vilkoğlu and Yanko, and gave away some castles and places in Rumelia.

Murad Khan set up his son in his place and took up residence in Yenişehir.

An envoy came from Karaman and made peace. Murad Khan freely bestowed Beyşehir, Seydişehir, Oklukhisar, Akşehir and all the castles in Karaman. The Karamanid took his army and left.

It is one year since these events.

5. From the Chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade: The Campaigns of the Zlatitsa Pass and Varna (1443–44)

This chapter tells how, after he had lost the land of Laz,⁶ Vilkoğlu led Yanko and the Hungarian army to the Izladi⁷ Pass.

When Vilkoğlu lost Semendire⁸ and it was garrisoned by the people of Islam, the infidels all despaired, and Vilkoğlu threw himself at the mercy of the King of

4 George Branković.

5 Presumably Kütahya, the chief town in the sanjak of Germiyan.

6 Serbia.

7 Zlatitsa.

8 Smederovo. Murad II captured this fortress on the Danube in 1439.

Hungary. Then an envoy came to Hungary from the Karamanid.⁹ ‘You march from the west,’ he said, ‘while I march from the east. Rumelia will be yours and Anatolia mine. We shall also recover Vilkoğlu’s land for him.’ In short, all the troops of Hungary were assigned to the King, Vilkoğlu and Yanko. They set off and penetrated the land of Islam as far as the Izladi Pass. Here Sultan Murad Khan Gazi encountered the infidels. He confronted them in the Izladi Pass. However, they entered the pass and camped there. Vilkoğlu bribed the lords of Rumelia with cash and these did not allow the sovereign to fight the infidels. The infidels stayed in the pass for several days until, one night, they departed.

Kasim Pasha was governor-general at that time, and they sent him after the infidels, thinking that they had fled. However, these accursed infidels had set an ambush, and they took them by surprise. They captured Halil Pasha’s brother who was then governor of the sanjak of Bolu.

In short, they gave Vilkoğlu back his lands. Vilkoğlu’s two sons were in prison in Tokat where branding-irons had been passed over their eyes. They were sent back to their father, and Halil Pasha’s brother was ransomed from Hungary.

Sultan Murad Khan returned to Edirne and said to Halil Pasha: ‘I am putting my son on the throne. I am making him Padishah. I have fought many campaigns. Now let me see how my son manages as Padishah during my own lifetime.’ He at once brought his son – that is, Sultan Mehmed Khan Gazi – from Manisa and put him on the throne.

He seized Turahan Bey and sent him to Bedevi Çardak in Tokat, because it was mainly Turahan that had caused the infidels to fight. It was said that Turahan was extremely friendly with Vilkoğlu.

Sultan Murad voluntarily gave his throne to his son Sultan Mehmed. He himself retired to Manisa and made Halil Pasha his son’s Vizier. Molla Husrev¹⁰ was appointed Military Judge.¹¹ Other arrangements were made appropriately.

Sultan Murad put his son on the throne in 848/1444–45.

This chapter tells how Sultan Murad Khan Gazi put his son on the throne, and what happened after he had settled in Manisa

When Sultan Murad Khan abdicated and went to reside in Manisa, his son Sultan Mehmed came to the throne in Edirne. Meanwhile, that troublemaker the Karamanid heard the news and was overjoyed. Vilkoğlu heard it too. The Karamanid immediately sent an envoy to Hungary. ‘What are you waiting for?’ he said. ‘The son of Osman has gone mad. He has given his throne to a boy, while he spends his time with singing girls, eating and drinking in a quiet corner of a garden. He has given up rulership. Now is your chance, and ours as well. We must march!’ He sent the same news to Vilkoğlu, talking the kind of nonsense that suited him. He instigated the

9 Ibrahim of Karaman.

10 Molla Khosraw (d.1480), a renowned Hanafi jurist.

11 The senior judge in the Ottoman Empire.

King and Yanko, saying: 'What are you waiting for? We shall never have a better chance against the Turks than this.' This man we call the King was the son of the King who had come to Güğercinlik.¹²

With Yanko leading the way, they passed Belgrade and marched straight to Varna. Meanwhile, the people of the land said to Sultan Murad Khan Gazi: 'My Sultan, what are you waiting for? Look, the infidel is on the march and is attacking us. The lands are ruined, Islam is destroyed.' When Sultan Murad Khan Gazi heard what the people were saying, he set out from Manisa to Gallipoli. He found that infidel ships had blocked the Straits of Gallipoli and that it was impossible to cross. He went from there via Koca Eli¹³ straight to Akça Hisar.¹⁴ Halil Pasha came from Rumelia to meet Murad Khan Gazi and set up cannon opposite the castle and waited. The sovereign crossed at that point. He camped there as he collected an army. Then he took refuge in God and set off to attack the infidels. As he approached the infidels, he cut off their passage and the two sides met in battle in the mountains of Varna.

Yanko attacked the army of Anatolia and there was a great battle. The governor-general of Anatolia fell a martyr, as did many sanjak governors. The Rumelian army withdrew to the open country, leaving the sovereign with the troops of his Porte. These gathered together in one place, but it was too narrow a spot for all the troops to assemble there, as it was amidst hills and valleys. Noticing that there were no men left beside the Turkish lord, the King said: 'Now is my chance against the Turkish lord. I am going to take him alive.' As he charged, the Janissaries opened up a passage in their ranks and, as the King entered it, they hamstrung his horse and brought him down, or rather they brought down horse and rider together. One of the Sultan's slaves called Koca Hızır cut off his head and hoisted it on a lance. When the warriors saw the King's head on the lance, they shouted in unison: 'God is the greatest.' They immediately began to slaughter the infidels in droves and to seize their carts. When the infidels assembled again, the warriors fell on them, killing them and scattering them.

The people of Islam rejoiced. Amidst the celebration Azab Bey came forward and petitioned the sovereign on behalf of Turahan Bey. In his joy, the sovereign set him free and released him from prison in the citadel of Tokat. Then he sent envoys to the neighbouring Padishahs, sending them with some armed infidels as gifts. He sent Azab Bey to Egypt, together with a number of infidels in armour.

As soon as Sultan Murad Khan Gazi had routed the infidels, he returned to Edirne and once again mounted the throne. He sent his son to Manisa while he once again resided in Edirne.¹⁵

12 Golubac. The reference is to King Sigismund's siege of Golubac in 1428. However, Aşıkpaşazade is mistaken in thinking that Sigismund was King Vladislav's father.

