

**The Wars of the Lawgiver:**

**An Examination of the Political Role of Suleyman**

**Kanuni's Campaigns on the Hungarian Frontier**

**(1521-1532)**

**BA Dissertation**

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## **Abstract**

Suleyman I's four campaigns on the Hungarian frontier, from 1521 to 1532, have largely been considered as military outgrowths of his political commitment to messianic universalism. Universalism, in turn, has been construed as either the defining political project of the Sultan's early reign or else as a masterly work of propaganda by a monarch dedicated to the rational concerns of power politics. This dichotomy is a less than useful means of understanding the interaction of politics and the application of force under Suleyman. This dissertation demonstrates that messianic universalism constituted a contingent reaction to the particular circumstances of his early reign and does not fully circumscribe the political imperatives that acted upon his military designs. Suleyman, it will be argued, was also influenced by inherited Ottoman ideals and power structures. In undertaking a campaign, he was seeking to fulfil the ideal standards of rule – the creation of justice, the divinely mandated expansion and the consolidation of a martial reputation. Finally, it will be recounted that the Ottoman army was not solely a purposive instrument but a group of political entities which the Sultan sought to balance and regulate within the Hungarian campaigns through discipline, munificence and ceremonial displays of submission.

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## Introduction

The first two decades of the reign of Suleyman Kanuni may be characterised as a period of intensive military activity which witnessed both the disintegration of the Kingdom of Hungary and a large-scale assault upon Habsburg possessions by the young sultan. Having broken through the Hungarian fortifications at Belgrade in 1521, Suleyman would decisively defeat the Hungarian Royal Army at the Battle of Mohacs (1526) and in so doing secure Ottoman dominance over the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Following the intervention of Ferdinand of Austria in the Hungarian succession, the Sultan would unsuccessfully besiege Vienna in 1529 and launched a large-scale advance into Austria in 1532 without achieving a decisive outcome.<sup>2</sup> In political terms, these campaigns have been characterised as emblematic of either the fundamental rationality of the Sultan in seeking to maintain the balance of power in the Balkans against the rising Habsburg Empire or else as expressions of his ideological drive to secure a universal empire. This paper is an attempt to unpick this dichotomy which has resulted in scholarly neglect of more inherent Ottoman political frameworks and ideals upon the application of military force on the Hungarian frontier. While not disputing the relevance of messianic universalism to his military aims, it will be argued that this was a contingent response to the political currents of the time which stressed the imminence of universal empire and confronted the Ottomans with the competing universalist projections of Charles V. The Ottoman ideals of rule which Suleyman inherited were equally significant in conditioning his actions; military action was expected to secure justice for his subjects, showcase his commitment to the principal of *gaza* (holy raiding) and ensure the creation of a divinely mandated martial reputation. Indeed, the very conduct of his military campaigns was heavily conditioned by the political frameworks of the empire wherein the Sultan was expected to maintain and strengthen the power relations between himself, his subjects and his army while projecting outward the strength of his authority. This analysis will demonstrate the importance of considering

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<sup>1</sup> D., Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 99-101

<sup>2</sup> K., Sahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Suleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, pp. 80-85

the Ottoman military in the context of the Ottoman political order rather than through narrow instrumental conceptions of utility. The Ottoman army that Suleyman led into Hungary was not merely a rational institution; it was a political entity and should be analysed as such. Overall, it will be shown that Ottoman ideals of rule and established political frameworks constitute unexplored standards by which historians must judge Suleyman's strategic choices.

This paper will begin with an outline of the existing lines of scholarly debate surrounding the Ottoman military and the conquest of Hungary. While acknowledging the work of recent scholars in widening the understanding of the Ottoman military institution and Suleyman's political vision, such approaches have arguably neglected the role of inherited Ottoman political ideas and structures in shaping his military endeavours. The main argument will be divided into three chapters. The first, 'Suleyman's Messianic Universalism' will detail the contrasting rational and ideological explanations for the Sultan's early campaigns before presenting his universalist ambitions as being a contingent response to the prevailing conditions of the time. The second chapter, 'The Ideals of Rule', will present Ottoman ideals of rule as standards by which Suleyman was obliged to measure his military actions on the frontier - namely the provision of justice, nominal adherence to *gaza* and the acquisition of a martial reputation. The final chapter, 'The Structures of Power', will detail Ottoman politics in practice during the Hungarian campaigns, demonstrating that these endeavours may best be characterised as a means to solidify the normative power relations between the Sultan and the political entities of the army and his subjects.

## **Literature Review**

The approach of this dissertation stands at an intersection of multiple debates within Ottoman historiography. In order to adequately situate this paper, these require some brief consideration.

Witteck's *gazi* thesis (1938), which postulated religiously motivated expansion as the central political

ethos of the Ottoman Empire, remains decidedly influential.<sup>3</sup> This has resulted in sweeping scholarly assumptions of the continual inherent bellicosity of the Ottoman state under Suleyman by more general historians such as Wheatcroft (1995) and Goodwin (1998).<sup>4</sup> There has, however, been a wave of revisionist scholarship that has largely dismantled such assumptions. Goffman (2002) has persuasively elucidated the integrated, rather than wholly adversarial, position of the Ottoman Empire in relation to Europe.<sup>5</sup> Casale (2010), Brummett (1994) and Sahin (2013) have made valuable contributions in widening interpretations of the Ottoman worldview by detailing the global breadth and complexity of Ottoman political aspirations in the early sixteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Coupled with this have been efforts to dismantle the 'golden age' perceptions of the reign of Suleyman, describing the limitations and vulnerabilities of his position.<sup>7</sup>

These nuanced approaches have been paralleled within early modern Ottoman military history. Previously written off as a victim of the 'military revolution' in western arms, there now exists a wealth of accounts providing a more comprehensive verdict on the Ottoman military.<sup>8</sup> Beginning with Finkel's account of the flexibility of Ottoman logistical networks (1988), Agostan (2005) has provided ample evidence of a sophisticated and efficient weapons industry which sustained military effectiveness long into the seventeenth century.<sup>9</sup> Murphey (1999) has extended such work to cover the entire period 1500-1700 by detailing systematically the processes involved in Ottoman warfare in reference to their

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<sup>3</sup> P., Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1938, pp. 14-15

<sup>4</sup> A., Wheatcroft, *The Ottomans: Dissolving Images*, Penguin Group, London, 1995, p. 49; J., Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizons: a History of the Ottoman Empire*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1998, p. 65

<sup>5</sup> Goffman, p. 9-12

<sup>6</sup> G., Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 9-12; P., Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, pp. 1-5; 36. Sahin, pp. 3-7

<sup>7</sup> C., Woodhead, 'Introduction: Ideal Sultan, Ideal State' in M., Kunt and C., Woodhead (eds), *Suleiman the Magnificent and His Age*, Longman, London, 1995, pp. 118-119; B., Flemming, 'Public Opinion under Sultan Suleyman' in H., Inalcik, and C., Kafadar, *Suleyman the Second and his Time*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1993, p. 49

<sup>8</sup> J., F., Guilmartin, 'Ideology and Conflict: The Wars of the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1606', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars (Spring: 1988), p. 733

<sup>9</sup> C., Finkel, *The Administration of Warfare: the Ottoman Military Campaigns in Hungary*, VWGO, Wien, 1988, pp. 307-313; G., Agostan, *Guns for the Sultan: military power and the weapons industry in the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 57-60

material limitations.<sup>10</sup> Borekci (2006) has similarly broken new ground, revealing long-standing Ottoman use of volley firing as early as the sixteenth century and making the case for the Ottoman military as being sensitive to European military shifts.<sup>11</sup>

These histories share a common limitation insofar as they privilege quantitative military processes within their analysis. The result is that the efficiency of the Ottoman military is largely considered without reference to the political function that it served. Despite the preponderance of literature detailing the political backdrop of Suleyman's reign, the impact of Ottoman ideals of rule and political frameworks upon military aims and conduct has been a substantially neglected subject matter. Consequently, this dissertation has sought to draw together the substantial secondary literature describing the contemporary political landscape as well as the new work on Ottoman military structures. The limited number of contemporary Ottoman and European accounts available in English and French have been utilised, as well as translated sections from Kemalpasazade's chronicle and the Ottoman campaign journals published within Von Hammer-Purgstall's multivolume Ottoman history.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, this paper will highlight the need for an integrated political-military approach to Suleyman's campaigns and Ottoman military history more broadly. Rather than imposing anachronistic standards of military behaviour, the Ottoman army ought to be considered within its own political context.

