

E.Y.6
Meşih Pasha
I.H. Danişmend, *Ottoman tarihi kronolojisi*, iii, İstanbul 1972², 58, 76, 79, 88, 100-2; v, 22; I.A. Gövsa, *Türk meşhurları ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul n.d., 159; Hammer-Purgstall, *HEO*, vii, 165, 405-6, 206, 226; *Mufassal Osmanlı tarihi*, iii, İstanbul 1959, 1390; 'Oğlumânzâde Ahmed Tâ'ib, *Hâdîkat ül-wüzerâ* (photo reprint ed.) Freiburg 1969, 41; T. Öz, *İstanbul camileri*, i, Ankara 1962, 83, 104, plate 75; İbrahim Peçewî, *Târikh*, ii, İstanbul 1283, 18-19; N. Poroy, *İstanbul'da gömülü paşalar*, İstanbul 1947, 19-20; İ.H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı devletinin saray tıpkılığı*, Ankara 1984², 28, 313, 354-7.

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Mesih Pasha Ottoman Grand Vizier in 906/1501. Mesih and his elder brother Khâss Murâd were sons of a brother of Constantine IX Palaeologus (Babinger, *Eine Verfügung*). Apparently Mesih and Murâd were captured during the conquest of Constantinople and brought up as pages in Mehmed II's seraglio.

The Greek faction under this Sultan first came to power when he decided to conquer the Greek island of Euboea (Eğriboz) in 875/1470. Mesih distinguished himself for the first time during this campaign as *sandjak begi* of Gelibolu [q.v.] and admiral of the navy. But soon afterwards he offered, as Venetian documents testify, to surrender Gelibolu, the Ottoman naval base, and the fleet to the Venetians in return for 40,000 gold ducats, aspiring to become ruler over the Morea (Babinger, *Mehmed*, 290). Mesih appears to have been a vizier in late autumn 1476, or in early 1477 (see discussion in Reindl, 280). Two documents (Gökbilgin, 138, 148 n. 153) indicate that he was already second vizier on 19 Şâ'bân 882/26 November 1477 and also in 883/1478, Mehmed Pasha Karamânî [q.v.] being Grand Vizier in both cases. A contemporary source (Donado da Lezze, 112) states that he was a newly-appointed fourth vizier when he was made commander-in-chief of the army and navy against Rhodes in the spring of 895/1480. Having failed at the siege, he was dismissed from the vizierate (Ibn Kemâl, cited by Reindl, 281), but apparently left with the *sandjak* of Gelibolu as admiral of the navy. During the indecisive period after the death of Mehmed II (3 May 1481) Mesih, who belonged to the military *dewshirme* [q.v.] group of Gedik Ahmed, appeared as a vizier in the *Dîwân*. Bringing Bâyezid II to the throne, the military *dewshirme* faction had then full control of the government.

While Gedik Ahmed, with the support of the Janissaries, acted too independently, Mesih won the trust of the Sultan as an opponent of Djem [q.v.]: when in early summer 887/1482 Gedik Ahmed, suspected of being pro-Djem, was imprisoned in the Seraglio, the Janissaries invaded the palace and threatened the Sultan, who sent a group of dignitaries, including Mesih, to negotiate. He succeeded in appeasing the soldiery by accepting all their demands including the promise never to appoint viziers outside the *dewshirme* (da Lezze, 179-80). This convinced Bâyezid that he was completely dependent, for his safety on the throne, on the military faction. Mesih, closely co-operating with the seraglio, demonstrated his diplomatic ability and loyalty once again when Djem took refuge with the Hospitallers of Rhodes. During negotiations, while Gedik Ahmed proved to be uncompromising, Mesih achieved an agreement to the satisfaction of Bâyezid, thus becoming the architect of Bâyezid's policy in respect of the Djem question. Now members of the military *dewshirme* (Dâwûd, Mesih and Hersek-oglu Ahmed)