13 The district to the east of the Bosphorus.

14 Anadolu Hisarı, the castle on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus originally constructed by Bayezid I (1389–1402).

15 Murad in fact returned to Manisa after the victory at Varna. He did not return to Edirne until his recall to the throne in 1446, following a Janissary uprising.

6. From a Greek Short Chronicle, c.1470: Constantine Palaiologos Harries Ottoman Territory in Southern Greece (1444)

In the year 6952, in the 7th indiction, on 20 December [1443] Despot Constantine Palaiologos came from Constantinople and took over the lordship of the Morea.

In the year 6952 in March [1444], Constantine, Despot of the Morea, re-built the Hexamilion wall. He also took Thebes the Seven-Gated and made a raid up to Livadhia and Zeitounion, as far as Agrapha.

7. From the Venetian Chronicle of Gasparo Zancaruolo: The Citizens of Edirne Panic as News of the Crusade Reaches the City (1444)

News came from Hungary that a huge number of men were preparing to join the Christian army. The Turks as a result were much alarmed, and this through a great miracle that happened in the city of Adrianople. That is to say, there was a Persian there, who was extremely learned and had gathered a great crowd around himself. He went around boldly preaching the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the law of Mahomet was a bestial law. It was for this reason that the judge of Adrianople had the said Persian imprisoned and cut out the tongues of many of his followers, so that they could not preach the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many allowed themselves to die, paying no heed to their agonies. This done, they went to the prison where the Persian was held and exhorted him to give up his belief. When he stood firm and patiently accepted martyrdom, it was observed that his soul was carried by the angels to the glories of eternal life. In consequence of this miracle, a very large number of Turks had had themselves baptised and fled, leaving a great confusion among the Turks.

On the said 22 September, a terrible fire broke out and nobody knew what had started it. It burned the covered market, which was the principal place and warehouse of the Genoese, where there were a hundred merchants with a vast quantity of goods. The great mosque was burned down and seven thousand houses. Following the fire, these places were left as if dead. They said that this was a miracle of God against them.

8. A Note on the Flyleaf of a Manuscript of the *Kanz Al-Daqā'iq*¹⁶ of Al-Nasafi: an Ottoman Participant Recalls the Battle of Varna

The date of the battle fought by Murad Khan son of Mehmed Khan son of Bayezid Khan son of Murad Khan son of Orhan son of Osman (may God make their dust sweet and make heaven their abode) with a mighty army of infidels, this being the army of the Hungarians (may God forsake them in the Two Abodes):

¹⁶ 'The Treasury of Subtleties', an abridged compendium of Islamic law by the Hanafi jurist al-Nasafi (d.1310).

The army of the infidels was routed with the help of God Most High and with His support. Many people were martyred: from among the commanders, the governor-general Karaca Bey son of ‘Abdullah and Hasan Pasha son of the molla of mollas Şemseddin¹⁷ son of Fenari (may God make their dust sweet); from among the learned, Bedreddin, judge of Vardar Yenicesi;¹⁸ and from among the virtuous, the crown of the pure in heart, Sheykh Su.

On 19 Rajab the Blessed in 848/2 November 1444,¹⁹ near the town called Varna.

I, Ibrahim, was with them in order to increase the multitude.

9. From a Greek Short Chronicle, c.1520: A Greek View of the Death of King Vladislav at Varna

In the year 6953, in the 8th indiction, on 10 November [1444], the King was killed at Varna as a result of his stupidity.

10. From the Mamluk Chronicle of Al-Sakhāwī: The Hungarian Prisoners Arrive in Cairo

On Monday, 16 Shawwāl 848/27 January 1445, news came from Murād Bey son of ‘Uthmān, the so-called King²⁰ of Bursa and other places in Rūm²¹ that there had been a great battle between himself and a faction of the Banū Asfār,²² and that nothing like it had been seen in this age. More than a thousand Muslims were killed, and even more of the Rūm.²³ In the end victory went to the Muslims, when they totally routed their opponents. They seized five of their great and trusty amīrs and more than ten thousand prisoners. The Muslims took more booty than words can describe, whether in valuables, animals or other items.

After more than two months had passed, that is on 11 Dhū’l-Hijja/22 March, a governor-general arrived from the said son of ‘Uthmān, bringing with him a group of amīrs and other men whom they had captured. There were sixteen of them, with cuirasses, vambraces and bowl-like helmets on their heads. They were immersed in iron and steel and riding on horseback, indicating that this was the state they had been in when they were captured. Their arrival occasioned a greater tumult than on

17 Fenarizade Şemseddin (c.1350–1431), a renowned Ottoman jurist, judge and mufti.

18 Giannitsa.

19 The date is clearly incorrect.

20 Arabic *mutamallik*. The chronicler uses the derogatory term to emphasise the insignificance of the Ottoman ruler in comparison with the Mamluk sultan.

21 The term here refers to Anatolia and the Balkan peninsula.

22 ‘The yellow tribe’, a Muslim term for Europeans.

23 The term here means the Christians.

the day of the *mahmil*,²⁴ because there was not a single man, woman or child who did not emerge to see them and enjoy the view. With the envoy came a gift to the Sultan consisting of fifty slaves and five exquisite white slave-girls, all enriched with silken cloth.

It is said that the King of Rūm²⁵ was killed in the battle and that their troops were double the number of the son of ‘Uthmān’s. The victory which the son of ‘Uthmān achieved was contrary to expectations, because the infidels had made great efforts in their preparations to take the lands along the coast from the Muslims and to proceed to – we take refuge in God – the conquest of Jerusalem. They assembled from all their cities everyone who was capable of fighting. Neither they nor the King of the Muslims had any doubt that they would capture the shores and destroy the Muslim armies.

But God granted victory to the Muslims. When the King of the infidels saw how few the Muslim soldiers were, he became greedy for action against them and attacked them on his own. He was a brave and heroic man. He killed a number of Muslims and returned to attack a second time. He did the same, and then attacked a third time. When they countered him with arrows, an arrow hit him and he fell. A Muslim horseman alighted and cut off his head and took it to the King of the Muslims. He stuck the head on a lance and announced to the infidels that the King had been killed. The infidels were routed without a battle, and the Muslims pursued them hotly, killing and taking prisoners. They became like a group of gazelles gathered in one place and attacked by a numerous gathering of predators. A great cloud of dust was stirred up between the two armies, and the infidels thought that help was coming from the Muslim lands, from Egypt or elsewhere. As their fear and disarray increased, they no longer took heed for one another. As the battle grew fiercer, they fought each other. God had given the Muslims their fill of battle.

