As Timur’s armies were withdrawing from Anatolia, Isa appeared at first to be the prince best poised for success there in the ensuing struggles for the Ottoman throne. Unlike his brother Mehmed, whose power base was in the peripheral and only recently Ottoman province of Rum, by November of 1402 Isa was making claims over his family’s original heartland of Bithynia, and may have already controlled Bursa. As we saw in the last chapter, after Timur’s armies sacked Bursa in early August, Timur assigned the city to an Ottoman protégé of his, the son of Bayezid I’s brother Savcı. It is not known exactly how Isa was able to take power from this son of Savcı, but the records of the Genoese colony of Pera make it clear that by January 1403, Isa was viewed as the dominant Ottoman ruler in Anatolia (dominans in Turchia).1

Isa’s rule in Bursa was not long. The records of Pera inform us that by 18 May of the same year, his brother Mehmed Çelebi had replaced him as ruler of Bursa.2 The decisive event for this power change was the Battle of Ulubad, which should be dated sometime between 9 March (the death of Yıldırım Bayezid) and 18 May 1403.3 Mehmed owed his victory largely to an alliance with the ruler of the beylik of Germiyan Yakub II. After his defeat at Ulubad, Isa took refuge in Constantinople with the Byzantine Emperor John VII. But by 18 May 1403, he had returned to Anatolia through the intercession of his brother Emir Süleyman, who had a treaty with Byzantium. Emir Süleyman was supporting Isa’s claims over Bursa in an effort to weaken his two broth-

1 Iorga, Notes et Extraits (ROL), 85.
2 Iorga, Notes et Extraits (ROL), 85. Zachariadou (Süleyman Çelebi, 284–285) has erroneously read “die … Madii” as March rather than May. It is clear from p. 80 of Iorga’s edition that entries made in March appear as “die … Marcii,” and madius is a common medieval form of the classical maius; see Du Cange et al., ed., Glossarium Medie et Infinae Latinitatis (Paris: Librairie des sciences et des arts, 1937–1938). May also fits the description of the Ahval much better (see below).
3 As we will see below, the account of the Ahval makes it clear that the battle should be dated not long after the death of Yıldırım Bayezid (9 March 1403).
ers in Anatolia by pitting them against each other, thus preparing the ground for his own operations on the Asian side of the straits.

Meanwhile, during Isa’s absence, Mehmed had taken advantage of his victory to present himself as heir to Yildırım Bayezid’s legacy in Anatolia. Entering Bursa, a city of crucial political importance, Mehmed held enthronement ceremonies and funeral services there for his father, further proclaiming his rule over the area by striking a coin on which his name appears alongside that of Timur. But Isa soon returned to Anatolia, and the region was plunged once again into civil war. Probably with an army provided by Süleyman, Isa first occupied the province of Karasi, then took the northwestern Anatolian towns of Beypazarı and Sivrihisar. After carrying out a military operation against Karaman, he descended on Bursa. But the city remained loyal to Mehmed, and Isa was forced to besiege and burn it. This led to another confrontation between the two brothers, which was again won by Mehmed. Following his second defeat, Isa made an alliance with Isfendiyar of Kastamonu, whose armies he used to attack Ankara and confront Mehmed for a third time near Gerede. Once again, Isa was defeated, and formed yet another alliance against his brother, this time with Cüneyd and the beyliks of western Anatolia. But in the meantime, Mehmed had formed alliances of his own with the beylik of Karaman and the tribal confederacy of Dulkadir, which was rich in horses and horsemen. Mehmed’s important alliance with Dulkadir was cemented by his marriage to a Dulkadırid princess. Probably with the assistance of his new allies, Mehmed was able to defeat Isa and Cüneyd—according to several Ottoman chronicles, Isa fled to Karaman but was unable to stay there, and was eventually caught and strangled in Eskişehir. While the details and chronology of Isa’s battles with Mehmed are somewhat unclear, it appears that by September of 1403 Isa was dead and Mehmed was once again in control of Bursa and Ottoman Anatolia. But Mehmed’s supremacy did not last long. By March 1404, his powerful brother Emir Süleyman had crossed the straits and occupied Bursa.

The Ahval provides an extensive and lively account of Mehmed’s struggles with Isa. Unfortunately, the dearth of other sources makes it difficult to corroborate its account, which presents certain problems of chronology. The Ahval creates the impression that Mehmed’s last three battles with Isa took place in 1404, while in fact it is clear from Clavijo and a document issued by Süleyman in March of 1404 that by that time, Süleyman had already crossed the straits and taken