



**SPECIAL FOCUS: UNVEILING UNCHARTED REALMS: THE OTTOMAN  
GRAND VIZIERATE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND THE KÖPRÜLÜ  
DYNASTY REVISITED**

## **The Early Career of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha: An Archival Reconstruction**

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### **Abstract**

The grand vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha (d. 1661) stands out as one of the most celebrated figures of Ottoman history, but despite his prominence, the basic contours of his earlier life remain largely unknown, and most of what is known derives from narrative accounts produced long after his death. This study utilizes archival sources to reconstruct Köprülü's career prior to his 1656 promotion to the grand vizierate. It reveals a major gap in the narrative sources: in 1653, when Köprülü is supposed to have been politically inactive, he was actually serving as a provincial governor in the sensitive region of Karaman in south-central Anatolia. At that time, a rebel faction was active in the area, and evidence indicates that Köprülü aligned with them. Elements of this faction, under Abaza Hasan's leadership, would later go on to rebel against Köprülü himself in 1658. Köprülü's ties to this rebel faction stand in sharp contrast to his later historical image as a paragon of order and central authority. An understanding of this period thus permits a reevaluation not only of Köprülü's political character, but also of how his supporters worked to construct his image in the aftermath of Abaza Hasan's rebellion.

**Keywords:** Köprülü Mehmed Pasha; Ottoman elites; Provincial government; Factionalism; Celali rebellions; Abaza Hasan

The appointment on 14 September 1656 of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha as grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire came as a surprise to his contemporaries. Although he would go on to become one of the most celebrated figures in Ottoman history, giving his name to an entire era, at the time he was not yet regarded as particularly important.<sup>1</sup> To illustrate this we could point to

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<sup>1</sup> The chronicler Mehmed Halife, who at the time was a servant in the palace's inner service (*enderun*), describes Köprülü as having been "poor, wretched, and nameless," such that "no one

the well-known work of Katib Çelebi (d. 1657), whose history covering the years 1591-1655 chronicles the exploits of dozens of contemporary political figures but does not mention Köprülü's name even once.<sup>2</sup> Köprülü become worthy of special attention only in retrospect following his spectacular term in office (1656-61) and the subsequent term of his son Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-76). By then he had become the progenitor of a virtual dynasty of grand viziers that would last, with interruptions, to 1710. Because of the suddenness of his rise to prominence, later chroniclers and biographers were left with fragmentary and contradictory information about his origins and early career.<sup>3</sup> Even matters as basic as his lineage and place of birth were subjects of controversy among his eighteenth-century biographers. It has been possible to clarify them only through the archival discoveries of modern historians.<sup>4</sup>

The present study aims to resolve some of the inconsistencies of these later sources by turning to archival materials dating to Köprülü's lifetime. The focus of my attention is his career as a provincial governor (*sancak beyi*, *beylerbeyi*), in particular the sequence of governorships that he held in the decade and a half prior to becoming grand vizier. In what follows, I present my reconstruction of this sequence, based on a variety of sources drawn from the Turkish Presidency State Archives of the Republic of Turkey, Ottoman Archives (Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA) in Istanbul. I have sought to clear up points of confusion and resolve contradictions present in earlier reconstructions. The result is a more grounded and reliable chronology than has been available heretofore.

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thought it appropriate for him to be appointed grand vizier or considered him important. It was as though they thought he would achieve nothing. When the pashas and beys outside the palace heard that he had become grand vizier, they were shocked and said, 'Hey now, even someone like Köprülü has taken the office! See what the times have come to!' But through God's command the opposite of what people expected came to pass." Mehmed Halife, "Tarih-i Gilmani," ed. Ertuğrul Oral (unpub. PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2000), 52. Na'ima states that "aside from some well-known figures who had been raised in the palace, no one at all considered it appropriate for Köprülü to be grand vizier." Na'ima Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 4 vols. ed. Mehmet İpşirli (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007), 4:1699.

<sup>2</sup> Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke [(Osmanlı Tarihi 1000-1065/1591-1655)]*, ed. Zeynep Aycibin, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> While incidental references to Köprülü's early career are scattered across a variety of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works, dedicated biographical accounts of his life and career are more limited. The most detailed include the chronicle of Silahdar Fındıklılı Mehmed Ağa (d. 1139/1726-27), "Zey-i Fezleke (1065-22 Ca.1106/1654-7 Şubat 1695) (Tahlil ve Metin)," ed. Nazire Karaçay Türkal (unpub. PhD diss., Marmara Üniversitesi, 2012); a biographical dictionary of grand viziers by 'Osmanzade Ahmed Ta'ib (d. 1137/1724), *Hadikatü'l-Vüzera* (Istanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matba'ası, 1271 [1855]), 104-06; and a family history of the Köprülüs by Behçeti Seyyid İbrahim Efendi (d. after 1151/1738), "Tarih-i Sülale-i Köprülü," ed. Mehmet Fatih Gökçek (MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> On the literary sources' conflicting claims regarding Köprülü's family, ethnic, and geographical origins, see Metin Kunt, "The Köprülü Years: 1656-1661" (unpub. PhD diss., Princeton University, 1971), 33-36; M. Fatih Çalışır, "A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Pasha (1661-1676)" (unpub. PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2016), 19-23.

I have found that archival sources diverge significantly from the literary accounts of at least one period of Köprülü's life, in a manner that invites us to reconsider his nature as a statesman. The literary sources depict him spending the period 1652-55 out of office, suggesting he was passively residing in his adoptive home town of Köprü in north-central Anatolia. Archival sources reveal that this was not the case. Instead, he became a governor in the south-central Anatolian province of Karaman. Furthermore, his tenure there coincided with the outbreak of a severe political crisis, in which Karaman became the site of a violent competition between two factions in the Ottoman military elite, each pushing claims to occupy administrative offices in the region. Köprülü became embroiled in this conflict, to the point of being accused by local taxpayers of ordering acts of violence against them. Furthermore, one side in the conflict was the so-called "rebel" or "Celali" faction of the governor of Aleppo, İbşir Mustafa Pasha (d. 1655), and Abaza Hasan Ağa (d. 1659). Years later, Abaza Hasan would lead a devastating rebellion against Köprülü in an attempt to topple him from the grand vizierate. However, against all expectations, the evidence indicates that Köprülü aligned himself with this "rebel" faction during the Karaman crisis. Consequently, the second half of this study will explore Köprülü's involvement in the crisis, along with its significance for understanding his connection to the faction of İbşir Mustafa Pasha and, more broadly, to the rebel and "Celali" movements against which he would later, as grand vizier, find himself opposed.

## The Reconstruction

The Ottoman archives preserve an enormous quantity of documentation that can shed light on the earlier stages of Köprülü's life. The main challenge, complicating every attempt at biographical and prosopographical study of Ottoman officialdom, is the problem of identification. The Ottomans had no surnames. Most officials' names consisted of an epithet (Köprülü meaning "from Köprü," modern Vezirköprü), followed by a given name (Mehmed), followed by a title (Ağa, Pasha). However, even these indicators are complicated by the fact that Köprülü acquired his epithet only very late in his life, and his given name was among the most common in use. Positively identifying any given "Mehmed Pasha" as Köprülü constitutes a challenge and is often possible only by cross-referencing multiple contemporary records. I have therefore tried to consult as wide a variety of sources as possible.<sup>5</sup>

Two sources in particular constitute the backbone of the present reconstruction. The first are provincial appointment registers, each consisting of a series of section headings organized by province. These registers list, in chronological order, all the governors appointed during the specified period, together with their dates of appointment. Unfortunately, very few such registers survive from the seventeenth century. Kamil Kepeci (KK) 266 and its copy,

<sup>5</sup> The difficulties of utilizing Ottoman archival materials for biographical and prosopographical purposes are noted by Metin Kunt in *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550-1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), xvi-xxii.

Cevdet-Dahiliye (C.DH) 6095, cover the period from 1632 to 1636, with supplementary entries extending as far as mid-1640.<sup>6</sup> Another mostly-complete register, Ruûs Kalemî Defterleri (RSKD) 1512, covers the period from 1641 to 1647. These registers are not without flaws: appointments are sometimes entered incorrectly or even left out entirely, as becomes apparent from a detailed comparison of KK 266 and C.DH 6095. Despite occasional inaccuracies, they constitute the best available source for the present study.

Ruûs registers constitute the second principal source. In contrast to the geographically organized provincial appointment registers, these registers are organized purely chronologically, and they consist of lists of appointments and grants of stipends authorized by the central government.<sup>7</sup> The type that I have made use of are the *ikindi ruûs* registers, recording appointments made at sessions of the imperial council (*divan-ı hümayun*) to provincial governorships, judgeships, professorships, administrations of pious endowments, and provincial fortress commands. *İkinci ruûs* registers survive in abundance from the early 1650s. Three registers, RSKD 1522, 1526, and 1529, together cover the period from August 1650 to October 1656. When placed alongside the provincial appointment registers, they permit a nearly seamless reconstruction of Köprülü's appointments as a provincial governor, with a gap only for the period 1647-50.

Köprülü was over eighty years old at the time of his death, thus scholars estimate that he was born around 1580, probably in the village of Rudnik (modern Roshnik) in Albania, which he refers to in an endowment deed as his "original home" (*vatan-ı asli*). According to his biographers, he was brought into the service of the imperial palace, where he worked as a cook for a very long time: he did not leave palace service until he was middle aged. Scholars have long hypothesized that he was recruited through the *devşirme*, the Ottoman Empire's periodic levy of Christian boys for dynastic service, but recent discoveries in the Istanbul court records contradict this and reveal that Köprülü was the grandson of a high-ranking palace cook named Mehmed Ağa. This family connection explains both his status in the kitchens as well as his unusually long period of service. In the early 1620s he won the support of Husrev Ağa, a ranking page of the sultan's privy chamber (*hass oda*), who helped him to advance within the palace hierarchy. Early in the reign of Sultan Murad IV (r. 1623-40), he left the palace and was rewarded for his years of service with membership in the prestigious cavalry branch of the sultan's household troops (the *altı bölük halkı*, "imperial cavalry"). It was probably in this capacity that he settled in the north-central Anatolian town of Köprü, from which he later acquired his epithet. According to one account, in 1628 he was functioning as the local commander of the imperial cavalry (*kethüda yeri*) in Amasya, the district capital, when his old patron Husrev, now the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire, passed through the city and recruited him into his household as his personal treasurer (*hazinedar*). He served in this function until his patron's dismissal and execution in 1631, but what happened afterwards is

<sup>6</sup> Metin Kunt describes this register in detail in *The Sultan's Servants*, 117-33, especially 131-33.