When the prisoners reached the Sultan, he delivered them to the Amīr Taghribardi. Islam became pleasing to them, and they became Muslim. This happened at the beginning of the following year. The Sultan divided them between the amīrs, and they never stopped sending one thing after another to their homelands.

Al-‘Aynī²⁶ says that the son of ‘Uthmān’s intention in sending them was to honour the Sultan and his army, and that they should know that they were valiant knights and heroic men. For this reason, he did not stop at sending them to Egypt. Indeed, he sent a group of them to each of the kings of the regions of the world, such as to the King of the East, Shāhrukh son of Timurleng, and the Lord of Tabriz and Baghdad.²⁷ It is said that they appeared before the Sultan on the last day of Dhū’l-Hijja, Thursday/8 April 1445.

24 The litter bearing the annual gift from the Mamluk sultan to Mecca and Medina at the start of the annual pilgrimage.

25 That is, Hungary.

26 Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (1361–1451). Mamluk judge, scholar and author of the history *‘Iqd al-Jumān*, from which al-Sakhāwī is quoting.

27 The Karakoyunlu sultan, Iskandar Beg.

11. From an Ottoman Tax Register of the District of Nicopolis, c.1450: A Tax Surveyor Notes the Flight of Villagers in the Wake of the Crusade

The village of Raviç: this is reported to have been the timar²⁸ of Kadizade. [The villagers] are reported to have dispersed since the infidels came to Varna. It is now contracted to Mehmed son of Yusuf, on condition of going to war and reviving [the village]. Because no one else has requested it, it has been registered in his name.

12. Part of Murad II's Persian Victory Proclamation: The Sultan Announces His Victory at Varna to The Karakoyunlu Sultan in Tabriz

The Creator – exalted be His glory and universal be His favours – put the halter of grasping and distension, of raising up and casting aside, and the reins of loosing and binding and of twisting and untwisting into our firm and imperial grasp and into our bold and felicitous possession. With the favours of divine assistance and with the gifts of divine protection, He strengthened the bonds of our dominion and laid the foundation of our sultanate, strengthened the good order of our domains and made smooth the path for our edicts of grandeur and exaltation. Every moment and every second, He has dignified and honoured us with the aid of His favours and gifts and the number of His miracles and mercies. He adorned and garlanded the neck and ear of our fortune with the necklace of felicitous gifts and the gems of imperial benefits. He made the cry of ‘Those who struggle on Our behalf, we shall guide on Our paths’²⁹ ring in our ears, and placed on our shoulders the mantle of ‘Do not count those who struggle in God’s way dead. No, they are alive and are given sustenance from their Lord, rejoicing in what God has given them out of His grace.’³⁰

We for our part, out of thanks for this generous gift and grateful for that donation, have for years and days held it in trust for exalting the affairs of Islam and for making comfortable the state of mankind, things which are given in custody by God the Omniscient King. We have confined and devoted the seasons and the hours to raising the standards of Muhammad and reviving the edicts of the law of Islam. We have not for one minute neglected to guard the good order of the lands, to bring to completion the welfare of mankind, to make ready the necessities of holy war, and to prepare the weapons to do battle with those ‘who make sedition appear on earth.’³¹ We have not neglected the slightest point in pouring out justice and spreading equity among our subjects, and in manifesting our compassion and in making plain our mercy in the affairs of the people. And from the first rising of the glad tidings of the sultanate and from the inauguration of the unrolling of the titles to the land – this being the prime of life, the freshness of youth and the first part of flourishing – until

28 A military fief whose revenues were granted to a cavalryman on condition of performing military service.

29 Qur’an 29.69.

30 Qur’an 3.168–9.

31 Qur’an 40.26.

today, I have exercised my sword with the help of God the Exalted the Blessed in scattering and confounding the infidels who are as low as the earth (may God make misfortune their guide and abandonment their leader). With arrows that pierce the heart and pursue the enemy, I have rent asunder the breasts of the accursed satans (may God exterminate and destroy them and may He not leave a trace of them on the face of the earth).

In every year and in every circumstance, the victorious armies of Islam have encountered sometimes the pig-headed Albanians, while sometimes the host of believers have fought the Vlachs who are full of hypocrisy. Sometimes they have settled accounts with the contemptible infidels of Istanbul, and sometimes opposed the ill-omened Hungarians, who are worshippers of idols, rejecters of the sacred texts and of the consensus, enemies of the religion of the Prophet and deniers of Muhammad's message. Sometimes they made treaties and agreements with the wicked and debauched vagabonds of Karaman, who in truth are the highway-robbers of the religion of God and enemies of the men of faith: 'if you ask about the magnitude of their oppression, their preservation of customs injurious to the Muslims and their promulgation of laws which tyrannise the people, then the horsemen of the Arabs and the Persians will tell of it, and the riders of the east and west will relate it.'

With praise of God Most High and through His grace, we are struggling for the advancement of the true religion and the illumination of the straight path. We are putting on our full armour and double-ringed coat of mail for holy war and the discomfiture of the people of rebellion and sedition. We continuously assign our well-directed undertakings and sagacious thoughts to the eradication of the enemies of religion and the repulse of the legions of Satan. We confine all of our endeavours and the entirety of our zeal to the helpers of veracity and the servants of truth, who are the stars of guidance and the meteors of the course, the pearls of zeal and the best of protagonists, the lamps to the right path and the keys to right conduct. Every day, without fail, heavenly support and the favours of the Lord – exalted be His majesty – are the forerunners of our felicity and our guides to power and glory. The exigencies of religion and state and the purposes of this world and the next are provided for and tended. Through the blessings of the beauty of faith and sincerity of mind, victories, new and without measure, come to pass in our imperial days, the fruits of which reach to all mankind.