## **I. Suleyman and Messianic Universalism**

The political underpinnings of Suleyman's campaigns on the Hungarian frontier cannot be understood without reference to the debate surrounding the role of universalism in conditioning his political aims.

The historiography surrounding Suleyman's political aims has sought to extricate the Ottomans from

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<sup>10</sup> R., Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1999, pp. xviii-xix

<sup>11</sup> G., Borekci, 'A Contribution to the Military Revolution Debate', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 59 (4), (2006), pp. 433-434

<sup>12</sup> Kemalpasazade, *Histoire de la Campagne de Mohacz*, (trans.) M., P., de Courteille, A L'Imprimerie Imperiale, Paris, 1859, p. 1-155; J., Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de L'Empire Ottoman Depuis Son Origine Jusqu'a Nos Jours*, Les Editions Isis, Istanbul, 1836, pp. 220-252

the generalisations of the 'gazi thesis' by construing Ottoman aims as being solely concerned with the maintenance of the balance of power. Suleyman, in this reading, possessed a grand strategy in relation to the Hungarian frontier which comprised maintaining dominance in the Balkans in the face of the emergent Habsburg Empire. Hence, expressions of universalism are merely propaganda measures intended to buttress the Sultan's authority rather than a tangible policy objective. More recent scholarship has questioned such an approach; particularly Sahin, who notes that 'universalism' was a well-defined political project in the context of the Hungarian campaigns and was intensified by messianic predictions which designated Suleyman as the 'Lord of the Last Age.'<sup>13</sup> Although Sahin's interpretation may be considered broadly valid, it neglects to examine the flexibility nature of messianic universalism in reaction to escalating universalist rivalry with Charles V and the military rebuttal of 1532. The messianic universalism of Suleyman was a contingent political project which, furthermore, has distracted scholarly attention from the impact of inherited Ottoman political norms and frameworks which will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

### **I.I. Suleyman's universalism and grand strategy**

That Suleyman possessed a claim to universal monarchy is not a novel observation. The Ottoman claim was described in sceptical terms by the seventeenth-century historian Robert Knolles as being derived from Mehmet II's conquest of Constantinople, through which the dynasty had inherited the global claims of Rome.<sup>14</sup> The Roman aspect of Suleyman's inheritance was only one strand of the divergent claims supporting their universalism including those of Central Asia and Islamic-Iranian concepts.<sup>15</sup> His official titles reflect that such universalist claims were important to the Sultan's self-image: 'I, emperor of emperors, crowned king of men over the whole face of the earth, shadow of God on the two

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<sup>13</sup> Sahin, pp. 61-62

<sup>14</sup> R., Knolles, *The general historie of the Turkes*, London, 1638, p. 615, Available from Early English Books Online, (accessed 27 January 2017)

<sup>15</sup> M., S., Birdal, *The Holy Roman Empire and the Ottomans*, I.B Tauris, London, 2011, p. 3; A., C., S., Peacock, 'The Ottoman Empire and its Frontiers' in A., C., S., Peacock (ed.), *Proceedings of the British Academy 156: The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, British Academy, London, 2010, p. 15



continents'.<sup>16</sup>

There exists, however, a demystifying trend within the recent historiography which has sought to construe universalism as a separate legitimating factor behind Suleyman's generally rational aims. Agostan casts this universalism as a propagandistic component of Ottoman 'grand strategy' which was rooted in pragmatic concerns regarding external challenges.<sup>17</sup> Mapping this onto the Hungarian context, Murphey casts Suleyman as seeking a pragmatic policy of anti-Habsburg containment in Hungary before annexing the kingdom in response to its internal political turmoil.<sup>18</sup> This approach is taken to the logical extreme by Isom-Verhaaren, wherein Suleyman's foreign policy is construed as a three-way struggle between France, the Habsburgs and the Ottomans for zones of influence and the title of universal sovereign.<sup>19</sup> All such interpretations owe a debt to Perjes' description of the Ottoman dynasty as a fundamentally rational polity whose primary aim in Hungary was to challenge their Habsburg rivals.<sup>20</sup> As such, the universalist ideology is rendered legitimating propaganda, extricable from the central concern of Suleyman, rebutting the Habsburg threat.

## **I.II. Universalism as the parameters of action**

In spite of this, such a distinction imposes anachronistic standards upon the political context of the time. For early modern sovereigns, as Dandalet aptly notes, war was not so much a means to secure geostrategic advantages but a 'vehicle to honour, fame and glory.'<sup>21</sup> Suleyman was no exception to this pattern; his articulations of policy do not concern the balance of military power but rather the

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<sup>16</sup> L., Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*, Cornell University Press, London, 1993, p. 53

<sup>17</sup> G., Agostan, 'Information, Ideology and Limits of Imperial Ideology: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of the Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry', in V., Aksan and D., Goffman (eds), *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 77-78

<sup>18</sup> R., Murphey, 'Suleyman I and the Conquest of Hungary: Ottoman Manifest Destiny or a Delayed Reaction to Charles V's Universalist Vision?', *Journal of Early Modern History* 5, 3 (2001), p. 220

<sup>19</sup> C., Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies with the Infidel: The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century*, I.B Tauris, London, 2011, pp. 34-35

<sup>20</sup> G., Perjes, *The Fall of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989, p. 18

<sup>21</sup> T., J., Dandalet, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, p. 103

fulfilment and contestation of dynastic claims. This is apparent in the preamble to the Egyptian Law Code of 1525, a document which Sahin identifies as a blue-print for the 'world-historical program' that Suleyman sought to fulfil.<sup>22</sup> Here, Suleyman's authority is related as being at once spiritual and temporal, but of special emphasis is his inheritance from earlier kings of the 'adornment of the rank of world-rulers and personification of the imperial position'.<sup>23</sup> The inclusion of universalist claims within policy documentation is indicative that such claims were not merely propagandistic; they were inextricable from his political aims.

This propagandistic assumption further ignores the messianic political 'canvas' of the early sixteenth century, in which armed force was perceived in relation to the imminent apocalypse.<sup>24</sup> Suleyman's reign was viewed in auspicious terms; the advent of the Islamic tenth century coupled with his inherited 'Roman' claims resulted in open speculation that the Sultan was to be the Emperor of the Last Age, destined to unite the world into an empire of one faith.<sup>25</sup> Suleyman and his Grand Vizier Ibrahim were not only aware of these prognostications but openly sought out and consulted prophetic volumes relating the Sultan's imminent conquest of Europe.<sup>26</sup> Sahin notes that, far from possessing purely rational objectives, Suleyman's early reign was characterised by 'messianic kingship' wherein the Sultan considered his actions in reference to the fulfilment of these prognostications.<sup>27</sup> This messianic imperative may therefore be said to have provided the necessary means for Suleyman's universalism to transition from broad political outlines into tangible military objectives in Europe.

