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Mehmed III

Mehmed III (Meḥmed, r. 1003–12/1595–1603) was the thirteenth Ottoman Sultan. The principal questions regarding his reign concern the response of the ruling elite to several major crises, which resulted in major disruptions in the functioning of the empire. These crises were global not local, including climatic disasters of drought and intense cold, which were factors in the Celali (Celālī) revolts that lasted beyond his reign. Due to the military revolution, which affected both land and sea warfare, Ottoman institutions required modification. The empire fought two major wars. The Long War (1001–15/1593–1606) with the Habsburgs in Hungary began before Mehmed came to the throne. While the empire was reeling from this war and the Celali revolts, the Ṣafavids attacked in 1012/1603 and began a war in the east that continued until 1021/1612. In addition, the empire faced inflation and fiscal instability, partly due to the widespread price revolution but also as a result of the growing cost of warfare.

Mehmed was born 973/1566, while his father Murad III (Murād, r. 982–1003/1574–95) was the governor of Saruhan. His mother, Safiye (Ṣāfiye, d. 1014/1605), was Murad's principal favorite, although he never married her. After Murad became sultan, Mehmed resided with Safiye and her daughters in Topkapı palace in Istanbul. His circumcision in 990/1582 was a splendid affair to which rulers in Europe and Asia were invited. In 991/1583 Mehmed was appointed governor of Saruhan, becoming the last Ottoman prince to be assigned to a province in order to gain governing experience before becoming sultan. While residing at Manisa, he fathered several children born to perhaps three concubines because, unlike his immediate predecessors, Mehmed III did not have a principal *haseki (khāṣekī*, "the favourite"). His children were borne by three different women, including Handan (Khandān, d. 1014/1605), mother of Aḥmed I (Aḥmed, r. 1011–26/1603–17). When Murad III died, Safiye sent for Mehmed. He immediately executed his nineteen half-brothers, who were entombed with Murad III. Among other factors, the revulsion this act of fratricide inspired led to changes in the mode of succession: from then on, all Ottoman princes remained in the palace harem and the most senior prince succeeded to the throne.

By the time Mehmed III became sultan in Cemaziülevvel (Jumādā I) 1003/January 1595, the empire already faced major disruptions that can be traced to climatic fluctuations. Beginning in the early 1000s/1590s and continuing until 1004/1596, the empire experienced several years of continuous drought, which caused famine in the provinces. This situation

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