One of these divine victories and favours of the All Merciful was like this. On the first day of God's month of Jumādā'l-ukhrā in the year 848,³² the King of Hungary and the ill-omened Pope assembled with the accursed infidels and with the helpers of satans, various sects and diverse parties – may God scatter their unity, annihilate their chattels and horses, and enfeeble their power and might. Relying on the strength of their limbs and depending on the greatness of their numbers and equipment, rejoicing in the abundance of their weapons and deluded by the bounty of their arms, they crossed over the waters of the Danube with a host of one hundred thousand infidels. Clad in mail and swelling like the sea, championing at the bit and

32 15 September 1444.

loosing the knot, mounted on steeds and pursuing the enemy, seeking battle and striking like thunderbolts, they never rested from galloping and spilling blood. They forced all the Muslims into the fetters of humiliation and bonds of captivity. Those noble places and sweet and exalted dwellings were not for a single hour free of harm and injury from them. They displayed forbidden vulvas and honoured and protected blood in the marketplace of libertinism. The wives and families and goods and chattels of the Muslims were in their entirety trodden underfoot. Their cultivation and sowing, livestock and beasts were all destroyed. The hidden treasures, wealth and stores of great and small were exposed to ruin. With a single spark of brutality, they burned the valuables which the people of Islam had acquired with their heart's blood. From there, determined upon battle and fighting, the destruction of the new and the old and the ruin of lands, they set out, so that they could make that abode of generosity and dwelling-place of glory and rank, that house of fortitude and courage and refuge of the community of the Seal of Prophecy,³³ Edirne – which is the white star in the forelock of Islam, the lustre in the eye of mankind and the outcome of the revolution of nights and days – into a temple of monks and a shrine of satans – and so too

Hemistich:

Premonition is nothing but error

the other cities of Islam which for years have been liberated from the perpetrators of strife through sacrifice of the person and the expenditure of fortitude and zeal. Our well-directed opinion is that in no way is any shortcoming or neglect esteemed permissible in the expulsion of the filth of ignorance, the removal of the uncleanness of unbelief, the breaching of the borders of rebellion, and the demolition of the walls of enmity from those dwellings of the faithful.

Thanks be to God Most High, no defect has found a way there into the prosperity of the assemblies of truth or the steps to the meeting-places of the true path, into the flourishing of the gardens of the shari'a or the guide-posts of safety and security, into the preservation of the usages of religion and faith or into the raising of the standards of justice and equity. Those shameful debauchees would lay waste and destroy them with their unholy and ill-omened advance, and as for the noble Muslim community that inhabited those regions and had settled in those parts, they would make their men the target for their arrows and fodder for their swords, put their women in the fetters of degradation and enslave their children.

33 The Prophet Muhammad.

Couplet:

Alas that the ‘Anqā³⁴ of eternity should be prey
To the spiders of thought with their games.

When this news reached our exalted hearing, it stirred up our righteous and imperial zeal and sovereign endeavour to concentrate on the acquisition of the merits of glory and holy war, the seizure of booty from the evil-doers, the salvation of the lands and the liberation of mankind from the talons of rebels and intriguers. So we decreed that the motives for resolution and incentives to desire be confined to being equal to this exigency, and resolved upon our imperial departure. We entrusted ourselves to the assistance of the grace of God and the protection of the Creator. We raised aloft the standards of Islam, seeking help in the Word of God the Omniscient King. We went forth to encounter them with an abundant host and an awe-inspiring army, with capable elders and heroes of battle, with as complete a grandeur and as general a power as is possible. It is true that the fury and the awesomeness of those accursed men had become established in the hearts of Muslims, but God the Glorious the Exalted, with the light of sagacity and wisdom, gave the inspiration that an imperial victory should be granted through the glory of our high estate; that a fortunate triumph be established through our victory-proclaiming banners; and that the glimmerings of the felicitous dawn, shining with the light of our prosperity and world-dominating rays, be diffused through our crystalline radiance.

In truth, the fires of our impetuosity suddenly flared up; the sparks of our anger flew up all at once; the favours due from the royal authority which is innate in us were stirred; and the hurricanes of imperial revenge with which we are encircled became turbulent. We decreed that exertions should be made in assembling and preparing armies; that weapons of war and battle should be made ready; that the doors of contention and strife should be opened and coats of mail put on; and that the standards of God Most High should be raised in an unforgiving struggle. This should be done so that they may store a good name and beauteous recollection eternally in this transient world; that they may consider these happy events better than life and good fortune; that they may enter the ranks of the blessed of the community and of the great men of religion, so that the tongue of the age is loosened in praising their glory with this quatrain:

34 A mythical bird, dwelling in solitude, invoked by Muslim poets as a symbol of God's unity.

Verse:

Their deeds are written on the page
And their stories endure down the ages.
They do not perish. No, they are eternal
Their lives are the fortunate events.

On Tuesday, the first day of the month of Sha'bān³⁵ – or rather the first day of the felicity of the People of the Faith – we freed ourselves from our own strength and power and sought the protection and grace of the Merciful. We recognised that victory and triumph are the work of the support of the Opener of Doors and the Causer of Causes, for which 'There is no victory but from God the Mighty the Wise'³⁶ is the heading on the pages of the Creator and proof of the prolegomena of the divine. It is our certain knowledge that the timorous beasts of triumph and victory are suspended from the branch of His – glorious be His majesty – will, and that the abundance of weapons of war is of no advantage; that the wild beasts of power and victory are tethered to the stakes of His – may His favours be universal – will and volition, and that the exertions and power of troops and horses are of no avail.

Then, after offering humble prayer and supplication to Almighty God the Merciful the Compassionate, and having encouraged the leaders of the army and the commanders among men, in accordance with the text, 'Do not faint and do not grieve, for you will prevail',³⁷ I decreed that they, seeking the help of God the Compassionate the Merciful, should wield the banners and swords, bring into play lances that spit fire like dragons, and draw from its inverse sheath the polished, blood-drinking blade, raining fire and flashing lightning. They adorned the centre, the wings, the right and the left; to protect their rear, they shielded the places of ambush with the bravest of noble men. The vanguard of the army came to battle like ferocious lions, trumpeting elephants or roaring tigers, and the warriors clashed and fought with those vile infidels. With all kinds of weapons, they exercised the overwhelming strength of the faithful and the power of the hearts of Muslims that are firmer than the anchorages of the summits and more stable than the immoveable mountains. After there had been confrontation and fighting between the two sides and among the two troops from earliest morning until the afternoon prayer, with attack upon attack, the Muslims acknowledged for certain that 'Islam overcomes and is not overcome.' The battle-tested warriors, who had tasted both the salt and the bitterness of fate, turned their reins and seized the opportunity. Putting hand to sword and arrow, they fought such a battle that the mountains were overawed by dread of it, and the heart of heaven rose up and cast a rosy cloak upon the plain.

35 Friday, 13 November 1444. The battle was in fact fought three days earlier, on Tuesday, 28 Rajab 848 (10 November 1444). The author has probably changed the date to 1 Sha'bān in order to achieve a rhetorical balance with 1 Jumādā'l-ukhrā, the date on which he makes the infidels set out.