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<sup>22</sup> Sahin, p. 57

<sup>23</sup> Extract from preamble, as cited in F., S., Eryilmaz, 'From Adam to Suleyman: Visual Representations of Authority in Ārif's Shāhnāma-yi Āl-i Os̄mān' in H., E., Cipa and E., Fetvacı (eds.), *Writing history at the Ottoman court: editing the past, fashioning the future*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2013, p. 120

<sup>24</sup> N., Housley, 'The Eschatological Imperative: Messianism and Holy War in Europe, 1260-1556' in P., Schafer and M., Cohen, *Toward the Millennium: Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco*, Brill, Leiden, 1998, p. 124

<sup>25</sup> R., Finlay, 'Prophecy and politics in Istanbul: Charles V, Sultan Suleyman, and the Habsburg Embassy of 1533-1534', *Journal of Early Modern History*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 1998, p. 11

<sup>26</sup> C., H., Fleischer, 'Shadows of shadows: Prophecy in Politics in 1530s Istanbul' in B., Tezcan, and K., K., Barbir (eds), *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2007, p. 55

<sup>27</sup> Sahin, p. 61

### I.III. Universalism in Hungary and Austria

If it is acknowledged that messianic universalism shaped Suleyman's political aims, it must be considered how such objectives were to be realised through expansion into Hungary. Although discounting universalism as a political motive, Perjes does note that the ruling Jagiellon dynasty in Hungary was being drawn closer into the Habsburg orbit through marital and inheritance agreements, much to the concern of the Ottomans.<sup>28</sup> This concern is notable when consulting the chronicler Kemalpasazade who identifies the liberation of Francis I from the tyranny of Charles V as one of the main causes for the Ottoman campaign against the Hungarians in 1526.<sup>29</sup> In this manner the Mohacs campaign became linked to the competing claims of universal monarchy by the two sovereigns. Suleyman thus sought not only to fulfil messianic predictions of European conquest but to challenge the universalist claims of Charles V and in so doing cement his own.<sup>30</sup>

Further evidence of this universalist challenge is provided by the consequences of Suleyman's victory at Mohacs in 1526. The throne of Hungary being disputed between Ferdinand Habsburg and John Zapolyai, Ibrahim received the Habsburg envoy and rebutted Ferdinand's claims in universalistic terms: 'How does your master dare to call himself the most powerful when face to face with the Emperor of the Ottomans, under whose shadow all other Christian powers take refuge?'<sup>31</sup> Indeed, upon receiving word of the Peace of Cambrai and the Treaty of Bologna in 1529, Ibrahim made this intent all the more pronounced: 'there must needs be but one monarch in the world, either the emperor or his own lord.'<sup>32</sup> The Sultan would fulfil his Vizier's rhetoric with a large scale military campaign directed at Vienna, stopping at Mohacs to ceremonially invest John Zapolyai with the right to rule Hungary as a vassal and thereafter claiming the title of 'Distributor of Crowns to the Monarchs of the World'.<sup>33</sup> Though the siege of Vienna itself would prove unsuccessful, this combination of

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<sup>28</sup> Perjes, pp. 18-19

<sup>29</sup> Kemalpasazade, p. 24

<sup>30</sup> Sahin, p. 63

<sup>31</sup> A., Clot, *Suleiman the Magnificent: The Man, His Life, His Epoch*, Saqi Books, London, 1992, p. 63

<sup>32</sup> Isom-Verhaaren, p. 38

<sup>33</sup> G., Necipoglu, 'Suleyman the Magnificent and the Representation of Power in the Context of Ottoman-

rhetoric, ceremonies and military action demonstrates the extent to which Suleyman and Ibrahim sought to project outward the Sultan's supremacy. In each of the examples, the Christian monarchs are rendered as either presumptuous rivals (Charles V and Ferdinand) or submissive inferiors (John Zapolyai).

#### **I.IV. Universalism as a reactive phenomenon**

On this basis, it is reasonable to conclude that Suleyman sought primarily ideological aims brought to a feverish intensity by the messianic anticipations of the period. To this, the reactive quality of his ambitions in response to mutual escalation with Charles V must also be added. The irony of Suleyman's campaigns on the Hungarian frontier was that they served to further Charles' claim to universal monarchy. Above all, they enabled the emperor to portray himself as 'a paladin of Christendom against Islam' whose imminent victory over Suleyman would herald the creation of a universal empire.<sup>34</sup> That the Sultan was alert to Charles' universalist displays was made clear by the 1532 campaign which was organised, as Necipglu aptly notes, as essentially a ceremonial display of Suleyman's universalist claims. The Sultan was presented to European ambassadors on a golden throne with a four-tiered crown, reducing the Habsburg representatives to "speechless corpses".<sup>35</sup> This regalia was a targeted political statement, displaying his superiority to the Pope and Charles V as well as providing a direct response to the latter's coronation by the former in 1530.<sup>36</sup> Thus, in Necipoglu's assessment, Suleyman sought to convey his universalist claims to a European audience utilising an 'intelligible western vocabulary' of regal symbols.<sup>37</sup>

The immediate aftermath of the 1532 campaign was arguably characterised by reactivity rather than ideological steadfastness. Despite both Charles and Suleyman making clear pronouncements of their

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Hapsburg-Papal Rivalry', *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 71, No. 3, (Sep., 1989), p. 416

<sup>34</sup> J., Elliott, 'Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry: The European Perspective' in H., Inalcik, and C., Kafadar, *Suleyman the Second and his Time*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1993, p. 154

<sup>35</sup> Necipoglu, pp. 407-409

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 410-411

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 425

desire to test their universalist claims in battle, as well as widespread contemporary expectation that such a clash was imminent, this battle did not occur.<sup>38</sup> Suleyman's failure to bring Charles to battle was perceived as a serious challenge to his position. This was apparent in the messianic crisis of 1533 when, as Finlay relates, Constantinople was alive with speculation of the imminent collapse of the empire to the Christian powers which was manifested in a large number of prophetic visions alluding to the sudden collapse of Suleyman's fortunes.<sup>39</sup> This crisis of the his messianic credentials was paralleled in Hungary where perceptions of the Sultan as the instrument of the Last Judgement collapsed with the revelation that the Ottomans were far from militarily invincible.<sup>40</sup>

Suleyman's response to this crisis, in my assessment, emphasises that his 'messianic universalism' was a contingent reaction to the political currents of the time. The peace established in the same year as this messianic crisis avoided addressing the universalist status of Charles and served instead to secure the rights of Suleyman's vassal over Hungary.<sup>41</sup> This agreement, coupled with the full annexation of Hungary in 1541 and the diversion of military forces to the Mediterranean, demonstrates the beginning of the processes of formalisation and consolidation with which Barkey characterises the second half of his reign.<sup>42</sup> Necipoglu adds that the execution of Ibrahim in 1536 would further signal a shift away from his Vizier's caesarean displays of universalism, as deployed in 1532.<sup>43</sup> This is not to suggest that this project was abandoned wholesale. Rather it would be expressed in more conspicuously Islamic terms in line with his increased piety, as witnessed through the rise of the Islamic prognosticator Remal Haydar within his court.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> J., D., Tracy, *Emperor Charles V, Impresario of War: Campaign Strategy, International Finance, and Domestic Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 138; A., Moore, *A Compendious History of the Turks*, John Streater, 1659, p. 538, Available from Early English Books Online, (accessed 21 February 2017)

