As we saw in the last chapter, in a series of campaigns probably taking place in the spring and summer of 1403, Mehmed Çelebi succeeded in wresting control of Bursa and the rest of Ottoman Anatolia from his brother İsa. The struggles between the two brothers involved the Turkish beyliks of Anatolia, which formed alliances supporting one or the other claimant to the Ottoman throne. After these events, for a short time Mehmed was the uncontested ruler of Ottoman Anatolia. But as soon as İsa was eliminated, Emir Süleyman gathered a large army from Rumeli and crossed the straits. Mehmed’s forces were not powerful enough to resist him, since he had on his side most of the Ottoman army that had survived the Battle of Ankara; moreover, with the exception of tribal elements in Rum and Dulkadır, now few Anatolian leaders had an interest in supporting Mehmed since he had become too powerful and was a threat to their existence as independent rulers. In a short time, Süleyman’s supremacy would enable Mehmed to regain allies among the beyliks of Anatolia.

In this manner, Süleyman was able to occupy most of Ottoman Anatolia, while Mehmed withdrew once again to Rum. Süleyman was unable to penetrate Rum, since it was Mehmed’s stronghold, and a long stalemate ensued which lasted for approximately five years. It finally ended when Süleyman’s enemies in Anatolia and Rumeli united against him in support of Mehmed, who had devised a plan to send Musa to Rumeli as a diversion. With the support of the Voivoda of Wallachia and the raiders of Rumeli, Musa began to gain control of Rumeli, eventually forcing Süleyman to return there (14 June 1410). Not surprisingly, after Süleyman’s departure, Bursa came once again under the control of Mehmed.

Because of the stalemate between Mehmed and Süleyman, in Anatolia the period 1404–1409 was by far the quietest in the civil war. After Süleyman’s initial operations in 1403–1404 in which he made great territorial gains, the overall situation there seems to have reached a bal-
ance which was only occasionally interrupted by skirmishes between Süleyman, Mehmed, and the beylik of Anatolia. In Rumeli also, thanks to Süleyman’s treaties, conditions remained relatively peaceful until the arrival of Musa. However, some limited operations do appear to have taken place during this time under various local frontier lords (uc begleri). Unfortunately, the fact that the period was mostly uneventful means that our sources on it are limited to a few passages in the chronicles, which while intriguing are difficult to interpret in the absence of substantial documentary evidence. Unlike the earlier struggles between Mehmed and Īsa that form the subject of the previous chapter, or the later ones involving Musa to which we will turn in the next two, the fact that the conflict between Süleyman and Mehmed was played out almost entirely in the Anatolian hinterland made it of little interest to foreign powers such as Byzantium or Venice. As a result, few outside reports have survived on this period, leaving us with no alternative but to try to glean from the chronicles what conclusions we can, based on an overall understanding of the situation at the time.

*Emir Süleyman’s Conquest of Bursa and Ankara*

As we saw in the last chapter, when the Castilian ambassador Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo disembarked on Chios in September of 1403, he received news that Īsa had been killed and that his brothers were fighting over the throne of “Turchia.” It is therefore likely that by this time Emir Süleyman had already crossed to Anatolia, or was preparing to do so. Süleyman’s haste should come as no surprise, since the elimination of Īsa meant that Mehmed had strengthened his position in Anatolia and had to be dealt with immediately before he got any stronger. While the precise timing of Süleyman’s crossing to Anatolia is uncertain, it is clear that by March of 1404 Süleyman was in Bursa, since he issued a document from there. Moreover, when Clavijo passed through the Black Sea towns of Harakleia Pontika (Bender Ereğlisı) and Samsun on his way to Trebizond in spring 1404, he found those towns under the control of Süleyman.

---

1 See above, chapter 2.
2 Clavijo, ed. Estrada, 69, 73; See also Zachariadou, “Süleyman Çelebi,” 291.