36 Qur'an 3.126.

37 Qur'an 3.138.

Then those accursed men with no religion, those lawless reprobates abandoned their lust for life and love for home and family and made attacks so fierce that the earth could not withstand the heat of battle, the air could not endure their harshness and, out of fear, the sun took flight to the safety of the dust. But where can the fox find strength against the attack of the raging lion or the wren have power against the talons of the dexterous falcon? Then the angels in the court of heaven gave forth to the lower world the cry of ‘Help from God and a near victory’,³⁸ and giving tongue to ‘We have given you a clear victory’³⁹ brought the good tidings to our ears. Those defiled and polluted men witnessed the struggle of God’s helpers to annul and annihilate them, and observed the army of the servants of God transforming their hosts and uprooting their multitude: ‘If they turn their backs in aversion,⁴⁰ the command of God is a foreordained decree.’⁴¹ Finally, one of the servants of His Excellency brought the godless King, who is sovereign of that cruel host and Padishah of that confounded sect, a helpless prisoner before the standard that adorns victory and hunts down the enemy. When the servants of His Excellency realised that it was the King, they made him a prey for the sword, and tested and proved their weapons on him.

When the helpers of the shari‘a of the Messenger of the Glorious King became aware of what had happened to the King, they attacked the troops of hypocrisy and the ranks of dissension with the attack of multitudinous lions, with the strength of a roaring lion, holding aloft their faith with cries of ‘There is no God but God’ and ‘God is the greatest’, awaiting victory from God the Almighty the All-powerful. God granted them what they had wished and asked for. The feet of the infidels slipped and their banners fled.

Then we gave the order that an army should pour like a flood from the mountain to the plain or hang like fire beneath brimstone, and those lions of high estate fell upon those hogs of vile descent. They brought Doomsday upon them before its time, and changed them all into morsels for the ant and snake, and into food for the birds and wild beasts. In that struggle and flight, most of those dissolute infidels were transported to hell on sharp and cutting edges. The tablecloth of the land was such that in those districts and regions:

Couplet:

The heavens will henceforth play host with the dead
For a hundred generations of beasts and birds.

Some who escaped from the sword of destruction fell into the snares of manacles and shackles and were confined with lock and chain in the corner of chastisement: ‘fettered in chains.’⁴² We depend upon God that the sparks of malice from the arrogance

38 Qur’an 61.13.

39 Qur’an 48.1.

40 Qur’an 17.46.

41 Qur’an 33.38.

42 Qur’an 38.38.

of these vile and contemptible men may, by means of this victory, be completely extinguished, the evils which they inflict be completely quenched, and not a trace remain of the records and ruins of these places of ignorance and abandonment. In accordance with the text, 'He made you heirs to their lands, their habitations and their properties, and a land which you have not trodden',⁴³ may God – may He be glorious and glorified – make all their infants and children, their women and scions, their boys and youths, their old men and mature men, their lands and dwellings, their castles and forts subject to our Imperial State: 'And that is not difficult for God.'⁴⁴

It is a personal obligation on all mortals and on all humanity and a debt owing from them, that when this glorious victory proclamation has been read in public from the pulpits of Islam, and they have become aware of the glory of this freely given benefaction and the miracle of this sublime gift, each one of them, with the utmost effort and to the limit of their capability, should offer thanks for this gift through the payment of alms and the performance of pious and righteous acts. They should petition His Majesty the Lord of Lords for the strengthening of the pillars of religion and state and the good ordering of the affairs of that felicity which is the bright star of the ages and the adornment of fate. May all the people of Islam, on account of these glad tidings, gain a countenance that is all the more cheerful, a vigour that is all the readier, a joy more perfect and a destiny more fulfilled. They should be assiduous and persevere in praying for the continuance of our imperial felicity and for our prosperity which increases daily.

Farewell!

43 Qur'an 33.27.

44 Qur'an 14.20.

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The Treaties, Oaths and Declarations of 1444

1. From Neşri's History of the Ottomans: Murad Makes Peace with George Branković and Ransoms Mahmud Çelebi (1444)

When the Hungarians had fled, Vilkoğlu¹ gave innumerable gifts to the Rumelian lords, and they persuaded the sovereign to make peace. The sovereign also gave Vilkoğlu back his realm in return for money. He also released his sons from prison and sent them back to their father. However, they had both been blinded. Then, when Sultan Murad came to Edirne, his sister, who was Mahmud Çelebi's² wife, came in mourning to kiss the sovereign's hand and to implore him to release Mahmud Çelebi. The sovereign took pity and ransomed Mahmud Çelebi.

2. From the Correspondence of Ciriaco of Ancona: King Vladislav Informs the Sultan that He is Sending His Envoy to Edirne (24 April 1444)

To the excellent Lord and great Emperor, Sultan Murath Beg, sincerely as to a brother and a preferred friend, Wladislaus, by the grace of God King of Hungary, Poland, Dalmatia, Croatia etc., Supreme Lord of Lithuania and heir of Russia, greetings and a goodly increase in brotherhood and friendship.

Your Excellency should know that we have appointed the noble and outstanding Stoyka Gisdanich, our faithful man in deed and enterprise, to negotiate with Your Excellency on our behalf. He is fully informed and adequately instructed by us to negotiate on our behalf with our complete authority and with the fullness of our power. He is therefore able to treat with Your Excellency on our behalf and draw up and conclude [a treaty] with the authority of our own person. May it please Your Majesty to have faith in his words, both spoken and written, conveyed to Your Excellency on our behalf as if they were from our own person.

And may Your Majesty be willing, therefore, to appoint and despatch to us envoys to come with our aforementioned envoy, that is to say, Stoyka. And whatever our faithful Stoyka shall arrange and conclude with Your Majesty, and whatever binding

1 George Branković.

2 Mahmud Çelebi was the brother of the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha and brother-in-law of the Sultan. He had been captured by the Hungarians in January 1444, during their retreat from the Zlatitsa Pass.

promise you shall ask for, we promise to give and to confer on your aforesaid envoys. May Your Majesty, therefore, in a similar fashion, give a binding promise to our aforesaid envoy. So that you will faithfully observe all that you shall have arranged and concluded, as we are certain you will.

Given in Buda, on the second day of the Feast of St George the Martyr,³ in the year of our Lord, 1444.

3. From the Correspondence of Ciriaco of Ancona: The Treaty of Edirne (12 June 1444)

To the great and excellent Lord, the great Emperor Ladislaus, Emperor of Hungary and King of Poland etc., and also our most esteemed brother and friend: Amurath Beg,⁴ great Lord, great Emir [and] Sultan: greetings and a fortunate increase in brotherhood and friendship.