<sup>39</sup> Finlay, pp. 19-22

<sup>40</sup> P., Fodor, 'The View of the Turk in Hungary: The Apocalyptic Tradition and the Legend of the Red Apple in the Ottoman-Hungarian Context' in B., Lellouch, et S., Yerasimos, *Les Traditions Apocalyptiques au Tournant de la Chute de Constantinople*, Varia Turcica XXXIII, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1996, p. 120

<sup>41</sup> Murphey, 'Suleyman and the Conquest of Hungary', pp. 216

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 220; Isom-Verhaaren, p. 40; K., Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 72

<sup>43</sup> Necipoglu, p. 424

<sup>44</sup> C., Kafadar, 'The Ottomans and Europe' in T., A., Brady, H., A., Oberman and J., D., Tracy (eds), *Handbook of*

Within these policies, Suleyman demonstrates that the 'Roman universalism' expressed within the Hungarian campaigns was a reactive project which was attuned to the political currents of Europe. Nonetheless, it was flexible enough to be rearticulated in a more Islamic direction when such political conditions proved unfavourable. The strand of universalism articulated in Hungary was not, therefore, a fixed value. It was an appropriate political project within the context of Suleyman's rivalry with Charles V but Suleyman possessed sufficient ideological flexibility to abandon it when necessary.

### **I.V. Conclusion**

The overall pattern of Suleyman's aims and actions surrounding the Hungarian campaigns would seem to indicate that the Sultan pursued a universalist project made intelligible through the messianic political context of his early reign. This was a malleable endeavour, though, and was heavily shaped by the competing claims of Charles V while also proving vulnerable to problematic military outcomes. Further, the scholarly focus on Suleyman's universalist aims has privileged these contingent aims without addressing the impact the pre-existing political norms and structures within Suleyman's early military endeavours. The subsequent chapter will therefore address the role of Ottoman ideals of rule upon the deployment of military force on the Hungarian frontier.

## **II. The Ideals of Rule**

As demonstrated above, scholarship examining the interaction of Suleyman's military-political aims in Hungary has largely centred upon debating the role of his universalist aims. These aims, however, constituted only a contingent political response to external developments. This conclusion leaves open the question of how more inherent Ottoman political ideals affected Suleyman's military policies on the Hungarian frontier. Although some scholars have acknowledged the role of Sultanic ideals of rule upon Suleyman, there have been few attempts to link these ideals with his military aims. This chapter will seek to re-examine the Hungarian campaigns in the context of the normative duties of a

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*European History, 1400-1600: Visions, Programs and Outcomes v. 2: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, Brill, Leiden, 1995, p. 611; Fleischer, 2007, p. 58

Sultan by intersecting the literature on Ottoman ideals of justice with the available contemporary accounts of these military endeavours. In so doing, it will be related that Suleyman's Hungarian campaigns were articulated as expressions of his primary duty to provide justice to his subjects. Simultaneously, Suleyman was expected to fulfil his obligations to the tradition of *gaza* (holy raiding) and exhibit his divine favour through the act of conquest. In undertaking this, he was mindful of the need for his deeds to be worthy of remembrance above and beyond his predecessors. The image of Suleyman that emerges is of a sultan who, despite possessing a dynamic universalist agenda, was obliged to reconcile his actions in Hungary with inherent Ottoman standards of military success.

### **II.I. Refuge of the world**

When launching a campaign into Hungary, Suleyman was not solely undertaking a military endeavour but rather also fulfilling his primary normative obligation as Sultan: the preservation of justice. The salience of this norm to Ottoman decision making can hardly be understated for, as Kurz aptly notes, in accordance with Islamic tradition sultanic authority was predicated on their duty to protect the *reaya* (subjects) from unjust rule.<sup>45</sup> In this respect, Inalcik adds, power and justice in the Ottoman state were interdependent, a claim which can be seen at work in the Circle of Equity: the Ottoman political framework which bound royal authority, the military, wealth, justice and divine law in an inextricable chain.<sup>46</sup> Such ideals were of particular concern to Suleyman, whose achievements were viewed through the prism of his namesake King Solomon. Arifi's volume on the life of Suleyman begins with a Qu'ranic verse attributed to the king: 'God commands justice, the doings of good, and liberality to kith'.<sup>47</sup> That this volume concerns itself in large measure with the Sultan's achievements as a military leader (particularly in the Balkans) gives an indication that his military policy was by no means exempt

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<sup>45</sup> M., Kurz, 'Gracious Sultan, Grateful Subjects: Spreading Ottoman Imperial "Ideology" throughout the Empire', *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 107, No. 1, (2012), p. 102

<sup>46</sup> H., Inalcik, 'State, sovereignty and law during the reign of Suleyman' in H., Inalcik, and C., Kafadar, *Suleyman the Second and his Time*, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1993, pp. 61-63

<sup>47</sup> E., Atil, *Süleymanname : the illustrated history of Süleyman the Magnificent*, National Gallery of Art, 1986, p. 87

as an articulation of his justice.<sup>48</sup>

On this foundation, Suleyman's military aims on his north-west frontier merit a re-examination. As noted, Kemalpasazade articulates the aims of Suleyman in Hungary in 1526 as a response to Francis I's call for aid, but this is preceded by passages relating the historic threat posed by the Germans to Muslims: "These wretches are always ready to descend on the Muslims and threaten [t]o defile with their cursed feet the abode of the salvation". Francis then delivers his request by appealing to Suleyman as 'the Soloman of the age' to 'Remove me from the hands of an unjust and tyrannical enemy.'<sup>49</sup> In this manner, Suleyman's role as guarantor of justice is invoked as a cause for war in two ways; firstly, he is confronting a historic threat to the *reaya* and second, he is confronting Charles V as an abusive ruler. The latter is crucial since, according to Inalcik, rooting out despotic governance was central to the Ottoman normative order.<sup>50</sup> In this case, the principle has been directed outwards towards Charles V as the designated tyrant and Francis as the wrongfully oppressed, in line with Mustafa Ali's dictum: 'every oppressed one that is plagued by the burning acts of injustice will doubtlessly find relief with the King of the World'.<sup>51</sup> To Charles' crimes was added the oppression of Spain's Muslim population which infringed on the Sultan's role as the defender of all Muslims.<sup>52</sup> In deploying his military forces to counter Charles V in the Balkans, Suleyman was seeking to rectify the normative imbalance of his tyrannical behaviour and thus vindicate his position as a 'just' Sultan.

Such an ordering of objectives was not unique to 1526. The 1521 campaign against Belgrade was undertaken nominally in reply to the detaining of an Ottoman envoy by the Hungarians, an act which prompted the Sultan's wrath.<sup>53</sup> Despite subsequently seeming to relate the incident as a mere pretext,

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<sup>48</sup> E., Fetvacı, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2013, p. 271

<sup>49</sup> Kemalpasazade, pp. 24-26

<sup>50</sup> Inalcik, 'State, sovereignty and law', p. 60

<sup>51</sup> A., Tietze, *Mustafa Ali's Counsel for Sultans of 1581*, Verlag der Osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, 1979, p. 21

<sup>52</sup> Isom-Verhaaren, p. 162

<sup>53</sup> F., Szakaly, 'Nandorfehervar, 1521: The Beginning of the End of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary' in G., David, and P., Fodor (eds), *Hungarian-Ottoman Military and Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Suleyman the Magnificent*, Lorand Eotvos University, Budapest, 1994, p. 48



Suleyman reveals his actual motive to have been to chastise 'the haughty king, who gave refuge to heretics, who trod the wrong path', again framing his opponent as an unjust ruler and hence his campaign as a moral necessity.<sup>54</sup> Suleyman relates his advance against Vienna in 1529 as being directed against the person of Ferdinand after the latter's incursion into Hungary, making the campaign an act of retribution against injustices committed against Zapolyai by implication.<sup>55</sup> Further, the 1532 campaign was legitimated in similar rhetorical terms. European accounts reported the Sultan's public assertions that: 'he was come into HUNGARIE, to revenge the wrongs which they had done unto King John his friend and vassal.'<sup>56</sup> This is not to suggest that such normative factors superseded the universalist objectives that have been alluded to previously. Rather, these obligations placed constraints on which of Suleyman's actions could be considered legitimate and created underlying imperatives to retaliate against acts of injustice. Overall, therefore, Suleyman's military aims in the Balkans were not simply a product of his individual political designs; they were required to fit into his normative duty to provide justice.