<sup>7</sup> Recep Ahışalı, "Ruûs," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (TDVİA)* XXXV (2008), 272-73.

far from clear. Without offering a precise chronology, the chronicler Silahdar claims that he held a series of offices in the central government, overseeing Istanbul's markets and cannon foundries, commanding regiments of the imperial cavalry, and becoming head of the corps of armorers (*cebecibaşı*).<sup>8</sup>

Köprülü's biographers do not depict him holding any provincial governorships in the 1620s and 1630s. However, there does exist an alternate tradition according to which he did hold such governorships. This alternative narrative derives from the historian Hüseyin Hüsameddin (d. 1939) and his magnum opus, *Amasya Tarihi*, or the History of Amasya. Based on a great variety of source material, much of which is no longer extant, Hüsameddin presents an extremely detailed local history of the city of Amasya, including a list of all of its governors. Without specifying a source, he asserts that Köprülü was appointed governor of the district (*sancak*) of Amasya on 13 Muharrem 1044/9 July 1634, and that he held this post until replaced by one Hüseyin Bey on 10 Şa'ban 1044/29 January 1635. He also claims that Köprülü was the governor of the district of Çorum in 1638, while participating in the campaign of Sultan Murad IV to reconquer Baghdad from the Shi'ite Safavid Empire of Iran.<sup>9</sup> However, these claims are contradicted by the relevant provincial appointment registers. Amasya's governors in the corresponding period were named Üveys Bey, Hüseyin Bey, and Elkas Pasha; there was no governor named Mehmed, nor anyone who could hypothetically correspond to Köprülü.<sup>10</sup> Amasya also possesses a surviving judicial register (*şer'îye sicilli*) from this period, in which there is no trace of Köprülü as governor.<sup>11</sup> Nor does Köprülü appear in the list of Çorum's governors.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in 1050/1640-41, a figure referred to as "Mehmed Ağa, the treasurer of the deceased Husrev Pasha" was appointed collector of the *cizye* (poll tax on non-Muslims) of Edirne. This must have been Köprülü, assuming that Husrev Pasha did not have two treasurers named Mehmed. However, if Köprülü had just recently become a provincial governor, it is unlikely that he would still carry the title *ağa* instead of *bey*, the title used by district governors. In the

<sup>8</sup> Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 33-49; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin and R.C. Repp, "Köprülü," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New ed. (E<sup>2</sup>), 5:256-63; Mücteba İlgürel, "Köprülü Mehmed Paşa," *TDVİA XXVI* (2002), 258-60; Halil İnalçık, *Devlet-i Aliyye. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar: Köprülüler Devri* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015), 27-62; Çalışır, "A Virtuous Grand Vizier," 19-44. Although there is no doubt that Köprülü became Husrev Pasha's treasurer, the timing and manner in which this occurred remains obscure. Hüseyin Hüsameddin's report that he was recruited while serving as *kethüda yeri* of Amasya is unique although, unfortunately, he provides no source for this claim. <sup>9</sup>Abdizade Hüseyin Hüsameddin, *Amasya Tarihi*, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Necmi İstikbal Matbaası, 1928), 4:53-54.

<sup>9</sup> Hüsameddin, *Amasya Tarihi*, 4:69-70, 81.

<sup>10</sup> BOA, C.DH 6095, fols. 19b, 22a. The precise chronology of these governorships is difficult to disentangle because a number of entries were written incorrectly ("*sehven*"), a product of confusion stemming from repeated transfer of the office between Hüseyin and Üveys.

<sup>11</sup> BOA, Amasya Şer'îye Sicilleri 03. On the other hand, the figure Hüsameddin identifies as Köprülü's deputy-governor (*mütesellim*), Kuloğlu Mehmed Ağa, does appear in the surviving judicial records as a prominent figure in the city.

<sup>12</sup> BOA, RSKD 1512, 57; KK 266, 58.

absence of further evidence, the notion that Köprülü served as a provincial governor during the 1630s should be regarded with skepticism.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of the 1640s, Köprülü returned to palace service, now heading a section of the outer palace (*birun*), as opposed to his earlier service in the inner palace (*enderun*). He did so with the support of the grand vizier Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha (1638–44), who like Köprülü was of Albanian origin, a factor that multiple sources identify as key in their association.<sup>14</sup> Silahdar states that he became *kapıcılar kethüdası* (head of the palace gatekeepers), while Behçeti refers to him as the *mirahur*, or stablemaster.<sup>15</sup> In reality he held both positions: he was appointed *kapıcılar kethüdası* in Receb 1051/October 1641, then *büyük mirahur* (chief stablemaster) in Zilka'de 1052/February 1643, holding this post until Cemaziülevvel 1053/August 1643.<sup>16</sup>

Köprülü's promotion to the rank of pasha and the beginning of his career as a provincial governor-general (*beylerbeyi*) followed immediately after his palace service. So far, scholars have relied on Silahdar's narrative to explain when and how this took place. According to his account, following the execution of his patron Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha in early 1644, the new grand vizier Sultanzade Mehmed Pasha decided to "expel" Köprülü from palace service, sending him to take charge of his first provincial governorship in the province of Trabzon.<sup>17</sup> However, archival evidence contradicts this aspect of Silahdar's narrative and indicates that his career took a rather different path.

Thus far, archival evidence has been used to verify one governorship of Köprülü not mentioned in the biographical sources. In an article published in 1960, Josef Blaskovics presented a document from the archives of Miskolc, Hungary, referring to Köprülü as having been, at some unspecified time, governor of the Hungarian province of Eğri (Hung., Eger). Blaskovics's discovery is an essential piece of evidence; any reconstruction of Köprülü's career must account for this data point and explain how and when he became Eğri's governor.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> BOA, MAD 4107, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Metin Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974): 233–39, esp. 236–37.

<sup>15</sup> Silahdar, "Zeyl-i Fezleke," 256; Behçeti, "Tarih-i Sülale-i Köprülü," 4.

<sup>16</sup> The precise timing of these appointments derives from the contemporary chronicler Topçular Katibi 'Abdülkadir Efendi, who identifies "the treasurer of the deceased vizier Husrev Pasha," as holding these positions during the specified period. See *Topçular Katibi 'Abdülkadir (Kadri) Efendi Tarihi (Metin ve Tahlil)*, 2 vols., ed. Ziya Yılmaz (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), 2:1158–59, 1169. In this edition "Husrev Pasha" is misread as "Hasan Pasha," but can be read in its correct form in the text's Istanbul manuscript: Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Esad Efendi 2151, fol. 313b. Additionally, a tax survey carried out in 1643 in the district of Amasya records the existence of Köprülü's household in the inner citadel (*dahil-i iç kal'a*) of the town of Köprü and refers to him as the palace's *kapıcılar kethüdası* (in the parlance of the scribal bureaucracy, *kethüda-i bevvabin*). BOA, Tapu Tahrir (TT) 776, 103. For the date of his exit from palace service, see below.

<sup>17</sup> Silahdar, "Zeyl-i Fezleke," 256.

<sup>18</sup> Josef Blaskovics, "Beiträge zur Lebensgeschichte des Köprülü Mehmed," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 11 (1960): 51–55. Blaskovics also identifies a particular Mehmed Pasha who governed Eğri in 1647 as Köprülü. As will be shown below, this identification is incorrect.

This question can now be re-examined in light of RSKD 1512, the provincial appointment register covering the period 1641-47. While none of the “Mehmed Pashas” in this document bear the name Köprülü, such an identification does occur in an account book containing a review of the fiscal obligations of the governors of Adana. This document concerns the year 1053/1643-44 but includes comments written in late 1061/1651, by which time Köprülü had begun to be known by his epithet. These comments identify him as one of Adana’s governors during the period in question.<sup>19</sup> This provides a starting point. The corresponding “Mehmed Pasha” in the provincial appointment register began as chief stablemaster of the imperial palace, just as we should expect. From there, he acquired his first governorship, Adana, on 18 Cemaziülevvel 1053/4 August 1643, became governor of Rum (also known as Sivas) on 19 Ramazan 1053/1 December 1643, was transferred to the district of Bolu in northern Anatolia on 1 Cemaziülevvel 1054/6 July 1644, and was appointed to govern Eğri on 22 Receb 1054/24 September 1644. This final point renders the identification definitive, leaving no doubt that this was Köprülü.<sup>20</sup>

A reference to Köprülü appears in a letter dated 25 Cemaziülahir 1054/29 August 1644, written to the future grand vizier Abaza Siyavuş Pasha by his *kapı kethüdası*, or agent in the capital. He informs the pasha that the district governor of Bolu, meaning Köprülü, somehow incurred the wrath of Sultan İbrahim (r. 1640-48). He writes:

As of the writing of this letter, Mehmed Pasha has been brought [to court] by imperial gatekeepers. When he arrived, [the Sultan], due to his great anger with him, called for the executioner, but then ordered him imprisoned. He is currently imprisoned at the Imperial Gate [at the entrance to Topkapı Palace], and it is unclear what will happen to him.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, the letter does not explain why this occurred, leaving this episode in Köprülü’s life rather mysterious.

<sup>19</sup> BOA, MAD 5597, 7. This register is titled *defter-i fihrist-i mukata’at-ı müteferrika tabi’-i kalem-i muhasebe-i evvel vacib ‘an gur-re-i Muharrem sene 1053* [catalog register of various revenue sources subject to the first accounting bureau, due from 1 Muharrem 1053/22 March 1643].