Your Excellency will be aware that the noble and distinguished man, your faithful envoy Stoyka,⁵ has brought a letter from Your Excellency which is highly esteemed and pleasing to me. Through this letter Your Excellency has made it known that whatever your faithful envoy Stoyka negotiates on your behalf, we should believe it exactly as if it were from your own person.

We make known to Your Majesty what your esteemed envoy Stoyka said to us first concerning the Despot George,⁶ namely that I should give up his sons and his places, and that George himself should be bound in all our services, just as he was in the past. I have agreed to this for the sake of brotherhood with Your Excellency.

He also told us that it would be agreeable for me to keep the peace with Blado,⁷ the Voevode of the Vlachs, on the following conditions: that the said Blado should pay me tribute as was previously the custom, and that he should again be bound to us in all our services, just as he was before, except that he should not come in person to our court. We agree to this out of love for Your Excellency: namely, that the Voevode Blado should pay tribute; that he should once again do everything that he was obliged to do in our service; and that he should not come to our court personally but instead send us a hostage; and also that, if our subjects flee to his territories, he should send them back; and also that we should do the same if his subjects flee here from those places.

This should be understood as follows: namely that Your Excellency should at the same time enjoy peace, fraternity and good friendship with us. For this reason we swore in the presence of Your Excellency's envoy, namely Stoyka, that we should

3 24 April.

4 Murad II.

5 Stojka Gisdanić, envoy of King Vladislav.

6 George Branković, Despot of Serbia.

7 Vlad Drakul, Voevode of Wallachia.

maintain a good and firm peace, without artifice or deceit, for ten years. To this end we are sending our faithful, noble and distinguished Solymam-beg,⁸ namely, that it should please Your Excellency to swear properly and faithfully, without artifice of any kind, that you will maintain a good and firm peace with us for ten years.

Issued in Hadrianupolis,⁹ 12 June [1444].

4. Letter from King Vladislav to the Senate of Florence: The King Announces His Intention to Lead a Crusade in the Summer of 1444 (4 July 1444)

Vladislav by the grace of God, King of Hungary, Poland, Dalmatia and Croatia, Supreme Lord of Lithuania, heir of Russia: to the magnificent leaders of the guilds, and to the standard bearer of justice of the people and commune of Florence, our dearest friends, with an increase of all that is good.

Our dearest and magnificent friends, as your friendly selves were able to learn at an earlier time, we were called, willingly, by God the governor of all things, from our ancestral and pacific Kingdom of Poland to this Kingdom of Hungary for its greater peace and tranquillity. In it, civil wars were raging, with the Turks causing enormous damage and loss of Christian souls. It was above all for this cause that we took upon ourselves this burden so that, when the time was ripe, we would try to see whether we could not, in some way, free from the hands of the Turks this Kingdom which is situated towards those eastern parts which form a shield for universal Christendom. For a long time now, the Turks have occupied Christian provinces and kingdoms in their length and breadth, including Greece itself, to say nothing of a not inconsiderable part of this Kingdom of ours. For this reason, we constantly apply our whole mind and all our zeal to bringing about peace and concord within our Kingdom and among our neighbours so that, with a freer mind, we may undertake to wage a holy and catholic war against the Turks.

Meanwhile, however, we have never stopped sending a good and great army of our people against them, with most distinguished leaders, which through divine protection and through its own efforts brought back praiseworthy triumphs against the Turks. Nonetheless, we wish for nothing more than to serve Almighty God and His Holy Church and to be able, as far as we can, to defend, enlarge and conserve our Kingdom, and so, with matters pacified in the Kingdom as far as possible, in the year just gone by, we personally went against the Turks with a large army. We crossed the borders of Hungary and Serbia and laid low the vice-regent of the Grand Turk, winning several victories against him and engaging him in struggles and fights. It is not proper for us to mention these, nor do we think it necessary, because we believe whatever we have done with the help of God to be known, to all and sundry.

8 Baltaoğlu Süleyman.

9 Adrianople, Edirne.

We led our army into Bulgaria, right up to the mountain passes of Romania, but we were in no way able to cross so late in December. Then, because of the high mountains that were occupied by hostile people, because of the intense and exceptionally bitter winter, and lastly because of the lack of food and fodder, which the sizeable enemy army had consumed either by use or by fire, we returned to our Kingdom of Hungary with our army intact. Following the will of all the inhabitants of our Kingdom, we have decided to go against the Turks this summer by another route, with a restored and more powerful army, by a certain passage of the Danube towards Nicopolis which, however, the Turks occupy with their galleys and galliots.

We have therefore departed¹⁰ from here under good auspices and with God's blessing on the fifteenth day of the present month. We shall assemble our people in our city of Varadin¹¹ and from there set out, with God's help, for the Danube and the lands of the Turks, for the honour of God Almighty and the advantage of all Christendom. The Most Reverend Lord Julian, Cardinal of St Angelus, Legate of the Apostolic See on behalf of the Most Holy Lord, our Lord Eugenius IV, Pope by divine providence, will once again accompany us.

If Almighty God gives us a safe passage of the Danube, as we hope, we are quite confident of expelling the impious sect of Maumett to parts across the sea, to the praise and glory of our Omnipotent God. This will come about especially with God's mercy and with the assistance of the fleet which, in order to do such a great good, our most Holy Lord, the Lord Pope Eugenius and our most illustrious and dearest brother, the Duke of Burgundy and, in addition, the entire Signoria of Venice have built and sent to the Straits of Gallipoli. In order, however, that our Lord God may grant to those of us who are fighting for His Holy Name and for His Holy Church that things turn out more easily than we might hope for, we especially ask you, our friends, that you should have solemn and devout prayers said, throughout your lands and your dominion, for the King and Lord himself, so that He Himself whose faith we strive to observe may take under the protection of His Divinity both us and His Christian army, which is commended to the faith rather than to our estate, and the fleet itself. And pray that He may always guide our steps and pious acts, so that so much effort and toil on our part and on the part of the same apostolic father and of the said Christian lords, with the arm of their bravery helping, may benefit the whole Christian state.

Given in Buda, on the second day of July, in the year of the incarnation of our Lord, 1444.

King Vladislav, with his own hand.

10 The King is using the past tense as he expects to have departed from Buda before the fleet reaches Florence.

11 Várad/Oradea.

5. The King's Oath at Szeged: Vladislav Renounces All Treaties with the Turks, Either Made or yet to Be Made

(4 August 1444)

We Wladislaus, by the grace of God, King of Hungary, Poland, Dalmatia, Croatia, Supreme Lord of Lithuania and heir of Russia, give notice to all.