## II.II. Lord of the Gazis

The role of the concept of *gaza* in Ottoman expansion is one of the most widely debated in the relevant historiography. By Suleyman's time, Kafadar argues, although *gaza* was retained nominally it had long since been incorporated into a glorious past and consequently had been substantially redefined and curtailed.<sup>57</sup> Despite this, the concept continued to play a legitimating role for the dynasty and thus required the Sultan to fulfil his role as 'the lord of gazi wars, famous among mankind'.<sup>58</sup> Suleyman's actions were widely legitimated in reference to *gaza* while his enemies were described as the enemies of Islam.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, a legacy of this practise, according to Kolodziejczyk, was

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 50

<sup>55</sup> Suleymanasch Fiolo de Selim Sach Imperador, Semper Vitorioso', in Von Hammer-Purgstall, pp. 235-236

<sup>56</sup> Knolles, p. 618

<sup>57</sup> C., Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, University of California Press, Berkely, 1996, p. 152

<sup>58</sup> C., Imber, 'Ideas and Legitimation in Early Ottoman History' in Kunt and Woodhead (eds), 1995, p. 145

<sup>59</sup> 'Copie de la Lettre Imperiale Adressee par sa Majeste Sultan Suleyman Khan Gazi Tous Les Gouverneurs de Provinces dans L'Empire Ottoman, a la Suite de la Victoire de Mohacz' in Kemalpasazade, 1859, p. 144

that the Ottomans recognized no fixed boundaries to their domains which they were obligated under Islamic guidance to expand.<sup>60</sup> One can see the same logic at work within the motif of the 'ever victorious frontier' which, in Birdal's estimation, constituted a means of legitimating the dynasty through the 'daily facts' of conquest.<sup>61</sup> In the case of Hungary, Suleyman's declaration of victory following the Battle of Mohacs relates the campaign as resulting from the kingdom being 'contiguous to the Muslim provinces and inhabited by the most wicked of the infidels'.<sup>62</sup> Such a statement is indicative of expansion not solely as a function of temporal objectives. Suleyman was a prisoner of the Ottoman's rhetorical compulsion to expand the House of Islam continuously and hence it should be no surprise that European observers described Ottoman conquests not as acts of conscious policy but as a ritual compulsion undertaken every three years.<sup>63</sup>

In another respect, Suleyman's military policy was conditioned by a related normative factor; demonstrating to the *reaya* that he retained divine favour. Inalcik argues that the Sultan's position was not a given for the Ottoman public, who would readily display discontent towards a sovereign who failed to meet these Ottoman ideals, and consequently Ottoman sovereigns would undertake an act of conquest in order to demonstrate to the *reaya* their ability and by extension their divine favour.<sup>64</sup> In Inalcik's reading, Suleyman's expedition against Belgrade may be regarded as a necessary display of divine favour to secure his prestige among the Ottoman public.<sup>65</sup> This perspective is reinforced when one considers the confused nature of the campaign aims. Szakaly reports that despite departing Constantinople with his army on 18 May, the precise goal of the campaign was not determined until after reaching Sofia on 18 July.<sup>66</sup> Fodor characterises this confusion as a by-product

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<sup>60</sup> D., Kolodziejczyk, 'Between Universalistic Claims and Reality: Ottoman frontiers in the early modern period' in C., Woodhead, *The Ottoman World*, Routledge, Oxon, 2012, pp. 206-207

<sup>61</sup> Birdal, pp. 139-140

<sup>62</sup> 'Copie de la Lettre Imperiale Addressee' in Kemalpasazade, p. 144

<sup>63</sup> G., Bartolomej, H. Goughe (trans.), *The offspring of the house of Ottomanno and officers pertaining to the greate Turkes court*, 1569, p. 45, Available from Early English Books Online, (accessed 27 January 2017)

<sup>64</sup> Inalcik, 'State, sovereignty and law', pp. 65-67

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>66</sup> Szakaly, p. 50

of Suleyman's military inexperience but this distracts from the central matter; the young sultan was obligated to undertake an act of conquest whether or not a precise target had been determined in advance.<sup>67</sup> Thus Suleyman's military imperatives were not solely a product of his own discretion. Conquest was an expected legitimating phenomenon both through acts that could be classified as 'gaza' and those which demonstrated his 'divine favour' to an expectant public.

### II.III. Reputation, reputation, reputation

In contrast to discussions over *gaza*, the role of sultanic ideals of reputation in determining Ottoman military aims has received comparatively little scholarly attention, despite being featured persistently in campaign histories and Suleyman's own campaign rhetoric. As Brummett notes, the Balkans not only consisted of spheres of operation but also of imagination through which they could seize the 'Red Apples' of Vienna or Rome and secure their status in 'historical consciousness and memory.'<sup>68</sup> Kemalpasazade reminds us of this imperative in the opening passages of his campaign history: 'In this world the renown that a man leaves after him is a second life'.<sup>69</sup> In this respect, Suleyman could claim substantial success in constructing a peerless martial reputation; on his death the contemporary poet Baqi articulated this persona in Suleyman's elegy: 'Of iron-girded heroes of the world thou threw'st a chain.'<sup>70</sup>

Against this backdrop, the campaigns in Hungary and Austria constituted a means to seize the coveted territory of dynastic renown. This was no easy matter since, as Turan notes, his father's glory was absolute whereas little was expected of the untried Sultan upon his ascension.<sup>71</sup> Seizing Belgrade in 1521 would signal the first act of constructing a formidable martial reputation, yet this was as nothing

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<sup>67</sup> P., Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy Towards Hungary, 1520-1541', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung*, Tomus XLV (2-3), 1991, p. 291

<sup>68</sup> P., Brummett, 'Ottoman expansion in Europe: 1453-1606', in Faroqhi, and Fleet (eds.), p. 69; *Ibid.*, p. 72

<sup>69</sup> Kemalpasazade, p. 2

<sup>70</sup> Baqi, 'Elegy on Sultan Suleyman' in E., J., W., Gibb (trans.), *Ottoman Poems*, Trubner and Co., London, 1882, p. 95

<sup>71</sup> E., Turan, 'The Sultan's Favourite: Ibrahim Pasha and the Making of the Ottoman Universal Sovereignty in the Reign of Sultan Suleyman (1516-1526)', PhD Thesis, University of Chicago, 2007, p. 62-64

compared to the memorialization of his subsequent victory at Mohacs (1521). Suleyman's *fethname* (letter of victory) makes clear that his victory constitutes 'a triumph such as neither ever nor any of the illustrious sultans, nor khans, Or even the companions of the Prophet, has not succeeded in obtaining the same.'<sup>72</sup> Significantly, this proclamation casts Suleyman's achievement in relation to the glorious achievements of Ottoman-Mongol-Islamic rulers preceding him while making clear that his victory was the pre-eminent success among this pantheon. Indeed, when subsequently brought into confrontation with Ferdinand over Hungary, he was once again impelled to consolidate his reputation against the pretender. Ibrahim relates that, upon informing the Sultan that such a large campaign might prove militarily unsustainable, 'He answered he wanted to show what he was capable of'.<sup>73</sup> Seen from this perspective, Ottoman ideals of sultanic prestige were not merely long term considerations; Suleyman's immediate military achievements were required to supersede those of his predecessors while simultaneously overshadowing any potential challenger in the present. In this respect, the Sultan was required to determine his military objectives with one eye upon his stature in the present, and another upon his place in eternity.