<sup>20</sup> BOA, RSKD 1512, 39, 49, 56, 70. The Mehmed Pasha governing Eğri in 1647, hypothesized by Blaskovics to be Köprülü, was a different individual, having been the sultan’s chief falconer (*doğancıbaşı*) prior to his appointment on 25 Ramazan 1056/4 November 1646. This figure is likewise misidentified as Köprülü in Szabolcs Hadnagy, “Köprülü Mehmed egri kormányzósága – egy oszmán államférfi életrajzának kérdőjelei,” [The Governorship of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha in Eger – Question Marks on the Career of an Ottoman Statesman] *Keletkutatás* (Spring 2010): 107-13; idem, “Köprülü Mehmed Paşa’nın Eğri Valiliği: Bir Osmanlı Devlet Adamının İdarecilik Hayatından Soru İşaretleri,” *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5 (2014): 25-34.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Abdülmü’min Ağa to Abaza Siyavuş Pasha, 25 Cemaziülahir 1054/29 August 1644. BOA, TSMa E 640/35. “Sivasdan ‘azl olunup Bolu verilen Mehmed Paşayı varaka tahririnde kapucular ile getirtilüp geldiği birle kendüye ‘azim gazab üzere cellad deyü hitabından sonra habs olunması emr olunup hala bab-ı hümayunda mahbus olup nice olacağı dahi bellü değildir.” On the function of the *kapı kethüdası*, see Michael Nizri, “Rethinking Center-Periphery Communication in the Ottoman Empire: The Kapı Kethüdası,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59 (2016): 473-98.



In any case, Köprülü was eventually freed and sent to govern Eğri. His time there was of special significance insofar as it coincided with the brief intervention of György Rákóczi I, prince of the Ottoman tributary state of Transylvania (r. 1630-48), in the Thirty Years War.<sup>22</sup> Beginning in February 1644, Transylvanian armies, in alliance with Sweden and France, set out to occupy the parts of Upper Hungary (largely corresponding to modern-day Slovakia) that were controlled by the Habsburg Monarchy. This region was directly adjacent to the Ottoman provinces of Buda and Eğri. Although Ottoman officials initially vacillated in their reaction to this development, by the time of Köprülü's appointment, Rákóczi had received clear orders from Istanbul to end his attack against the Habsburgs.<sup>23</sup> He would eventually submit to these demands, but in the meantime, according to Katib Çelebi, the task of convincing Rákóczi to withdraw fell to the two nearest Ottoman governors: that of Buda, Deli Hüseyin Pasha, and that of Eğri, whom Katib Çelebi leaves unnamed but whom we now know was Köprülü.<sup>24</sup>

The research of Szabolcs Hadnagy and Özgür Kolçak has demonstrated that Köprülü developed a personal hatred of the Rákóczi family stemming from his time as governor of Eğri. According to a September 1658 report of the Habsburg ambassador, György Rákóczi I sent Köprülü an insulting letter, which the pasha never forgot nor forgave. Whatever the precise cause of their rivalry, its long-term consequences were catastrophic for Transylvania. Rákóczi's son and successor, György Rákóczi II (r. 1648-60), pursued an active foreign policy to expand his personal and dynastic power. His military interventions in neighboring states culminated in 1657 with an invasion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then deeply embroiled in the Second Northern War with Sweden.<sup>25</sup> The younger Rákóczi's attempt to seize the

<sup>22</sup> Katalin Péter, "The Golden Age of the Principality (1606-1660)," in *History of Transylvania*, vol 2, *From 1606 to 1830*, eds. László Makkai, András Mócsy, and Zoltán Szász (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2002), 122-29.

<sup>23</sup> Petr Štěpánek, "War and Peace in the West (1644/5): A Dilemma at the Threshold of Felicity?" *Achiv Orientální* 79/2 (2001): 327-40; Gábor Kármán, "The Hardship of Being an Ottoman Tributary: Transylvania at the Peace Congress of Westphalia," in *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen: Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Arno Strohmeyer and Norbert Spannberger (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013), 163-67; Balázs Sudár, "The Principality of Transylvania and the Ottoman Province of Eger, 1596-1660," in *Tributaries and Peripheries of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Kármán (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 154-56.

<sup>24</sup> Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, 2:892-93. Katib Çelebi apparently had a special interest in the international diplomacy of this period: a collection of copies of diplomatic correspondence to and from central and eastern European heads of state (dated 1051-55/1641-46), discovered in the Dār al-Kutub library in Cairo, is attributed to him. See Z. Veselá Přenosilová, "Ein neuer Beitrag zur Korrespondenz der Hohen Pforte mit Siebenbürgen und seinen Nachbarländern," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 82 (1992): 439-44.

<sup>25</sup> Gábor Kármán, "György Rákóczi II's Attempt to Establish a Local Power Base among the Tributaries of the Ottoman Empire 1653-1657," in *Power and Influence in Southeastern Europe, 16th-19th Centuries*, ed. Maria Baramova, et al. (Berlin, 2013), 229-43; Géza Pálffy, *Hungary Between Two Empires 1526-1711*, trans. David Robert Evans (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), 159-61. On the Second Northern War, see Robert Frost, *The Northern Wars: War, State, and Society in Northeastern Europe, 1588-1721* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 156-83.



Polish-Lithuanian throne ended in disaster and invited an Ottoman military response. As grand vizier, Köprülü led a punitive campaign against Transylvania, plunging the principality into a devastating crisis. Köprülü's goal was not only to subdue Transylvania, but also to destroy Rákóczi personally. The vehemence with which Köprülü attacked Transylvania, targeting in particular the domains of the Rákóczi family, was not derived solely from reasons of state, but also stemmed from this long-lasting personal rivalry.<sup>26</sup> We may now date the beginning of the Köprülü-Rákóczi rivalry to 1644-45, when Köprülü was tasked with convincing the elder Rákóczi to heed the empire's warnings and desist from further attacks against the Habsburgs. By the end of his tenure in Eğri, this rivalry was thoroughly established: Rákóczi's ambassador in Istanbul, István Seredi, wrote to the prince to inform him that the grand vizier Sultanzade Mehmed Pasha was angry with Köprülü for his overly harsh treatment of Rákóczi, and that he would work to convince him to remove the pasha from his governorship.<sup>27</sup>

Köprülü remained in Eğri until Şevval 1055/December 1645. Both chronicles and archival sources confirm that his next appointment was to Damascus in Rebi'ülevvel 1057/April 1647, and a reference to Köprülü in a letter following this appointment refers to him as "the dismissed governor of Eğri." It is thus likely that he spent the intervening period out of office, perhaps due to his mishandling of the Rákóczi affair.<sup>28</sup> Sultan İbrahim ordered the incomes of Damascus to be converted into the personal domain (*hass*) of Şivekar Sultan, one of his influential concubines, and Köprülü was appointed deputy governor (*ka'im-makam*) on her behalf.<sup>29</sup> From the provincial appointment register we learn that he simultaneously held the district governorship of Jerusalem, explaining Behçeti's attribution of that city's governorship to him. He remained only a short while in these posts: in Şevval/November, after just seven months, he was replaced by another figure, also named Mehmed.<sup>30</sup>

Ottoman chroniclers, as well as Evliya Çelebi, next report that Köprülü was the governor of the south-central Anatolian province of Karaman in early 1648.

<sup>26</sup> Hadnagy, "Köprülü Mehmed egri kormányzósága," 109; idem, "Köprülü Mehmed Paşa'nın Eğri Valiliği," 28; Özgür Kolçak, "A Transylvanian Ruler in the Talons of the 'Hawks': György Rákóczi and Köprülü Mehmed Pasha," in *Turkey and Romania: A History of Partnership and Collaboration in the Balkans*, ed. Florentina Nitu et al. (Istanbul, 2016): 341-59, esp. 349-50.

<sup>27</sup> István Seredi to György Rákóczi I, 15 June 1645. Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Levelek és okiratok I. Rákóczi György keleti összekötetései történetéhez* [Letters and Documents for the History of the Eastern Contacts of György Rákóczi I] (Budapest, 1883), 846. I am indebted to Georg Michels for helping me understand this source.

<sup>28</sup> 'Abdülüm'min Ağa to Abaza Siyavuş Pasha, Rebi'ülevvel 1047/April 1647. BOA, TSMA E 272/44. Kunt expresses skepticism as to whether Köprülü really governed Damascus in "The Köprülü Years," 42; this view is further elaborated by Sultan Murat Topçu in *Güçün Mimariye Yansıması: Köprülüler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2015), 17. These interpretations both rely on Blaskovics' dating of Köprülü's term in Eğri to 1647, which now, having been revised to 1644-45, no longer presents a contradiction.

<sup>29</sup> Silahdar, "Zeyl-i Fezleke," 256; Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1110-11.

<sup>30</sup> BOA, RSKD 1512, 61; Behçeti, "Tarih-i Sülale-i Köprülü," 4. Thus, there need be no confusion as to why Na'ima refers to Köprülü Mehmed Pasha and "Mehmed Pasha the deputy governor of Damascus" as separate individuals. Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1132.

I have not been able to confirm this through archival documentation, as this period is not covered by provincial appointment registers or the surviving *ru'us* registers. However, given the variety and unanimity of contemporary literary sources regarding this appointment, there is no reason to doubt its veracity. From documents issued by Karaman's governors, we can see that there was indeed a Mehmed Pasha in office during this period. He took up the post in early 1648 (before 9 May) and remained in office until early 1649 (between 9 January and 5 March); we may infer that this figure was Köprülü.<sup>31</sup> During this time, Köprülü was tasked with combatting the rebellious governor-general of Rum, Varvar Ali Pasha. The latter defeated Köprülü's forces in battle and took him prisoner. Shortly thereafter, Varvar was himself defeated by another governor, İbşir Mustafa Pasha. İbşir thus rescued Köprülü from captivity, an event that likely played a role in the cooperative relationship that would later develop between them.<sup>32</sup>

Köprülü next became governor-general of the province of Anatolia, although the surviving *ru'us* registers do not provide his appointment date. According to Evliya Çelebi, this assignment took place during Melek Ahmed Pasha's term as grand vizier (Şa'ban 1060-Ramazan 1061/August 1650-August 1651) and lasted for only seventeen days before he was dismissed. Such a short term in office is not possible, because taxpayers in the district of Ankara sent a representative to the capital to accuse him of illegally seizing their wealth during his time as governor. He must at least have had time to travel to the province and begin taxing its inhabitants.<sup>33</sup> His actual date of appointment seems to have been either in late 1649 or, more likely, early 1650. It would have fallen between the last date at which his predecessor can be identified in office (13 Ramazan 1059/20 September 1649), and the first date at which Köprülü is referred to in the later *ru'us* registers (last third of Cemaziülevvel 1060/22-31 May 1650). His date of dismissal is more straightforward: he was replaced on 22 Şa'ban 1060/20 August 1650.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> In the absence of exact dates, we can achieve an approximation from the dates of documents issued by Karaman's governors in a contemporary *timar ruznamçe* register (BOA, DFE.RZ.d 636, 25, 84, 106). In this register, Mehmed Pasha's first appearance as governor is on 15 Rebi'ülâhır 1058/9 May 1648 and his last appearance is on 20 Zilhicce 1058/9 January 1649. The first appearance of his replacement, Hasan Pasha, is on 20 Safer 1059/5 March 1649.