Not long ago a general assembly of the prelates, barons and nobles of this our Kingdom of Hungary was held in Buda. In it we determined, confirmed and affirmed, with the unanimous agreement and will of this entire assembly, for the honour of Almighty God, for the defence and increase of the Christian faith, for the good of all the Catholic Church, and especially for the liberation of this our Kingdom and its surrounding lands which the Turks have most cruelly persecuted for many years past, and do not cease from persecuting in the present, to go in person this summer or this year, and to lead with us an army towards Greece and Romania and, with the help of God, to strive with all our powers to exterminate the said impious Turks. Therefore, for greater certainty in the matter, we swore between the hands of the Most Reverend in Christ, Father Lord Julian, Cardinal of St Angelus, Legate of the Holy See, to put into effect, for the consolation of all Christendom, our clear intention and decision by our letters written below in our own hand.

We therefore notify our Most Holy Father in Christ, our Pope Eugenius IV and the most serene Christian kings and leaders that nobody should imagine that we do not, in whatever way, wish and are not wholly prepared through God's mercy, to put into effect and bring to the desired conclusion such a sacred and solemn resolve, sworn and published everywhere. Nonetheless, some people to this day appear, on account of the arrival of the envoys of the Emperor Amurath demanding that [a truce] be made, to doubt whether we wish to put into effect the said decision made and sworn in Buda. Therefore, to remove from the minds of whoever it may be any doubt or suspicion of this kind concerning us, and to remove the slightest uncertainty, and especially so that the lords Most Reverend in Christ, the lords Franciscus the Venetian, Vice-Chancellor, the aforesaid Lord Julian, Supreme Penitentiary and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, the legates, and the magnificent captains of the galleys, both of the illustrious Lord the Duke of Burgundy and of the most illustrious Lord of the Venetians, may be yet further assured and informed of the sincerity and integrity of our mind, the firmness of our intention and the observation of our aforementioned decision and promise, and of the agreement and assent of our prelates and barons who are with us, both those who are to come with us in the army, and those who are to remain in the Kingdom: with the regal word and with our honour, and under the Christian faith in which we have received the most holy baptism and hope to attain eternal life, we pledge, undertake, promise, and swear and make a vow by the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and by the Most Glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and by all the angels and saints of God, and especially by St Stephen and St Ladislaus, patrons of this Kingdom, to put into effect

our aforesaid decision and promise made at Buda, that by the first day of September next we shall be with our army on the ford of the Danube at Orşova, or at other fords lower down, and begin to cross immediately, and do whatever is possible for us in accordance with our strength and power, so that the Turks may be expelled this year from Christian parts beyond the sea, notwithstanding whatever treaties, negotiations, conclusions or articles of truces have been made with the Emperor of the Turks, or his aforesaid envoys or ambassadors acting in his name, under whatever form of words or oath, whether already confirmed or being confirmed. From all of these we wish expressly and specifically to withdraw and be withdrawn, so that it cannot be thought for any reason, for any cause or on any pretext that our promise, oath and vow should or could in this way be broken, violated, prevented or deferred. In testimony to this matter, we had the present letters drawn up and made public, and confirmed by appending our seal which we use as King of Hungary.

Given in Segedin,¹² on the fourth day of August, in the year of the Lord 1444.

6. From a Letter of the Venetian Senate to Admiral Alvise Loredan: The Senate Informs the Admiral of the Negotiations at Várad (August 1444)

We know for a fact through letters that we have received from the Cardinal and from our Secretary, given at Varadin in the Kingdom of Hungary on 12 and 14 August just passed, that you will have had full information about certain agreements made by the Emperor of the Turks with both [...] the King of Hungary and Poland and with the illustrious Lord Despot. We do not know for certain if they have taken place, since the same [...] Legate [...] as well as our Secretary wrote to us that the aforementioned Most Serene King and the barons of Hungary, notwithstanding what has just been said, had promised willingly to go this year to exterminate the Turks by force of arms.

7. From the Serbian Annals: Following the Treaty with Murad II, George Branković Recovers His Lands (15 and 22 August 1444)

In the same year [1444], the Despot made peace with the Emperor [Murad]. August 15.

In the same year, the Despot took back Smederovo, Kupinovo, Novo Brdo and the entire Serbian land and state. August 22.

¹² Szeged.

8. The Sworn Statement of Ibrahim of Karaman (August 1444)

In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.

I bear witness by God and ‘God is sufficient as a witness.’¹³ ‘And fulfil your covenant and do not break oaths when you have confirmed them. You have made God your surety.’¹⁴

I, who am Ibrahim Bey son of the late Mehmed of Karaman, place my hand on the Word of God¹⁵ and in honesty and sincerity, without artifice or reservation, I swear:

By God, through God and for the sake of God, who seeks and overwhelms, who perceives and destroys, the Ever Self-Existent, who never sleeps and never dies in all eternity, who took no consort and has no son; and out of veneration for the Word of God which came down through Gabriel to Muhammad Mustafa (may God bless him and give him peace). I will not in any way, outwardly or inwardly, show enmity to the noble persons, lives or honour of Murad Bey son of the late Mehmed Khan; nor to his son Mehmed, nor to their friends, lands and territories; nor to the towns, castles, villages and borders of their lands; nor to their settled peasants and nomads; nor to their governors, cavalrymen and servants; nor to their followers, possessions and all dependents. Nor will I incite anyone to show enmity or become the helper or accomplice of anybody who wishes to do so. If anyone wishes to show enmity, I will hinder and prevent them as far as lies within my power.

I will not fail in duty. I have become a friend to their friend and an enemy to their enemy. I will be nowhere that might harm their high estate. I will send neither agent, nor word, nor letter, in secret or in public, to the enemies of Murad Bey, whether Muslim or infidel, who do not wish for his prosperity and high estate. I will inform Murad Bey and his son Mehmed Bey, word for word, of the letters and information that come to me from their enemies and from those who wish them evil.

If any subject of theirs betrays them and gives any of their castles or towns to me, I will not accept. And if any slave belonging to the said Murad Bey or to his son Mehmed Bey, or any slave belonging to any of their followers, or any slave, female slave or animal belonging to anyone in the territories dependent on them should flee or be stolen and enter my territory, I will find and return [the fugitive].