#### **II.IV. Conclusion**

Suleyman's military aims on the Hungarian frontier were not only constructed from the universalist project alluded to in Chapter I; they were also conditioned and legitimated according to Ottoman normative ideals of rule. In undertaking military action, Suleyman was required to abide by his obligation to dispense justice and punish injustice beyond his borders. In addition, Suleyman was required to demonstrate his continued adherence to the principle of *gaza*, his retention of divine favour and ensure that his actions were worthy of acclaim and remembrance. With these considerations, Suleyman can be seen as constrained in the articulation of military aims by these inherited ideals. As will be elaborated below, however, Suleyman's military conduct was simultaneously conditioned by Ottoman political frameworks, wherein the Sultan sought to balance

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<sup>72</sup> 'Copie de la Lettre Imperiale Adresse'e' in Kemalpasazade, p. 155

<sup>73</sup> Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy Towards Hungary', p. 285

competing power groups on the Hungarian frontier.

### **III. The Structures of Power**

Suleyman, as described above, was obligated to meet the normative ideals of rule which dictated the legitimacy, timing and memorialisation of the Hungarian campaigns. Following this line of enquiry further, it is apparent that inherent political factors were also highly influential in dictating the conduct of Suleyman's campaigns on the Ottoman frontier. There have been efforts by Brummett, Christensen and Aksan to consider the social and political implications of Ottoman military activity yet none has examined the particularities of Suleyman's campaign within this context or drawn the logical conclusion that Suleyman's campaigns were in practice an effective means of strengthening and expanding the governing power relations of the empire. Within this chapter the impact of Ottoman political frameworks on the conduct of Suleyman's Hungarian campaigns will be addressed. Beginning by situating the Sultan within the Ottoman political framework, it will describe the political status of the Ottoman military before examining the impact of such structures in Hungary in the context of battles, sieges and the campaign march. In so doing, it will be demonstrated that the military conduct of Suleyman in Hungary served to strengthen and expand the political order of the empire.

#### **III.I. The Ottoman political order**

The Ottoman polity may be defined as 'patrimonial' wherein, as Inalcik describes, the Sultan is required to exercise power to balance between rival groups.<sup>74</sup> Barkey similarly describes the Ottoman Empire as a 'negotiated enterprise' in which the political status of the dynasty was legitimated on the basis of 'concrete and reproducible relations' between the Sultan and his subjects.<sup>75</sup> During his early reign, Suleyman was particularly vulnerable to such competing groups, inheriting a power struggle between the established Grand Vizier Piri Pasha and the second and third viziers who were favourites of his father, while he himself had not formed the necessary alliances to mediate between these

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<sup>74</sup> H., Inalcik, 'Decision making in the Ottoman state' in H., Inalcik, *Essays in Ottoman History*, Eren, Istanbul, 1998, p. 113

<sup>75</sup> Barkey, p. 68

factions.<sup>76</sup> The military was intimately connected to this political balancing act; indeed, to an extent they comprised it since the political hierarchies of the empire were simultaneously those of the military.<sup>77</sup> The claim that the Ottoman military structures also constituted political entities is common among scholars, yet what this union amounts to in the practice of Ottoman warfare is seldom expanded upon.<sup>78</sup> To begin with, therefore, the political status of Ottoman military structures must be considered and subsequently it will be demonstrated how such dispositions were managed in the Hungarian campaigns.

### III.II. The 'Victorious Army' as a political structure

Under Suleyman, the Ottoman army reached its zenith in terms of size and reputation. This in turn created political challenges as the enlarged component groups formed powerful interest groups.<sup>79</sup> Principal among these were the Janissaries: the elite infantry of the sultans had expanded to 12,000 men under the reign of Suleyman and possessed such an impressive martial reputation that one European observer described them as 'the fortress and heart of all the power and strength of the Turks'.<sup>80</sup> Such an assessment hints at the influential political role of the Janissaries. As Aksan notes, they were incorporated into the imperial garrison system and served as representatives of the Sultan in the provinces.<sup>81</sup> Despite this theoretical condition as the sovereign's enforcers, they displayed a substantial influence in their own right. Busbecq records Suleyman's Grand Vizier, Roostem, declaring that during wartime 'they [the Janissaries] were the masters so that not even Solyman himself had

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<sup>76</sup> Turan, pp. 67-71

<sup>77</sup> C., Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2002, p. 324

<sup>78</sup> G., David, 'Ottoman armies and warfare' in S., Faroqhi, and K., Fleet (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 280; Wheatcroft, p. 52

<sup>79</sup> G., Agostan, 'Empires and warfare in east-central Europe, 1550-1750: The Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry and military transformation' in F., Tallett and D., J., B., Trim (eds.), *European Warfare 1350-1750*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 114

<sup>80</sup> Bartolomej, p. 14

<sup>81</sup> V., Aksan, 'Ottoman war and warfare 1453-1812' in J., Black (ed.), *War in the Early Modern World*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 151

control over them'.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the approval of the Janissaries was regarded as a necessary precondition for the accession of a new Sultan – Suleyman was obligated provide them with financial rewards and a wage increase upon taking the throne.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, these troops proved a restive influence on sultans by regularly agitating for military expansion, as demonstrated in their acclamation cry: 'We will meet again at the Red Apple.'<sup>84</sup>

That the Janissaries were able to claim such a position within the Ottoman state was in large measure a consequence of a long-term effort by successful sultans to contain the power of the *Timar* (land holding) cavalry. It was this internal threat, according to Aksan, which prompted the dynasty to continually expand the salaried army (particularly the Janissaries).<sup>85</sup> Although they had succeeded in suppressing the direct influence of the provincial forces, maintaining the *Timar* system continued to impose its own pressures during Suleyman's reign, particularly through the need to supply more land for distribution by undertaking new conquests.<sup>86</sup> The evidence above would seem to vindicate Murphey's description of the Ottoman army as one failing to become an 'unequivocal enforcer of state interest.'<sup>87</sup> This assessment, however, rests upon an anachronistic understanding of Ottoman state interests which neglects to consider the Ottoman army within contemporary political structures. Instead, as will be demonstrate below, Suleyman's Hungarian campaigns are better characterised in reference to the strengthening of political relations.