<sup>32</sup> Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 42; Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1132; Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 2, ed. Zekeriya Kurşun, Seyit Ali Kahraman, and Yücel Dağlı (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 229-36.

<sup>33</sup> Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 43; Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol 5, eds. Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman, and İbrahim Sezgin (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2001), 52. The taxpayers' complaint is recorded in BOA, Ankara Şer'ıye Sicilleri 3, entry 550 and the *şikayet* register A.İDVNSŞKT.d 2:1091. The order written in response to these complaints is dated Şevval 1063/August-September 1653 but refers to events that took place years earlier, during Köprülü's time as governor of Anatolia.

<sup>34</sup> A number of documents issued by Anatolia's governors survive in another contemporary *timar ruznamçe* register (BOA, DFE.RZ.d 635, 47, 67, 92, 100). Köprülü's documents can be distinguished from those of his predecessor, Boynuyaralı Mehmed Pasha, in that the latter had the rank of vizier, while Köprülü did not. For Köprülü and his successor's *ru'us* entries, see RSKD 1520, 4, 6; RSKD 1522, 14.

In 1651, while out of office in Istanbul, Köprülü partnered with the Albanian eunuch Kasım Ağa, the palace's chief architect (*mi'marbaşı*) and steward (*kethüda*) of the queen mother (*valide sultan*) Turhan Sultan, in an effort to bring Köprülü into the high ranks of the empire's central administration as his friend and ally. Incidentally, this was the period when he acquired his epithet. Documents from before 1651, if they provide any identification at all, refer to him as "the former treasurer of Husrev Pasha," whereas from this point onward he is consistently known as "Köprülü."<sup>35</sup> He won a seat on the imperial council in what was intended as a preliminary step toward becoming grand vizier in place of Kasım Ağa's rival, Gürcü Mehmed Pasha. Gürcü Mehmed, however, reported to the *valide sultan* that the two were conspiring to engage in "disorder and troublemaking" (*fitne vü fesad*), and convinced her to banish them from the city. Köprülü was appointed to govern the district of Köstendil in Bulgaria (17 Zilhicce 1061/1 December 1651); the official record of this appointment repeats the language of disorder and troublemaking from the grand vizier's petition.<sup>36</sup> Two days later, Köprülü was struck another blow: while reviewing its old account books, the finance department determined that the arrears owed by the grand vizier's brother Ca'fer Pasha for the governorship of Adana in 1643 were in fact owed by his successor, Köprülü. The bureaucrats, perhaps acting on the grand vizier's orders, claimed that Köprülü collected revenues that should have gone to Ca'fer, and so required him to pay the treasury over 400,000 *akçes*.<sup>37</sup> A few months later, the grand vizier went even further, ordering the exiled and bankrupt Köprülü to travel to Crete, where he was to assist Ottoman armies in the ongoing war against Venice. Turhan Sultan regretted this course of events and ordered not just Köprülü, but all banished pashas to return to the capital.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Examples include the chronicle of Topçular Katibi (d. c. 1054/1644), in which he lacks even a name and is simply "the treasurer of the deceased vizier Husrev Pasha" (*Topçular Katibi*, 2:1158-59), a treasury *ruzmançe* entry from Muharrem 1051/April-May 1641, which refers to him as "Mehmed Ağa, treasurer of the deceased Husrev Pasha" (*Mehmed Ağa hazinedar-ı merhum Husrev Paşa*) (BOA, KK 1835, 92), and the letter to Abaza Siyavuş Pasha from Rebi'ülevvel 1057/April 1647, in which he is "Mehmed Pasha, who emerged from being the deceased Husrev Pasha's treasurer" (*merhum Husrev Paşa hazinedarlığından çıkma Mehmed Paşa*) (TSMA E 272/44). In other cases, he is simply called "Mehmed Pasha" and distinguished only by his most recent office, as in the provincial appointment register from the late 1640s (RSKD 1512), as well as in a 1054/1644 petition of the grand vizier Sultanzade Mehmed Pasha, in which he is "the Mehmed Pasha who was dismissed from Sivas" (*Sivasdan ma'zül Mehmed Paşa*) (TSMA E 798/28). Similarly, in the Cemaziülahır 1054/August 1644 letter to Abaza Siyavuş Pasha he is "the Mehmed Pasha who was dismissed from Sivas and given Bolu" (*Sivasdan 'azl olunup Bolu verilen Mehmed Paşa*) (TSMA E 640/35). The earliest instance I have encountered in which he is called "Köprülü" is Sultan Mehmed IV's note to the grand vizier granting him a seat on the council in 1651, which reads, "You who are the grand vizier, [know that] I have granted the rank of *kubbe vizier* [council member] to Köprülü Mehmed Pasha" (*sen ki vezir-i a'zamsın Köprülü Muhammed Paşaya kubbe vezirliği ihsan eyledim*) (TSMA E 779/11).

<sup>36</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1372-73; Silahdar, "Zeyl-i Fezleke," 256; BOA, TSMA E 532/7; RSKD 1522, 186. "Köprülü Mehmed Paşanın nefy olunan Mi'mar [Kasım Ağa] ile fitne içinde bile bulunup da'ima fesadı mukarrer olmağın. . . ."

<sup>37</sup> BOA, MAD 5597, 7.

<sup>38</sup> BOA, TSMA E 751/48. On these events see Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 43-45, as well as a recent reappraisal by Jane Hathaway in light of the role played by the Chief Harem Eunuch, Lala Süleyman

Another pasha was appointed to govern Köstendil in Cemaziülahır 1062/May 1652, so Köprülü's return to Istanbul must have taken place at this time.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the short term of his banishment, this event is traditionally regarded as a turning point in Köprülü's life. According to his biographers, he spent the following years out of office. Behçeti claims that he returned to his adoptive home town of Köprü and remained there until early 1655, when the newly appointed grand vizier İbşir Mustafa Pasha called him to become governor-general of Trablus-Şam (Tripoli in Syria).<sup>40</sup> This traditional narrative does not stand up in light of archival evidence. The *ru'us* registers reveal that after his return from exile, Köprülü again became a provincial governor with two more postings: to Karaman on 12 Safer 1063/12 January 1653 and to Beyşehir (a district of Karaman province) on 28 Receb/24 June of the same year. Rather than retiring to Köprü, he returned rather quickly to political life.<sup>41</sup>

### Köprülü and the Faction of İbşir Mustafa Pasha

In his widely cited doctoral thesis, the late Metin Kunt made note of several passages in the chronicle of Na'ima that testify to a link between Köprülü and the "rebel" faction of İbşir Mustafa Pasha and his close ally Abaza Hasan Ağa. In contrast to the usual characterization of Köprülü as a paragon of order and good government, Kunt interpreted these passages as depicting a Köprülü who was "unscrupulous in his dabblings in the power politics of his time, to the extent of associating with rebellious factions."<sup>42</sup> However, the paucity of the evidence meant that beyond this vague impression, the context in which this association took place remained mysterious. In light of Köprülü's previously unknown terms as governor of Karaman and Beyşehir in 1653, we are now positioned to revisit the question of his affiliation with the faction of İbşir Mustafa Pasha. That year witnessed the outbreak of a political crisis in Karaman in which İbşir and his followers were central actors. In the section that follows, after reviewing the evidence tying Köprülü to this faction, I will consider its implications for understanding the course of his career and the

Ağa: *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 102.

<sup>39</sup> BOA, RSKD 1522, 263.

<sup>40</sup> Behçeti, "Tarih-i Sülale-i Köprülü," 4; Osmanzade, *Hadikatü'l-Vüzerâ*, 105; Silahdar is the only source to hint at an alternative, claiming Köprülü spent part of this time "suffering in some insignificant (*çürük*) offices," while also occasionally being imprisoned for debts. "Zeyl-i Fezleke," 256.

<sup>41</sup> BOA, RSKD 1526, 119, 183. A grand vizier's petition to the sultan concerning the first of these appointments is still extant, although previously misdated to 1648, the year of Köprülü's first term as Karaman's governor (BOA, TSMA E 798/9). This document must refer to Köprülü's 1653 appointment, as it identifies the governor who preceded him as Ahmed Pasha, who appears as his predecessor in the *ru'us* registers (BOA, RSKD 1526, 48). Furthermore, the petition claims that Köprülü had been waiting in Istanbul for a new office "for a long time" (*hayli zamandan berü*). There cannot have been a long gap between his dismissal from Damascus in November of 1647 and his appointment to govern Karaman at the beginning of the following year. Yet in January 1653 he had been waiting in Istanbul for at least half a year following his recall by Turhan Sultan.

<sup>42</sup> Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 47.

reputation that he would later acquire as an intractable opponent of this very same rebel movement.

