

exploits written in his court, as well as a diplomatic document, Mehmed was able to make an alliance with the ruler of Germiyan, through which he gained possession of his father's corpse and the young prince Musa. In this way, he was able to challenge Isa's control of Bursa. Following a battle with his brother outside the city, Mehmed was able to drive out his brother and enter Bursa, where he held elaborate funeral ceremonies for his father, followed by enthronement ceremonies for himself. However, Mehmed's success prompted the intervention of Süleyman, who took control of Bursa and used it to cement his own claims. Although Mehmed had already buried Bayezid, his tomb was still unfinished, so Süleyman was able to complete it and take credit on the inscription.

From the above, it is clear how important Bursa still was for Ottoman legitimacy following the defeat by Timur in 1402. Eager to assert their claims to the succession, three sons of the defeated Bayezid I fought each other for what was left of his political legacy: an incomplete attempt at empire centred around Bursa, still perceived as the Ottoman capital. However, despite the continued importance of Bursa throughout the interregnum, during this time Edirne (Adrianople) began to be treated for the first time as an alternative capital by princes whose power did not extend to the Anatolian side of the straits. In 1402, Edirne, which like Bursa had an important Roman-Byzantine past and had long functioned as the main Ottoman centre on the European side of the straits, became the seat of the Ottoman prince Süleyman. It is clear that his intention was always to expand his power to Anatolia and rule from Bursa, and it was not long before he was able to achieve this aim. The timing of Süleyman's capture of Bursa is unclear, but should probably be dated to late 1403, or possibly a year later.²⁰ Süleyman's inscription on Bayezid's mausoleum is dated early 809 in the Islamic calendar (late 1406), but this may well refer to the final stages of the building's construction.²¹ In any case, various sources suggest that after occupying Bursa, Ankara and other Anatolian cities, Süleyman remained mostly in Anatolia until 1410, when he was forced to return to Europe to face his brother Musa, who had earlier invaded his territory from the north. Musa's bid for power was the result of an alliance between Mehmed, in whose custody Musa had remained until that time, and a number of neighbouring powers threatened by Süleyman. It had the desired result, since Mehmed was able to take advantage of Süleyman's departure and recapture Bursa. As for Süleyman, having lost control of Ottoman Anatolia, he was once again forced to make Edirne his capital. After a series of confrontations with Musa, which ended when Musa surrounded Edirne and most of Süleyman's court and army deserted to him, Süleyman was forced to flee the city and was killed in early 1411.²² Thus Musa became the ruler of Ottoman Rumelia and its capital until 1413, when Mehmed was finally able to overthrow and kill him, becoming sole Ottoman ruler until his death in 1421.

²⁰ Kastritsis, *Sons of Bayezid*, 112–113.

²¹ Kastritsis, *Sons of Bayezid*, 99–100.

²² Kastritsis, *Sons of Bayezid*, 153–158.

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It is important to note that despite Edirne's prominent role in the careers of Süleyman and Musa, after Mehmed was able to eliminate the threat posed by their rival courts, he probably continued to treat Bursa as his main capital. Written sources suggest that Bursa was burned no fewer than three times during the period 1402–1413: first by Timur in 1402; then by Isa in retaliation against Mehmed after he lost Bursa, probably in 1403; and finally, by the neighbouring principality of Karaman, a major enemy of the Ottomans which took advantage of the conflict in Rumelia between Mehmed and Musa to attack it in 1413. According to the Byzantine chronicle of Doukas, the Karamanids even went so far as to exhume and burn the corpse of Bayezid I, which as we have seen played such an important role in the dynastic claims of both Mehmed I and his older brother Süleyman.²³ All this leaves no doubt that in 1413 Bursa was still perceived as the Ottoman ancestral capital, where members of the dynasty were to be buried. Further evidence is provided by the fact that when Musa was killed by Mehmed in Rumelia, ending the interregnum, his corpse was sent for burial across the straits to Bursa, ending Karaman's attack on the town. Like Mehmed I, whose 'green' (Yeşil) funerary socio-religious complex is among the most famous monuments in Bursa today, Murad II, under whose rule Edirne definitively became the main Ottoman capital, nonetheless chose to be buried with his ancestors in Bursa in a foundation he also constructed there, a practice that continued for lesser members of the Ottoman dynasty after Mehmed II and his successors chose instead to be buried in Constantinople. His complex, the Muradiye, is still visited today for the large number of Ottoman tombs it contains.

When did Edirne become the main Ottoman capital?

We have seen that although Bursa was still thought of as the main Ottoman capital during the interregnum of 1402–1413 and subsequent reign of Mehmed I (r. 1413–1421), this was also the time when Edirne had first emerged as an alternative capital, at least for princes without access to Bursa. Sometime during the long reign of Murad II (1421–1444, 1446–1451), Edirne finally surpassed Bursa, so that on the eve of the 1453 conquest of Constantinople it was considered the Ottoman capital.²⁴ However, it is difficult to determine at exactly what point the transition took place. For the first two years of Mehmed II's second reign (1451–1481), as well as his previous brief reign as an adolescent (1444–1446), there is no doubt that the capital was Edirne. Moreover, even after 1453, the transition to Istanbul was not immediate and Edirne would continue to be used as a second capital for centuries to come.²⁵ In addition to the two palaces he built in Istanbul, Mehmed also completed the Edirne palace begun by his father Murad II around 1450, which like the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul would be expanded in the sixteenth century and added to until the end of the seventeenth.²⁶ All this leaves

²³ Doukas, *Decline and Fall*, 115 (chapter 21.1).

²⁴ Singer, 'Enter, riding on an elephant', is largely an attempt to answer the question of when Edirne became the Ottoman capital. On this question, its conclusions are broadly in agreement with my own.

²⁵ Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul*, 16–18.

²⁶ Kontolaimos, 'A landscape for the Sultan', 21; Özer, *Ottoman Imperial Palace*, 7–12, 48–51.

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