I will not make excuses but, in short, I will be friend to their friend and enemy to their enemy. Every year I shall give one of my sons to the service of the said Murad Bey with my army.

By God, I will not break my oath in the matters aforementioned, and if I break it, I will neither expiate it nor have it expiated. By God, whenever I break the oath, may the oath be upon me. By God, I have sworn truthfully, without artifice or reservation.

13 Qur’an 4.79.

14 Qur’an 16.91.

15 The Qur’an.

I will not act contrary to or transgress this oath. If I do, by God, let the Word of God be creditor to me and my descendants.

God is the agent for what we say. He is sufficient for men and excellent is the agent!

9. From a Letter of King Vladislav to the Polish State Council: The King Justifies His Breach of the Treaty

(22 September 1444)

Although the said Turks have for the most part confirmed their peace by relinquishing great and notable castles, they have nonetheless not fulfilled the rest of what was to be done, that is to say the release of the Despot's sons and the rest of his castles. Rather, they have burned his lands and do not cease from burning them. For this reason it is necessary for us to do that which we concluded and swore with all our Kingdom, that is, to go against them.

Glossary

Ağa: title given to some officers in the service of the Ottoman Sultan, including the commander-in-chief of the Janissary Corps.

Akçe: an Ottoman silver coin.

Amīr: an officer of the Mamluks (*q.v.*).

Azab: an Ottoman infantryman, levied for the space of a campaign.

Ban: a governor on the southern frontier of the Kingdom of Hungary.

Bey: a title given to some Ottoman governors and occasionally to the ruler. In the mid-fifteenth century, its usage was not stable. As a title, it follows the personal name.

Beylerbeyi: a governor-general of an Ottoman province.

Bombard: a muzzle-loading, large-calibre siege gun, firing stone cannon-balls.

Bombardelle: in De Wavrin's text, apparently a synonym for bombard.

Braye: a fortified outwork of a castle.

Captain of the Gulf: Venetian admiral patrolling the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, and frequently also the Aegean.

Caravel: a broad-beamed, lateen rigged sailing vessel.

Çavuş: an officer of the Ottoman court used to convey messages and commands, order ceremonial, carry out punishments, and in other functions. As a title, it follows the personal name.

Culverin: a light, long-barrelled cannon, firing at long ranges; also a hand-held firearm.

Despot: a title of rulership, second to the Emperor, adopted by the Palaiologan rulers of Mistra and by George Branković of Serbia.

Door-keeper: a member of a corps of palace officers, responsible for guarding the entrance to the palace, carrying out punishments and executions, and other functions.

Dovica: an officer of the akıncıs, Ottoman raiding troops stationed along the Danube frontier.

Efendi: a title of respect, usually used for members of the ulema (*q.v.*). Its usage in the mid-fifteenth century was not stable. As a title, it follows the personal name.

Esedī: a silver coin stamped with a lion. In the Balkans in the fifteenth century, probably a Bohemian silver pfennig.

Galleass: a heavy galley.

Galley: a narrow-beamed, oared vessel with about twenty-five benches on each side, and carrying a mast with a lateen sail.

Galliot: a light galley.

Gazi: a warrior; in the specific sense of warrior of the faith it was adopted as a title by the Ottoman Sultans.

Janissaries: the Sultan's household infantry corps, levied from non-Muslim prisoners-of-war or from levies of boys made among the Sultan's Christian subjects.

Jizya: a poll-tax payable by adult non-Muslim males to the Muslim sovereign, in return for enjoying the protection of the law.

Kadi: a judge in an Islamic court. Ottoman kadis had administrative as well as judicial functions.

Kaftan: an outer gown with long skirts and sleeves. Gowns of this type were often presented as robes of honour.

Kethüda: the representative of a dignitary or office-holder. As a title, the word follows the name.

Lala: the tutor of the Sultan or of an Ottoman Prince; a title of address used by the Sultan to the Grand Vizier or other high-ranking dignitary.

Machicolation: a parapet projecting beyond the wall of a castle, leaving an opening which allowed the defenders to drop missiles on the attackers.

Madrasa: an Islamic college.

Mamluk: member of the military caste in Egypt and Syria, composed of slaves, mainly of Turkish and Circassian origin. The Mamluk Sultans, rulers of Egypt and Syria from 1250 to 1517, originated from this caste.

Manocque: a type of canoe used by the Vlachs on the Danube.

Mantlet: a moveable shield used to protect artillery and saps during siege operations.

Metropolitan: in the Greek Church, the head of the bishops in an ecclesiastical province.

Military Judge: the highest-ranking judge in the Ottoman Empire, and a member of the Sultan's council.

Molla: a term of respect for leading members of the ulema (*q.v.*).

Müteferrika: member of a corps of officers in the Ottoman palace made up of the sons of high office-holders and others.

Padishah: a title of rulers in the Turco-Persian world.

Pasha: a title used for viziers and some other high-ranking office-holders in the Ottoman Empire. Its usage in the mid-fifteenth century was not stable. As a title, it follows the personal name.

Porte: the Ottoman Sultan's court, often used as a generic term for the Ottoman Sultan's government and retinue.

Raki: arak, a grape-based spirit.

Reis: a captain or commander. As a title, it follows the personal name.

Rumelia: the Ottoman territories in the Balkan peninsula, forming in the fifteenth century a single province.

Sanjak: a sub-division of an Ottoman province. The cavalrymen with fiefs in a sanjak served in times of war under the banner of their sanjak governor.

Serpentine: a type of light cannon.

Shariah: the sacred law of Islam.

- Subashi:** an Ottoman officer holding a large fief, and having both military and police functions.
- Timar:** a fief whose revenues were held in exchange for service as a cavalryman in the army.
- Ulema:** learned men; a term denoting members of the Islamic learned class, occupying legal, teaching and religious positions.
- Vambrace:** armour protecting the forearm.
- Vizier:** a minister of the Sultan serving on the Sultan's council. In the mid-fifteenth century there were usually three viziers.
- Voevode:** a high-ranking commander or governor. The title was also used for the rulers of Wallachia.
- Voynuk:** a non-Muslim soldier from the Balkans, serving in the Ottoman army.
- Wagenburg:** a mobile fortification consisting of cannon and arquebus mounted on or behind the shelter of carts.
- Yürük:** A semi-nomadic Turkish tribesman in Anatolia or the Balkans. The Ottoman Sultans employed yürüks in auxiliary military services.
- Zeamet:** a large Ottoman military fief, awarded to a subashi (*q.v.*).
- Župan:** a commander or governor of a province.

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