İbşir Mustafa Pasha (or simply İbşir Pasha) was a governor in Anatolia during the 1640s. In 1651, he became the head of a faction that would ultimately elevate him to the position of grand vizier. This faction was born of a confluence of interests between İbşir Pasha and Abaza Hasan Ağa, the leader of a coalition of imperial cavalrymen in rebellion against a junta of janissary officers who then dominated the Ottoman central government. İbşir Pasha's support for this rebellion helped it to decisively defeat loyalist armies in Anatolia and pressure the central government into negotiation. As a result, the faction's notables acquired several lucrative offices in provincial administration, while İbşir himself became the governor of Aleppo, his new stronghold. There he proclaimed his commitment to a reformist agenda: he would eliminate the bribery and corruption he saw afflicting the empire's ruling class, end conflict between the imperial cavalry and janissary corps, and improve the conditions of provincial government to the benefit of both governors and subjects. Whether because of these promises of reform or out of fear of the substantial strength of his faction, İbşir was appointed grand vizier in November 1654, and arrived in Istanbul in February of the following year. There, after failing to fulfil promises he had made to the imperial cavalry, his faction split in two. Opponents of İbşir organized an uprising in Istanbul, bringing about his dismissal and execution. Abaza Hasan Ağa and his ally Seydi Ahmed Pasha claimed leadership over the İbşir loyalists; this group retreated to Anatolia, hoping to take revenge on their patron's killers and gain new offices for themselves.<sup>43</sup>

There are two pieces of evidence in Na'ima's chronicle pointing to the existence of a substantial relationship between Köprülü Mehmed Pasha and İbşir Pasha's faction. The first occurs in the context of İbşir's appointment as grand vizier, when he set about replacing the existing governors of several provinces in Anatolia and Syria. The new appointees were all figures with whom İbşir had preexisting relationships and whom he trusted to uphold his authority. Köprülü was one of their number: he was İbşir's chosen appointee to Trablus-Şam (Tripoli in Syria), a post he held until İbşir's execution a few months later.<sup>44</sup> İbşir must therefore have regarded him as a trustworthy and reliable figure. The second piece of evidence is Na'ima's claim that Köprülü joined the army of Abaza Hasan and Seydi Ahmed in the aftermath of İbşir's execution in 1655. Although the chronicler does not explain in what capacity he did so, Köprülü's involvement was active enough to leave him with a permanent grudge against Kara Mustafa Pasha, Aleppo's governor and one of their opponents whom Köprülü later sought to execute.<sup>45</sup> These two events

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Whitehead, "Rebellion, Reform, and Taxation in the 17th-Century Ottoman Empire: The Struggles of the Imperial Household Cavalry" (unpub. PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2023), 140-200.

<sup>44</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 4:1568, 1634.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:1736. Evliya Çelebi and Karaçelebizade also place Köprülü with the army of Abaza Hasan and Seydi Ahmed during this period. Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, 5:310; Karaçelebizade 'Abdülaziz Efendi, *Ravzatü'l-Ebrar Zeyli (Tahlil ve Metin)* ed. Nevzat Kaya (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), 334.

indicate a connection between Köprülü and İbşir Pasha's faction. This connection can be further elucidated by examining the events of 1653, while İbşir was governor of Aleppo and Köprülü governor of Karaman.

In that year a serious political crisis broke out affecting much of central Anatolia, centered on the province of Karaman. It concerned the pastoral-nomadic confederation of the Boz Ulus Turkmen, administered jointly by a tribal leader (*mir-i 'aşiret*) and an Ottoman-appointed tax collector (*voyvoda*). This latter post was one of several acquired by the faction of İbşir Pasha following the negotiated end to their 1651 rebellion, and it was thereafter administered by one of their members, an imperial cavalryman from Konya named Hadım Karındaşı Hasan Ağa ("Hasan Ağa the brother of the eunuch"). Hasan Ağa was unable to form a working relationship with the *mir-i 'aşiret*, Yusuf, and toward the end of 1652 the latter issued a formal complaint to the capital, accusing Hasan Ağa of abusing his authority in order to loot the Turkmen's wealth and property. Hasan Ağa was dismissed from his post and replaced as *voyvoda* by a wealthy and well-connected member of the Istanbul elite, Rıdvan Ağa. Not all within the Boz Ulus supported this change. In February, while Yusuf and Rıdvan Ağa were passing through the semi-steppe region to the south of Ankara, a large party of Turkmen suddenly attacked them. Rıdvan Ağa survived the encounter, but Yusuf was killed and the office of *mir-i 'aşiret* passed to his son 'Ali. Rıdvan Ağa retreated to Ankara and began to recruit an army in the hope of enforcing his and 'Ali's authority, while Hasan Ağa proceeded to gather forces of his own, drawing on the resources of İbşir Pasha's faction. By April, the region between Ankara and Konya was swarming with mercenaries. Conflict between the two claimants to the Boz Ulus devolved into open warfare, and the violence soon spread to other Turkmen groups as well.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout this period of intensifying conflict, Köprülü was serving as the governor of Karaman. As noted above, chroniclers do not comment on the role that he played, nor even mention his presence. Na'ima even replaces him with someone else entirely, claiming that Karaman's governor was Çuvalcı Hasan Pasha, who was in reality the governor of Anatolia province.<sup>47</sup> The fact that Hadım Karındaşı Hasan Ağa was able to maintain the upper hand in the conflict and reside comfortably in Konya indicates that Köprülü was not hostile to him. That being said, he was not required to be: the Ottoman government issued orders for Hasan Ağa not to interfere with Rıdvan Ağa's authority over the Boz Ulus but did not yet go so far as to brand him a rebel, despite the ongoing violence. The grand vizier, Derviş Mehmed Pasha, sought to maintain friendly relations with İbşir Pasha's faction for the time being, and over the course of

<sup>46</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1442-3; BOA, MAD 2836, 47, 49; A.İDVNSŞKT.d 2:442, 745, 926. Onur Usta, "Celâlîliğin Türkmen Cephesi: 17. Yüzyıl Anadolu Kırsalında Türkmen Voyvodası ve Türkmenler," *Kebikeç* 33 (2012), 61. In Muharrem 1063/December 1652, the saltpeter works of Akşehir were attacked by bandits (*eşkiya*) who looted the supplies stored there, possibly in connection with these events. (BOA, D.BŞM 154/22, 155/38). On the origins, structure, and administration of the Boz Ulus Turkmen, see Tufan Gündüz, *Anadolu'da Türkmen Aşiretleri: Bozulmuş Türkmenleri 1540-1640* (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> BOA, RSKD 1526, 68; TSMA E 644/32.



the summer made peaceful overtures to Hasan Ağa and other factional notables to that end.<sup>48</sup>

The turning point in Hasan Ağa's fortunes came after Köprülü's dismissal from the governorship of Karaman in June. His successor was Suhte Mahmud Pasha, a local notable of Adana and Tarsus with experience governing across southern Anatolia and Cyprus.<sup>49</sup> In a brief anecdote, Katib Çelebi reports that the new governor aligned himself with another of Konya's local notables, a turncoat from İbşir Pasha's faction named Helvacı Mehmed Ağa, and that the two together expelled Hasan Ağa from the city.<sup>50</sup> Conflict in the surrounding region continued, and in early December the grand vizier finally took decisive action. He issued an order declaring Hasan Ağa an outlaw and demanding that he be seized and put to death, then appointed one of his personal followers as *voynoda*, rejecting both of the competing candidates.<sup>51</sup> This seems to have had the desired effect: by April 1654, the fighting had ceased. The grand vizier pardoned Hasan Ağa and invited him to Istanbul. There, he dressed him in a ceremonial robe of honor, signaling that the crisis had come to an end.<sup>52</sup>

What of Köprülü's role in these latter stages of the conflict? Following his dismissal from the governorship of Karaman, he was transferred to the district of Beyşehir, still within the region affected by the ongoing violence. An important piece of evidence survives regarding this period. From an entry in a fragment of a register of complaints (*şikayet*), we learn that in September 1654, a man from the Boz Ulus came to the capital to issue a complaint against Köprülü, describing events that must have occurred in the lead-up to the winter of the previous year:

Order to the governor of Karaman, and to the former governor of Karaman Köprülü Mehmed, long may they prosper: A man named Hacı Cümdi from the Boz Ulus Turkmen submitted a petition to my felicitous threshold, informing me that you, the aforementioned former governor of Karaman, sent the head of your gatekeepers (*kapıcılar kethüdası*) with three hundred mercenaries and a man of yours named Hüseyin on a night attack in the vicinity of Beyşehir against the aforementioned [Hacı Cümdi] while he was on the way to his winter pastures, seizing and imprisoning thirty-three of their men and wounding four, taking 340 *guruş* [large silver coins] and a horse, looting their other possessions, and engaging in excessive oppression and troublemaking (*zulm u fesad*). As the aforementioned requested that [the perpetrators] be summoned to my felicitous threshold, I have hereby ordered that the aforementioned [perpetrators] be summoned to my felicitous threshold.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1467-68, 1487-88; TSMA E 644/33.

<sup>49</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1386-87, 4:1835. For Cyprus, see BOA, RSKD 1526, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Katib Çelebi, *Fezleke*, 2:1072.

<sup>51</sup> Kayseri Şer'îye Sicilleri 63, 157; BOA, MAD 396, 42.

<sup>52</sup> TSMA D 1995, fol. 29b.

<sup>53</sup> BOA, A.DVN.ŞKT.d 981, 6. "Karaman beğlerbeğisine ve sabıka Karaman beğlerbeğisi Köprülü Mehmed, dame ikbalühümaya, hükm ki: Boz Ulus Türkmânından Hacı Cümdi nam kimesne südde-i sa'adetime 'arzuhal sunup sen ki sabıka Karaman beğlerbeğisi-i muma-ileyhsin: mezkur kışlağına gider iken Beğşehir nahiyesinde



Here, in unambiguous terms, we find Köprülü accused of ordering acts of violence against members of the Boz Ulus during his time in Beyşehir. Unfortunately, the circumstances of this episode are less than clear. Essential context is lacking: who was Hacı Cüdi, and why did Köprülü attack him? How was this incident connected to the wider conflict over the Boz Ulus? Reports in the *şikayet* registers are concise and typically provide only the bare minimum of background explanation. Nevertheless, this entry reveals that Köprülü took some part in the conflict, maintaining a force of mercenaries and making use of them to serve his purposes. In this instance his target was a group from the Boz Ulus, but to whom did their allegiance belong? The answer is suggested by İbşir Pasha's subsequent bestowal of favor upon Köprülü. Had Köprülü been a supporter of Rıdvan Ağa, it would be unlikely for İbşir Pasha thereafter to consider him trustworthy. Yet had he supported Hasan Ağa, it would explain how he won İbşir Pasha's favor and became his choice to govern Trablus-Şam.