### **I.III. The battle**

During his campaigns on the Hungarian frontier, Suleyman sought to reaffirm the political relations between himself, his army and his subjects while projecting his political status to external enemies. Within this 'theatre' of operations, battles and sieges were sites where these aims were clearly

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<sup>82</sup> C., T., Forster, and F., H., B., Daniell, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (Vol. 1)*, Kegan Paul & Co., London, 1881, p. 297

<sup>83</sup> Knolles, p. 568

<sup>84</sup> P., Mansell, *Constantinople: City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924*, John Murray, London, 1995, p. 221

<sup>85</sup> Aksan, p. 150

<sup>86</sup> Fodor, 'Ottoman Policy Towards Hungary', pp. 282-283

<sup>87</sup> Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, p. 31



fulfilled. Suleyman himself was engaged in a set piece battle only once during the four campaigns under examination – the battlefield of Mohacs. This battle was a decisive success thanks largely to the application of the archetypal Ottoman order of battle which placed the Sultan at the centre, ringed by his household cavalry, the Janissaries and his artillery while the *Timar* cavalry and their levies formed the left and right wings.<sup>88</sup> This order of battle, Christensen maintains, is not wholly a product of military expediency; it is the literal expression of the Ottoman political order on the field of battle.<sup>89</sup> The formation allows for the Sultan to distribute to his men the normative ‘gifts’ of protection and order in accordance with their status, with the Janissaries and household cavalry afforded the greatest share of both while the *Timar* cavalry, *Azabs* (militia infantry) and *Akincis* (militia cavalry) receive only moderate allowances.<sup>90</sup> The applicability of this interpretation to Suleyman at Mohacs is demonstrated through Ottoman artistic representations of the battle (figure 1); here the salaried forces of Suleyman’s household are portrayed as occupying a harmonious, ordered realm with the Sultan at the centre while the *Akincis* are placed in the domain of threat and chaos in combat with the Hungarians. Further, the field of battle constituted another arena in which Suleyman could renew his normative relations; Christensen notes that the Sultan asserted himself as an ‘arbiter of social wellbeing’ through the *Cavuses* who would pass information to him on the conduct of the troops and allow for the subsequent distribution of reward.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Wheatcroft, p. 55

<sup>89</sup> S., T., Christensen, 'The Heathen Order of Battle' in V., G., Kiernan, R., Muchembled and S., T., Christensen, *Violence and the Absolutist State*, University Press Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 1990, pp. 94-95

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114



(Figure 1<sup>92</sup>)

If this order of battle served to advance Suleyman's internal position by testing and renewing the political structures of the empire, it placed the Ottoman polity in a vulnerable position. The contemporary observer of the Ottoman court, Mihailovic, notes that the possibility of the Ottomans engaging their opponents in a decisive battle was one fraught with anxiety for a defeat would literally destroy the political structures, arrayed in their entirety on the field of battle.<sup>93</sup> If Suleyman sought to avoid battle at Vienna in 1532, it may reasonably be said to be a result of this calculus of risk; seeking battle on uncertain terms would have risked the symbolic and literal defeat of Suleyman's polity. When seeking battle on the Hungarian frontier, paradoxically, Suleyman was strengthening Ottoman power relations but in the process risked their destruction.

### III.IV. The siege

The siege constituted another site of action wherein Suleyman sought to confirm and renew the normative relations between himself and his subjects. The siege occupied a particular significance for the Ottomans; the capture and retention of fortresses were, in Brummett's estimation, the means by

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<sup>92</sup> Atil, pp. 136-137

<sup>93</sup> K., Mihailovic, B., Stolz (trans), *Memoirs of a Janissary*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbour, 1975, p. 146

which they sought to measure their sovereignty.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, Aksan argues that Ottoman fortresses constituted a means of representing the Sultan's authority throughout the empire.<sup>95</sup> For Suleyman, fortresses constituted a crucial measurement of his power, as his biographer Celalzade related: '[Suleyman] has under his dominion 1,200 fortresses. Whenever in mentioning one of them I have employed a description and rhyming prose, especially in reference to [its] grandeur, strength and sturdiness'.<sup>96</sup> By extension, the siege constituted an act of asserting and extending Suleyman's power in the Balkans, an assertion that can be witnessed within artistic representations of the Hungarian campaigns. The sieges of Belgrade (see figure 2) and Buda (see figure 3) portray Suleyman's armies as embodying harmony and order, while the defenders are visual examples of chaos and danger. In the context of the projection of sovereignty, these images cast the army as being witnesses to the assertion of Suleyman's power by force.<sup>97</sup> The capture of fortresses is further embellished within Suleyman's fethnames – the 1529 letter stresses primarily the events of the capture of Buda which is related as securing the Sultan's rights in Hungary.<sup>98</sup> Within Suleyman's campaign journals, sieges are a predominating feature; despite the delay incurred to his march on Vienna, Suleyman nevertheless ceremonially bestows a sum of money and an annual income upon the surrendering garrison commander of Guns before receiving the congratulations of his Pashas.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, although he had failed to defeat Charles V, Suleyman nevertheless received the submission of four castles on the frontier in October 1532.<sup>100</sup> Such displays of submission and authority in the midst of a campaign commonly regarded by scholars as a failure indicates, in my view, that the standards of success being applied are too narrow. The capture or surrender of fortresses in Hungary were instrumental in

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<sup>94</sup> P., Brummett, 'The Fortress: Defining and Mapping the Ottoman Frontier in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in Peacock (ed.), p. 31

<sup>95</sup> Aksan, p. 151

<sup>96</sup> R., Blackburn (trans.), *Journey to the Sublime Porte: An Arabic Memoir of a Sharifian Agent's Diplomatic Mission to the Ottoman Imperial Court*, Ergon Verlag Wurzburg in Kommission, Beirut, 2005, pp. 199-200

<sup>97</sup> Brummett, 'The Fortress', p. 51

<sup>98</sup> 'Suleymanasch Fiolo de Selim Sach Imperador, Semper Vitorioso', in Von Hammer-Purgstall, pp. 235-236

<sup>99</sup> 'Journal de la quatrieme campagne de Souleiman contre Vienne, 935 (1529)' in Von Hammer-Purgstall, p. 250

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 251

projecting Suleyman's authority and asserting his political role as the ultimate receiver and bestower of social well-being.



(Figure 2<sup>101</sup>)



(Figure 3<sup>102</sup>)

### III.V. The campaign

The campaign march in the Ottoman context may be considered not simply as an attempt to direct military assets along the optimal route to their objectives; it constituted an opportunity for Suleyman to assert his normative role through the imposition of discipline, displays of munificence and receiving political submission. In the case of the Hungarian campaigns, Suleyman applied discipline to ensure his army's adherence to Ottoman ideas of just behaviour and in so doing reaffirmed his role as the moral centre of the empire. Punishments were rigorously enforced against those soldiers who abused the *reaya*: 8 soldiers were put to death for infractions against the local population within the first 5 weeks of Suleyman's 1526 campaign while the 1529 campaign records the execution of a Sipahi for allowing his horse to trample the nearby fields.<sup>103</sup> Such enforcements were by no means limited to

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<sup>101</sup> Atil, pp. 112-113

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 149

<sup>103</sup> 'Journal de la quatrieme campagne', pp. 220-221; 'Journal de la cinquieme campagne de Souleiman contre roi d'Espagne' in Von Hammer-Purgstall, p. 229

military personnel. Local Ottoman officials were executed for abuses of power early in both the 1529 and 1532 campaigns.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, Kemalpasazade claims that Suleyman used the campaign as an opportunity for the dispensation of justice to his subjects directly while encamped at Sofia.<sup>105</sup> Suleyman also attempted to regulate the political order of the empire: abuses or slights towards the Janissaries were punished by execution while the Timar holders publicly had their estates stripped from them in cases where they have failed to meet their obligations to provide men and equipment.<sup>106</sup> From this, the Ottoman campaign can be seen as an opportunity for Suleyman to fulfil his normative obligations towards his subjects by protecting them against abuses. Simultaneously, however, Suleyman enforces the patterns of hierarchy and preference – defending the Janissaries' privileges and reminding the Timariot of their obligations.