dominated the *Dîwân*, while Bâyezid sent to the most sensitive governorships his eunuch *kâpi-âğhas* from the seraglio (Yâhiyâ, Ya'kûb, 'Ali, Khalil and Fîrûz). Supported by the seraglio, Mesih managed to survive Bâyezid's bold decision to eliminate Gedik Ahmed, whom he believed to be a threat to his throne. After his execution (18 November 1482), a new era, that of the seraglio's direct control of government, began. Mesih was second vizier in the *Dîwân* in 888/beg. 9 February 1483 (*Anonymous chronicle*, B.N. Paris, suppl. 1047, fol. 93a; also Ya'kûb Pasha's *wâsiyyâ* dated awâ'il Muharram 888/mid-February 1483, in Epstein, 290). Mesih had replaced in this post Djazârî Kâsim Pasha, a bureaucrat famous as "the founder of the Ottoman bureaucratic tradition". When Ishâk Pasha, Grand Vizier and supporter of Gedik Ahmed, had to leave the *Dîwân* (in the summer or early autumn 888/1483, see Reindl, 171, 236, 283), Dâwûd Pasha, who was already second vizier in 887/beg. 20 February 1482, and apparently favoured by the seraglio faction, became Grand Vizier. It is suggested that Mesih succeeded Ishâk in the grand vizierate (Reindl, 171, 236, 283, on the authority of the contemporary historian Ibn Kemâl), and kept the position until 890/1485. But Mesih is shown in the *Anonymous chronicle*, fol. 93b, as second vizier and Dâwûd as Grand Vizier in 889/beg. 30 January 1484.

In 890/beg. 18 January 1485, Mesih was suddenly dismissed from the vizierate by the sultan, who was infuriated at something which we cannot determine (Ibn Kemâl, cited by Reindl, 283). He was first banished to Filibe as its *subâshi*, and then was transferred to Kaffa [q.v.] as its *sandjak begi* in 892/1487 (Kaffa, like Salonica, had become an exile for demoted viziers). The customs register of Kaffa dated 892/1487 shows that Mesih then owned a ship which was active in the traffic between İstanbul and Kaffa and at that time his *ketkûdâ* took for him slaves at Azak. Mesih apparently left Kaffa when Prince Mehmed was sent as its governor toward the end of 895/1489 (Reindl, 284). Next we find him in our sources as *sandjak begi* of Akkerman (Akkerman) in Rabi' II 903/beg. 27 November 1497. According to the *Anonymous chronicle*, fol. 118b-121a, he played a major role in stopping a Polish army which invaded Moldavia in 1496-7, in cooperation with the Rumelian and frontier forces and with the Moldavian Voivode Stephen. Mesih took advantage of this achievement to gain the sultan's favour, sending him 29 standards and enslaved Polish nobles.

The news was welcomed in İstanbul, and Venice was informed as a warning (Sanuto, *1 Dianii*, i, 845; Fisher, 56). Mesih's pilgrimage in the summer of 904/1499 seems to be a calculated move to go to İstanbul and exploit his recent success in Moldavia. Actually, considering his experience in naval affairs, his knowledge of western politics and his family connections with Venice (Reindl, 279), he was a man who would be most useful in the war against Venice, which began in June 1499. Shortly after his return from Mecca he was appointed a vizier (*bâbâ* in Sanuto, quoted by Reindl 285, does not mean necessarily Grand Vizier). In fact, in Radjab 905/February 1500, the Grand Vizier was Ya'kûb Pasha, Bâyezid II's first Grand Vizier of palace eunuchs, who came to this post following the death of Çandarlı İbrâhîm Pasha at the end of Muharram 905/August 1499. Mesih entered the *Dîwân* as second vizier while his friend Hersek-oglu occupied the post of third vizier (*Anonymous chronicle*, fol. 124a). Eunuchs (*tawâshî*) were never welcomed by the bureaucratic and military factions, but they estab-