There are two avenues through which Köprülü could have become affiliated with İbşir's faction. The first is his prior experience with İbşir and his possible attraction to the latter's reformist rhetoric. As noted above, in 1648 Köprülü was defeated in battle by the rebel Varvar Ali Pasha, and it was İbşir who rescued him from captivity. This experience might have been the catalyst for a cooperative relationship. İbşir promised to eliminate corruption in government and restore conditions that would better serve both provincial governors and the subjects over whom they presided. He and his followers were sometimes given the pejorative label "Celali," but they staunchly rejected this characterization, and saw themselves as the advocates of justice against those elements in Ottoman government that had, in their view, become corrupted. There was much about this that Köprülü could find appealing. After his recent political failure in Istanbul, aligning himself with İbşir's faction would have given him a new means of building a name for himself.<sup>54</sup>

Another factor linking Köprülü to İbşir's faction was his shared regional ties with İbşir Pasha and, even more directly, Abaza Hasan. Following the work of Metin Kunt, Ottomanist historians have devoted substantial attention to what he termed "ethno-regional solidarity," the phenomenon by which Ottoman elites formed relationships with one another on the basis of shared ethnic origin (*cins*).<sup>55</sup> Thus, it was common for Bosnians to align with other Bosnians, or Abkhazians with Abkhazians. The relationship between İbşir Pasha and Abaza Hasan is one example of this, referred to as such in several chronicle accounts.<sup>56</sup> So too were the ties between Köprülü and some of his Albanian

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*üç yüz nefer sekban ile kapuçular kethüdan ve Hüseyin nam adamınla gönderüp gece ile basup otuz üç nefer adamların ahz ü habs ve dört nefer kimesneyi mecruh edüp ve üçyüz kırk gurusların ve bir re's atın alup ve sa'ir erzakların garet edüp ziyade zulm u fesad eylediklerin bildirüp mezbur asitane-i sa'adetime ihzar olunmak babında emr-i şerifim rica etmeğin mezburlar asitane-i sa'adetime ihzar olunmaları emrim olmuştur. Tahriren fi evasit-ı Zilka'de sene 1064."*

<sup>54</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1360 for İbşir's faction's rejection of the Celali label.

<sup>55</sup> Kunt, "Ethnic-Regional (Cins) Solidarity."

<sup>56</sup> 'Abdurrahman 'Abdi Paşa, *Vekayi' -namesi [Osmanlı Tarihi (1648-1682)]*, ed. Fahri Ç. Derin (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), 42; Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 3:1358.

patrons, such as Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha and Kasım Ağa. As an Albanian, part of a broader category of “western” ethnic groups hypothesized by Kunt, Köprülü’s heritage was at odds with that of “easterners” like İbşir and Abaza Hasan. Thus, in referring to their shared regional ties, I have in mind something different from the concept of *cins* solidarity. What they had in common was not their ethnic-regional origin prior to entering Ottoman service, but the region in which they settled after doing so.

Köprülü acquired his epithet as a result of settling in the town of Köprü, part of the district of Amasya in the larger central Anatolian province of Rum. However, outside the context of his philanthropic activity, scholars have not tended to regard this as more than an incidental biographical detail. One gets the impression that his career would have taken the same path had he settled in any other place. In fact, the town played a key role in shaping the Köprülü household. He became exceedingly well-established there, marrying into its regional elite and recruiting locals into his household retinue. His wife, ‘Ayşe Hanım (d. 1674), was the daughter of Hacı Yusuf Ağa, whom Evliya Çelebi depicts as one of the town’s foremost notables and who is described in a document from 1643 as its *Za‘im*, or chief.<sup>57</sup> Köprülü’s son-in-law, the future grand vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha (1676–83), is the most famous of the many local figures whom he brought into his household. Kara Mustafa Pasha hailed from the nearby town of Merzifon, and one can find examples of other household officers from Amasya, Tokat, Turhal, and, of course, Köprü.<sup>58</sup>

İbşir Pasha’s main site of residence was Tokat, capital of the wider province to which Köprü belonged. Evliya Çelebi reports that İbşir’s wife Perihan was living there in 1648, and other sources make clear that İbşir owned extensive properties in and around the city; the steward of his household, Bayram Ağa,

<sup>57</sup> BOA, TT 776, 103; Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, 2:205–6. Yusuf Ağa’s name is listed first in the town’s ‘avarız tax survey, ahead of Köprülü himself. The meaning of the term *za‘im* is ambiguous. It can refer to the holder of a *zi‘amet*, a medium-sized revenue grant in the context of the empire’s *timar* system, given to mid-level administrators and officeholders. It can also be a synonym of the Turkish term *subaşı*, an urban official often likened to a chief of police, who usually also held a *zi‘amet*.

<sup>58</sup> As grand vizier, Köprülü appointed a number of his household officers (termed *sahib-i devlet ağaları*) to oversee the collection of extraordinary taxes for his military campaigns against the Venetian-occupied island of Tenedos (Bozcaada) in 1657 and Transylvania in 1658. Records of these taxes, noting the identities of the collectors, thus constitute an important source for the manpower of the Köprülü household. Compiling several examples of these yields six officers from Köprü, one from Havza, one from Tokat, and two from Turhal. The only other place from which more than one officer hailed was Erzurum, with two examples (BOA, MAD 2998, 24, 54–56; MAD 3856, fol. 18b; MAD 12585, 17; KK 2624, 62; KK 2625, 45, 61). Turhal’s prominence is surely related to Köprülü’s establishment an early pious foundation there, on which see Metin Kunt, “The Waqf as an Instrument of Public Policy: Notes on the Köprülü Family Endowments,” in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Prof. V. L. Ménage*, eds. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1994), 194. Köprülü appointed a third figure from Turhal, Turhallı Ca‘fer Ağa, first as ‘ulufeciyan-ı yesar ağası in 1657 and then *silahdaran ağası* in 1658; these were the commanders of the fourth and second regiments of imperial cavalry (BOA, MAD 2998, 5); *Rumeli Sadâreti Mahkemesi 106 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1067–1069 / M. 1656–1658)*, ed. Coşkun Yılmaz (Istanbul: İSAM, 2019), 759. In addition, Köprülü granted membership in the imperial cavalry to six men from Köprü in the aftermath of the reconquest of Tenedos (BOA, KK 261, 33).

also had a mansion there. İbşir designated some of his income-producing properties in Tokat to support the large charitable foundation he established in Aleppo, and after his execution, a special agent was dispatched there to oversee the confiscation of the rest of his possessions, valued at nearly a million *akçes*.<sup>59</sup>

But in this context, İbşir was actually a less important figure than Abaza Hasan. Chroniclers have nothing to say about the famous rebel before his emergence as a major officeholder in 1648, but archival evidence can be used to reconstruct elements of his career prior to that point. He was already serving in the army as a member of the imperial cavalry in 1629. Three years later, we find him referred to by one scribe as “Amasyalı Abaza Hasan,” which may have referred either to the city itself or to the district of which it was the capital. Whatever the case, the district was comprehensively surveyed in 1643 for taxation purposes, allowing us to identify Abaza Hasan’s exact place of residence: it was none other than Köprü. Abaza Hasan and Köprülü Mehmed shared one and the same home town.<sup>60</sup>

Like Köprülü, Abaza Hasan was well-connected with local society, forming marriage ties with the town’s elites. Evliya Çelebi notes the existence of a village near Köprü belonging to “Hamamcıoğlu,” this being the name of Abaza Hasan’s son-in-law and the steward (*kethüda*) of his household.<sup>61</sup> Another son-in-law named Beyzade Siyavuş owned an agricultural estate (*çiftlik*) in the town’s vicinity. After Abaza Hasan’s 1658 rebellion, the state confiscated these properties along with others belonging to locals whom Abaza Hasan had recruited into his household. The choicest properties then passed into the possession of the Köprülü family, sold to Köprülü’s son Fazıl Ahmed Pasha and to Kara Mustafa Pasha. Another estate, located in the village of Kayacık in the judicial district of Havza, came to be owned by Köprülü’s wife ‘Ayşe Hanım.<sup>62</sup> These relationships and properties reflect Abaza Hasan’s status as one of Köprü’s most prominent local notables, second only to Köprülü himself. Abaza Hasan’s presence in Köprü was such that if history had turned out slightly differently, he might have come to be known as “Köprülü Hasan Pasha.”<sup>63</sup> These connections lend plausibility to the incredible claim made by a contemporary chronicler whose work has only recently been discovered: that ‘Ayşe Hanım, the wife of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, was the sister of the wife

<sup>59</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, 2:227. On İbşir’s endowment in Aleppo, see Jean-Claude David, *Le waqf d’İbşir Paşa a Alep (1063/1653): Etude d’urbanisme historique* (Damascus: Institut Français d’Etudes Arabes, 1982); Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 155–74. An itemized list of İbşir’s objects, livestock, and landed estates confiscated from Tokat is contained in BOA, MAD 6597, 24–27. On Bayram Ağa’s mansion, see the *hükm* in D.BŞM.d 201, 18.

<sup>60</sup> For Abaza Hasan’s early career: BOA, RSKD 1498, 29; KK 2573, 9. For his appearance in the survey of Amasya: TT 776, 107. Evliya Çelebi also seems aware that Abaza Hasan maintained his primary residence in Köprü: *Seyahatnamesi*, 2:205.

<sup>61</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, 2:205.

<sup>62</sup> BOA, D.BŞM.d 201, 31; IE.ML 11/955, 51; IE.DH 19/1781; KK 1951, 67, 75; İSTM.ŞSC.20.d 107, fols. 171b–172a. Abaza Hasan’s personal residence in Köprü was also seized and sold at auction.

<sup>63</sup> There is even precedent for such a name: Hüseyin Hüsameddin was somehow aware of Abaza Hasan’s ties to Köprü and refers to him in his *Amasya Tarihi* as “Köprülü Abaza Hasan” (4:121).

of Abaza Hasan. If true, it means that the two men were not only neighbors – they were family.<sup>64</sup>

### The Rebel and the Reformer

The revelation that Köprülü Mehmed was closely linked to Abaza Hasan casts his association with İbşir's faction in an entirely new light, suggesting that Abaza Hasan played a central role in inducting Köprülü into the faction. It also forces us to reconsider the nature of Abaza Hasan's 1658 rebellion, which sought to topple Köprülü from power. Three chroniclers writing at court in the 1660s – Hasan Vecihi, Mehmed Halife, and 'Abdurrahman 'Abdi Paşa – created the basic narrative framework for this event. These authors depicted the rebellion as a monumental clash between distant rivals of diametrically opposed ideologies.<sup>65</sup> According to this paradigm, Köprülü stood for order and just government, while Abaza Hasan and his "Celali" following represented an endemic disorder and oppression that only Köprülü could resolve. This paradigm pervades the Ottoman chronicle tradition and has left a lasting impression on modern interpretations of the rebellion. Yet Köprülü Mehmed and Abaza Hasan turn out not to have been opposites. Rather than eternal enemies, they were neighbors and allies, or even family. Their relationship is ripe for reexamination.