The related obligation of the Sultan as the 'big-giver' of material and symbolic rewards was manifested on the Hungarian frontier. The campaign journals record Suleyman rewarding his commanders in return for actions of note: for his bold foray across the Drava, Yahya-Paschaoghli Balibeg is granted a land holding worth 9,000 aspres.<sup>107</sup> This granting of rewards in recognition of military success would also be applied to the entire army in certain cases, as witnessed during the same campaign after the fall of Peterwardein.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Suleyman would announce the provision of rewards before actions: before the assault on Vienna, the Sultan announced that the first man to breach the defences would be granted a promotion relative to his current rank.<sup>109</sup> This form of relative rewards is significant for it indicates that sultanic munificence was not simply a pre-battle incentive but also a means to reaffirm the patterns of political preference. Indeed, these were not entirely willing gestures on the part of Suleyman; recognition for service was expected, whether or not the broader objectives had

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<sup>104</sup> 'Journal de la quatrieme campagne', p. 228; 'Journal de la cinquieme campagne', p. 247

<sup>105</sup> Kemalpasazade, p. 34

<sup>106</sup> 'Journal de la cinquieme campagne', p. 248; *Ibid.*, p. 249]

<sup>107</sup> 'Journal de la troisieme campagne de Souleiman en Hongrie. Bataille de Mohacz, en 932 de l'heg (1526)' in Von Hammer-Purgstall, p. 223

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, p. 27

been achieved, as witnessed following the failed Siege of Vienna.<sup>110</sup> The consequences of Suleyman failing to fulfil these gestures of munificence were seriously illustrated following the Siege of Buda when the Janissaries began rioting in lieu of a demanded gratuity.<sup>111</sup> As with the application of justice, Suleyman directed his displays on campaign not only towards the army but also to his subjects – liberally dispensing rewards at major stopping points, such as Sofia.<sup>112</sup> Thus munificence was an exercise in recognition which enabled Suleyman to manage and strengthen the relations between military and civilian groups.

The campaign afforded the Sultan the opportunity to consolidate and project his authority through the receipt of submission and the punishment of rebellion. Brummett is correct to characterise the Ottoman campaign as an exercise seeking to confirm power relations between the sultanic centre and its frontier lords, a practice exemplified in the hand kissing ceremony which symbolised the submission and reincorporation of the kisser into the Sultan's favour.<sup>113</sup> The Hungarian campaigns are replete with such displays of submission which occur in the aftermath of both military successes and failures and are undertaken by both Suleyman's courtiers and foreign emissaries.<sup>114</sup> The campaigns were, therefore, used as arenas in which Suleyman could reassert his political status through these displays. The opposite extreme in these displays, and one neglected by Brummett, was the formal designation of Suleyman's opponents as rebels. Through this declaration of 'rebel', Suleyman was effectively removing all constraints upon the application of violence. Suleyman's execution of 2,000 Hungarian prisoners is comprehensible given that King Louis and his followers were repeatedly referred to as 'rebels'. They had therefore forfeited the Sultan's mercy and were justly deserving of

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<sup>110</sup> 'Journal de la quatrieme campagne', p. 231

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 230

<sup>112</sup> Kemalpasazade, p. 34

<sup>113</sup> P., Brummett, 'The Early Modern Ottoman Campaign: Containing Violence, Commemorating Allegiance and Securing Submission', *Eurasian Studies*, 3: 1, (2004), p. 70; P., Brummett, 'A Kiss is Just a Kiss: Rituals of Submission Along the East-West Divide' in M., Birchwood and M., Dimmock (eds.), *Cultural Encounters Between East and West, 1453-1699*, Cambridge Scholars Press, Newcastle, 2005, p. 108

<sup>114</sup> 'Journal de la troisieme campagne', p. 224; 'Journal de la quatrieme campagne', p. 231; 'Journal de la cinquieme campagne', p. 248

the subsequent campaign of pillaging and enslavement that followed Mohacs.<sup>115</sup> The journal makes further reference to the defenders of Budapest being 'declared rebels', the result being the massacre of prisoners taken.<sup>116</sup> Within Suleyman's campaigns, therefore, the Sultan was consolidating and projecting his authority by receiving displays of submission from both frontier lords and newly acquired vassals. Where this was rejected, Suleyman's use of violence further strengthened these relations by starkly demonstrating the consequences of being outside the Sultan's protection.

### **III. VI. Conclusion**

The conduct of Suleyman's campaigns on the Hungarian frontier reflected the Sultan's need to affirm the relations between himself, his army and his subjects. Rather than seeing the Ottoman army as a flawed instrument of the state, Suleyman's operational priorities should be viewed in the context of the Ottoman political order which saw the Sultan seeking to enforce normative relations between competing groups. This is evident during battles and sieges, where the political order was tested and vindicated, but also on campaign where discipline and munificence served to regulate the relationships between the Sultan and the component parts of the Ottoman system. In fulfilling this authoritative regulatory role, Suleyman's military campaigns in Hungary achieved a tangible form of success – the vindication of the Ottoman political order.

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<sup>115</sup> 'Journal de la troisieme campagne', p. 223; Kemalpasazade, pp. 127-130

<sup>116</sup> 'Journal de la quatrieme campagne', p. 230

## Conclusion

Suleyman's four campaigns on the Hungarian frontier served both the contingent political designs of messianic universalism but also the inherent political ideals and structures which governed his actions. Although Suleyman certainly possessed messianic universalist aspirations when initiating this series of military campaigns, these were contingent responses to the circumstances of the time, namely the universalist projections of Charles V. When he was unable to realise these objectives militarily, this 'messianic universalism' proved flexible enough to be rearticulated into an Islamic ideological direction. This paper has sought to demonstrate that these universalist displays constitute only the surface of the political frameworks and standards that shaped and directed Suleyman's use of force. Beneath this, Suleyman's campaigns can be viewed as expressions of his sultanic prerogatives; the Sultan was bringing justice to his subjects through the elimination of the tyrannical rule of Charles V. In the process, he was demonstrating his nominal commitment to the principle of *gaza* and exhibiting his divine favour while also creating and expanding a formidable martial reputation to be inscribed onto the memory of the dynasty. Within the conduct of these campaigns, Suleyman was not merely obeying the dictates of military expediency; whether in battles, sieges or on the campaign march, the Sultan was performing (in a literal sense) the normative obligations that held the component parts of his empire together and allowed for the incorporation of new subjects through the act of submission. In this sense, the lines of military success and failure are not as clear as have been implied. In adhering to these prerogatives and obligations on the Hungarian frontier Suleyman was, by the standards of Ottomans, succeeding. Furthermore, the Ottoman army appears not as a rational instrument but a grouping of political entities that required regulation through the sultan's normative relations.

This dissertation has sought to draw attention to the need to consider the Ottoman military in a political as well as an institutional context. If recent histories have succeeded in filling the void of archival analysis previously inhabited by generalisations, they risk reducing the Ottoman army to its functional qualities without situating it within its political landscape. When examining Suleyman's



military ambitions it must be considered that, besides his immediate political objects, the Sultan inherited the political expectations of the Ottoman Empire. The sultans did not exist in a political vacuum; even as they sought to structure their environment through policy, they were themselves structured by their position within Ottoman political frameworks and ideals.

From the perspective of the Ottoman polity, the Hungarian frontier was not only a space of territorial contestation or solely a launch-pad for messianic conquest. It was a space within which the Ottomans could construct and exhibit their understandings of an ideal political order with an ideal sultan at its centre. As Mustafa Ali relates: 'Justice means putting things in the places where they belong'.<sup>117</sup>

**Word count:** 9,997

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