After İbşir Pasha's death in May 1655, Seydi Ahmed and Abaza Hasan – later joined by Köprülü – fought to avenge their former patron by attacking those whom they considered responsible for the soldiers' uprising that had killed him. The state declared them rebels, but this condition lasted only for a few months. After negotiations with the central government, they regained their status as legitimate officeholders: Seydi Ahmed became governor-general of the province of Rum, and Abaza Hasan became the collector of some of its principal taxes.<sup>66</sup> Köprülü simply went home to Köprü, but this does not mean that they parted ways: all were headed in the same direction. He left home again the following summer to join the government of the newly appointed grand vizier Boynuyaralı Mehmed Paşa. He became a confidant of the vizier who, in

<sup>64</sup> Anonymus, "Anonim Osmanlı Vekayinâmesi (H.1058-1196/M. 1648-1694)," ed. Ramazan Aktemur (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2019), 112. For the original, see Anonymus, *Anonim Osmanlı Kroniği*, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Hazine Koleksiyonu 1468, fol. 36a. The Turkish term for their relationship is *bacanak*, which can only awkwardly be rendered in English as "co-brother-in-law."

<sup>65</sup> Hasan Vecihi, *Tarih-i Vecihi*, Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Hamidiye 917, fols. 58b-67a; Mehmed Halife, "Tarih-i Gilmani," 58-68; 'Abdurrahman 'Abdi Paşa, *Vekayî' -namesi*, 122-32. Vecihi (d. 1661) was a bureaucrat of Crimean origin who once held a high rank in the household of Köprülü's erstwhile patron, the grand vizier Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Paşa. Mehmed Halife was a high-ranking page in the *enderun* and completed his history in 1665. 'Abdurrahman 'Abdi Paşa (d. 1692) served in the *hass oda* of Mehmed IV and began writing his chronicle in the 1660s following the sultan's orders. For their biographies, see Abdülkadir Özcan, "Vecihî Hasan Efendi," *TDVİA* XLII (2012), 586-87; Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Mehmed Halife," *TDVİA* XXVIII (2003), 489-90; Fahri Çetin Derin "Abdi Paşa, Nişancı," *TDVİA* I (1988), 74-75.

<sup>66</sup> Specifically, the *bedel-i nüzül* for the years 1066/1655-56 and 1067/1656-57. BOA, MAD 3028, 27; MAD 12585, 89; Amasya Şer'iye Sicilleri 11, 83.

Na'ima's words, "taught him how to handle intricate policy with regard to numerous matters." At the same time, Abaza Hasan also came into the vizier's favor and was appointed governor-general of Diyarbekir, and Seydi Ahmed was placed in command of the Ottoman navy as grand admiral. It is striking to observe that in the summer of 1656, the fortunes of all three were still moving in unison.<sup>67</sup>

Köprülü became grand vizier on 14 September 1656. The same day, Abaza Hasan's agents submitted specially prepared gifts to the sultan.<sup>68</sup> Köprülü's appointment was a phenomenal boon to Abaza Hasan and his allies: Köprülü quickly promoted him to the rank of vizier and in January 1657 appointed him governor-general of Aleppo, the former stronghold of İbşir Pasha. He held this post with unusually wide authority: in addition to the governorship, he also received control over the province's largest tax farms: the customs administration (*gümrük*) and rural revenues grouped under the label *dimus*.<sup>69</sup> Many of his allies acquired new offices as well. To name but one particularly relevant example, Hadım Karındaşı Hasan Ağa regained his old post as *voyvoda* of the Boz Ulus Turkmen.<sup>70</sup> The importance of their shared "home town" is reflected in the assignment of Süleyman Ağa, the local commander of the imperial cavalry (*kethüda yeri*) of Köprü, as collector of some of Aleppo's war-time taxes.<sup>71</sup> As late as March 1658, Abaza Hasan was still receiving new licenses to collect emergency revenues for the sake of the upcoming campaign against Transylvania, mere months before his ill-fated rebellion. Had Köprülü considered this rebellion a possibility, it is unlikely that he would have been willing to entrust him with such a crucial task.<sup>72</sup>

It is sometimes asserted that Köprülü's appointment of Abaza Hasan to govern Aleppo was only a concession, meant to temporarily placate a disloyal and hostile figure whom he always intended to destroy.<sup>73</sup> Such an interpretation depends on our foreknowledge of later events and Abaza Hasan's posthumous reputation. Contemporary evidence points to the simpler likelihood that Köprülü saw him as an ally. Köprülü helped Abaza Hasan consolidate power in Anatolia and northern Syria. He was cognizant of the dangers of Istanbul politics and was determined not to share the fate of their former patron

<sup>67</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 4:1681, 1697; BOA, RSKD 1529, 277.

<sup>68</sup> TSMA D 1995, fol. 40a.

<sup>69</sup> On the *dimus* see Charles L. Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 148.

<sup>70</sup> BOA, MAD 9845, 48; MAD 4391, 28, 73.

<sup>71</sup> Süleyman Ağa collected the *bedel-i sürsat* from the province of Aleppo for the year 1067/1656-57. BOA, MAD 12585, 17.

<sup>72</sup> BOA, MAD 2998, 30. The *bedel-i beldar* was a special tax of 500 *akçes* levied from each nominal household unit (*avarızhane*) in Anatolia and Syria, ostensibly as a substitute for supplying the army with conscripted logistical manpower. Abaza Hasan was appointed to oversee collection of this tax from the provinces of Aleppo, Ayntab, and Maraş. Köprülü also permitted him to enroll several of his personal followers in the imperial cavalry in December 1657 (BOA, KK 261, 37, cited in Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 101).

<sup>73</sup> İlgürel, *Abaza Hasan Paşa İsyanı*, 205.

İbşir Pasha. By supporting Abaza Hasan, he ensured that he would have a place to turn should his position in the capital become unstable.

The first break occurred in Köprülü's relationship with Seydi Ahmed. According to Evliya Çelebi, the two had serious disagreements already in late 1655. In December 1656, Köprülü sought to distance him from the capital by appointing him governor-general of Bosnia. Seydi Ahmed's followers among the imperial cavalymen in Istanbul mutinied in an effort to reverse this, hoping to have their patron appointed grand vizier in Köprülü's stead. Köprülü responded by rallying the janissaries in the capital, suppressing the mutiny with force and hunting down suspected ringleaders. Although Seydi Ahmed agreed to leave for Bosnia, Köprülü came to view him as a dangerous rival and finally ordered his execution four years later, in 1660.<sup>74</sup>

The earliest evidence of a breach in the relationship between Köprülü Mehmed and Abaza Hasan is an anecdote related by Na'ima. He first presents a narrative transmitted from the contemporary chronicle of Karaçelebizade (d. 1658). In 1657, Köprülü ordered the execution of one Kara Mustafa Pasha, then governor of Egypt. This figure had been the enemy of Seydi Ahmed and Abaza Hasan while Köprülü was present in their army, and he bore a grudge against him thereafter. Kara Mustafa fled overland to Anatolia, and as he passed by Aleppo, Köprülü ordered Abaza Hasan to apprehend and kill him. In Karaçelebizade's account, although Abaza Hasan attempted to carry out this order, he failed in his task. Na'ima then contrasts this narrative with another that he heard "from some notables of Aleppo," according to which Abaza Hasan intentionally allowed Kara Mustafa to escape. He was beginning to feel uncomfortable with Köprülü's gratuitous execution of his political rivals, and "either out of fear of God's vengeance, or out of reluctance to be involved in such repugnant matters," decided to let his victim go.<sup>75</sup>

After becoming grand vizier, Köprülü became notorious for executing anyone who appeared to challenge his rule, to the extent that many accused him of being outright bloodthirsty.<sup>76</sup> Literary sources agree that fear of Köprülü was the primary motivation for Abaza Hasan's rebellion. Observing Köprülü's callous execution of high officials and massacres of mutinous soldiers, Abaza Hasan and his followers became convinced that he would turn on them too. They decided to act first by assembling an army and demanding his dismissal and execution. One chronicle, that of an enigmatic figure named Nihadi, breaks with the rest in voicing support for Abaza Hasan. Nihadi portrays him as an innocent victim of Köprülü's plotting. For him, the rebellion was the

<sup>74</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, 5:310; Kunt, "The Köprülü Years," 48, 63-64, 98.

<sup>75</sup> Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 4:1736-38. For Karaçelebizade's original version, see *Ravzatü'l-Ebrar Zeyli*, 334.

<sup>76</sup> Evliya Çelebi calls Köprülü bloodthirsty, contrasting the severity of his behavior with his benign appearance (*şeyh-suret amma hunhar-siret*). *Seyahatname*, 5:136. 'Abdi Pasha relates a story from Fazıl Ahmed Pasha, who claims to have heard the chief mufti Bursevi Mehmed Efendi (1659-62) celebrating Köprülü's death, saying "he shed a great deal of blood unjustly." *Vekayî-namesi*, 153. More distant chronologically, Silahdar likewise uses the term bloodthirsty ("Zeyl-i Fezleke," 257) and Osmanzade Ahmed Ta'ib accuses him of doing more evil than good, being "fearless in killing people and in rending the curtain of honor" (*Hadikatü'l-Vüzerâ*, 106).



unavoidable consequence of Abaza Hasan's discovery that Köprülü planned to have him killed, from which he was unable to escape even by offering to retire from public life. He rebelled in the name of stopping Köprülü's plan to execute all the empire's experienced statesmen to become its "absolute ruler."<sup>77</sup> For pro-Köprülü writers, Abaza Hasan's fear was a function of his innate rebelliousness and evil nature; he knew that Köprülü would inevitably punish a man such as him. Typical of this view is Hasan Vecihi (d. 1661), a court-affiliated bureaucrat who wrote at the end of Köprülü's term in office. For Vecihi, Abaza Hasan was "an evil-natured bandit, inclined toward oppression and troublemaking; if it were necessary to summarize the oppression he inflicted upon the empire's subjects in the name of self-enrichment, such a summary would resemble a detailed book." Vecihi pairs his evaluation of Abaza Hasan's particular character with a general description of the disorder and corruption afflicting the empire, linking them by claiming that all manner of oppressors, when called to justice for their actions, "would take refuge under his protection," leading to "the destitution of prosperous villages, even famous towns," as the lands of the empire were systematically looted. Abaza Hasan appears here as a personification of the collectivity of the empire's brigands, oppressive tax collectors, and tyrannical governors, his factional following consisting of no more than "scoundrels and bandits" hoping to escape justice even while privately admitting that they were deserving of death. Vecihi's account became the basis of Na'ima's influential portrayal of Abaza Hasan's rebellion, copied almost verbatim into his history.<sup>78</sup>

Demonization of Abaza Hasan became a central component of Köprülü's image, justifying the harsh and bloody measures for which he was so often criticized. At the outset of the rebellion, the Köprülü-appointed chief mufti Bolevi Mustafa Efendi (1657-59) issued a fatwa accusing the rebels of openly renouncing Islam and seeking to establish an independent state in Anatolia. Although far-fetched, these claims helped create an image of Abaza Hasan and his rebellion as an existential threat to the empire.<sup>79</sup> Following his victory, Vecihi depicts Köprülü as the man who "cleansed the face of the earth of rebels," and busied himself with destroying "the people of disorder and troublemaking."<sup>80</sup> Writing a few years later, the bureaucrat Katib Mustafa Zühdi praises Köprülü for eliminating the rebels who "trod upon the world with their evil actions," restoring order to the land.<sup>81</sup> In his family history of the Köprülü's,

<sup>77</sup> Nihadi, "Tarih-i Nihadi (152b-233a) (Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirme)," ed. Hande Nalan Özkasap (MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2004), 37-45. "Na-hakk yere bunca kimesneleri katl edüp paşalardan iş görmüş kimesne kalmadı. Her birine birer illet bulup öldürdi. Bunun muradı cümleten melik olmaktadır."

<sup>78</sup> Hasan Vecihi, *Tarih-i Vecihi*, fols. 58b-59b; Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 4:1784-85.

<sup>79</sup> A version of this text is preserved in BOA, Ankara Şer'îye Sicilleri 44, entry 342. While the first of these claims is not repeated by Ottoman chroniclers, the second, isolated from its original propagandistic context, does appear in the chronicle of Mehmed Halife in a manner clearly indicating that the fatwa was his source. Na'ima subsequently integrated this narration into his own chronicle. Mehmed Halife, "Tarih-i Gilmani," 62; Na'ima, *Tarih-i Na'ima*, 4:1789.

<sup>80</sup> Vecihi, *Tarih-i Vecihi*, fols. 50b, 59b.

<sup>81</sup> Katib Mustafa Zühdi, "Mustafa Zühdi Ravzatü'l-Gazâ (Tarih-i Uyvar) (1663-1665) Tahlil ve Metin," ed. Merve Yılmaz (MA thesis, Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, 2012), 3.



Behçeti echoes these sentiments by likening Köprülü to a bridge across which the Ottoman state could find peace after suffering at the hands of “the people of rebellion and troublemaking.”<sup>82</sup> The image of Köprülü presented in these works places him fundamentally at odds with Abaza Hasan and his following. Köprülü stands here as their polar opposite, the “restorer of the state” (*musahhih-i devlet*) who brought their reign of terror to an end. These images of the rebel and the reformer complemented one another and developed in tandem.<sup>83</sup>

In reality Köprülü was not as disconnected from these rebels as he has been made to appear. Kunt was correct in suggesting that Köprülü nurtured ties to the faction of İbşir Pasha. In the years prior to his appointment as grand vizier, Köprülü became a governor in Karaman, took part in the 1653 Boz Ulus crisis, and aligned himself with İbşir Pasha. After İbşir’s death, Köprülü maintained his association with Abaza Hasan, and granted him offices and titles after becoming grand vizier. Rather than a distant political opponent, Abaza Hasan was his neighbor, ally, and perhaps even family. Despite Köprülü’s reputation as a staunch opponent of all “rebels,” he could, at one point, have been counted among them.

## Conclusion

This investigation has revised the standard chronology of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha’s career and revealed him to be a substantially different figure than previously thought. Scholars normally attribute the severity of Köprülü’s rule to a deep ideological commitment to order and obedience to authority. This is not a man who should have aligned himself with rebels, and yet we find him doing just that. Moreover, Köprülü’s allies turn out to be the very same “Celalis” against whom he fought as grand vizier. In the face of this incongruity, we would do well to lay aside the old dichotomy between the stern, order-loving Köprülü and the subversive, ungovernable Celali rebels. That paradigm was the creation of court-affiliated chroniclers in the 1660s who sought to legitimize the violent means through which the Köprülü family had achieved its unprecedented concentration of power. Stepping beyond this paradigm means coming to terms with the contested nature of Köprülü’s rule and taking seriously his contemporary critics. It also means questioning chroniclers’ villainizing portrayal of Abaza Hasan and his “Celalis.” The latter, after all, by no means agreed with that label, which is why I have placed it in quotes throughout this article.

<sup>82</sup> Behçeti, “Tarih-i Sülale-i Köprülü,” 3. For an earlier use of the bridge metaphor, playing on the meaning of the word *köprü*, see *Risâle-i Kürd Hatib: Dördüncü Mehmed Saltanatında İstanbul*, ed. H. Ahmet Arslantürk and Murat Kocaaslan (Istanbul: Okur Akademi, 2014), 34, quoted in Çalışır, “A Virtuous Grand Vizier,” 12.

<sup>83</sup> For surveys of attitudes toward Köprülü, contemporary and modern, see Çalışır, “A Virtuous Grand Vizier,” 7-17; Cumhuriyet Bekar, “Köprülü Mehmed Paşa’nın Osmanlı Tarih Yazımında Değişen Algısı,” *Tarihyazını* 1 (2019): 62-78. The term “*musahhih-i devlet*” is derived from a marginal note in Nihadi’s manuscript written by Hasan Ağazade ‘Abdullah Efendi, whose father Gümruk Emmini Hasan Ağa was killed by rebels in the *Çınar Vak’ası* revolt of 1656 when he was six months old. “Tarih-i Nihadi,” 29. On Hasan Ağazade see Fahri Ç. Derin, “Mustafa II. ya Dâir bir Risale,” *Tarih Dergisi* XI, 13 (1958): 45-70.

Köprülü's alliance with İbşir Pasha and Abaza Hasan also has something to tell us about contemporary forms of elite networking. Scholars today follow Metin Kunt in recognizing solidarity based on ethnic-regional origin as an indispensable part of Ottoman factional politics. But Ottoman elites were not limited to the regional ties they were born with. The frequent rotation of provincial governors can mislead us into thinking that they lacked local ties. Most pashas appear at first impression to be rootless, moving across the empire without a single home, except perhaps in Istanbul. This impression often breaks down upon closer inspection. Despite the practice of rotation, Ottoman grandees did establish roots in particular locales, and these locales played important roles in shaping their politics, relationships, and careers. In Köprülü's case, this is apparent in his very name: when it came time for him to adopt an epithet, his association with Köprü became his defining characteristic. Although a "westerner" by ethnicity, he was, with minor exceptions, a governor of the eastern provinces of the empire. His household's residence in Köprü firmly grounded him in Anatolia, where he served seven of his eleven terms as governor. It was in Köprü that he forged connections with the "Celali" faction of İbşir Pasha and Abaza Hasan. Köprülü's case demonstrates what is to be gained from considering regional solidarity based not only on birth, but also on the ties that Ottoman elites created for themselves.

Finally, Köprülü is also a reminder of what we can gain from questioning the biographical narratives related by literary sources, especially those produced long after the events that they describe. Earlier scholars have addressed his eighteenth-century biographers' conflicting accounts of his ethnic and regional origin, and now we have seen that they also had a generally poor understanding of the course of his early career. This is not necessarily because these biographers were trying to obfuscate the facts. His governorships in Karaman in 1653 and his connections with İbşir Pasha's faction simply had no relevance for his image as it developed in the decades after his death. Like so many other details, they had, by the time of these authors' writing, already come to be forgotten. As it stands, chronicles and biographical dictionaries such as these still form the basis of much of our understanding of seventeenth-century Ottoman history. We will be on firmer footing when we have more fully utilized the contemporary archival record to supplement, question, and critique them.

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## Appendix: Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's Provincial Governorships

Adana ( <i>eyalet</i> )	18 Cemaziülevvel – 19 Ramazan 1053 4 August – 1 December 1643
Rum/Sivas ( <i>eyalet</i> )	19 Ramazan 1053–1 Cemaziülevvel 1054 1 December 1643–6 July 1644
Bolu ( <i>sancak</i> )	1 Cemaziülevvel – Cemaziülahır 1054 6 July 1644 - August 1644
Eğri ( <i>eyalet</i> )	22 Receb 1054 – Şevval 1055 24 September 1644 – December 1645
Damascus ( <i>eyalet</i> , as deputy-governor) and Jerusalem ( <i>sancak</i> )	Rebi'ülevvel – Şevval 1057 April – November 1647
Karaman ( <i>eyalet</i> )	Early 1058 – Early 1059 Early 1648 – Early 1649
Anatolia ( <i>eyalet</i> )	Early 1060–22 Şa'ban 1060 Early 1650–20 August 1650
Köstendil ( <i>sancak</i> )	17 Zilhicce 1061 – Early (Cemaziülahır?) 1062 1 December 1651 – Early (May?) 1652
Karaman ( <i>eyalet</i> )	12 Safer – 28 Receb 1063 12 January – 24 June 1653
Beyşehir ( <i>sancak</i> )	28 Receb 1063 – ? 24 June 1653 – ?
Tripoli ( <i>eyalet</i> )	Rebi'ülahır – Receb 1065 February – May 1655

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