

Ventures into the Reign of Osman: A New Consensus on Early Ottoman Historiography

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When exploring early Ottoman history a modern historian must delineate between fact and purposeful misinterpretation. Over the past century, Historians have debated the origins of the Ottoman Empire. Much discussion has been devoted to the notion that the early Ottomans were devoted *gazis*, warriors of the Islamic faith. Despite this proclivity, historical discourse has begun to move away from such an incorrect assumption. Contemporary historians, such as Colin J. Heywood, Cemal Kafadar, Colin Imber, Heath W. Lowry, and Rudi Paul Lindner, have all devoted much thought and research to discovering the solution to this historiographical quandary. The role of the *gazi* in Ottoman historiography should not be dismissed entirely, but a new comprehensive analysis must be constructed which fully incorporates the political, economic, geographical, and cultural nuances of middle age Anatolia and Europe.

Before discussing the evolution of the Ottoman Empire, one must understand that contrary to contemporaneous Byzantine histories composed during the early fourteenth century, there lies no distinct chronology of events. Even the very date of the empire's founding lies somewhere in the constellation of the unknown; Ottoman tradition, however, points to the empire's founding in 1299, although evidence points that it could have been established anywhere between 1298 and 1304. Another difficulty inherent in Ottoman history is the nearly complete lack of resources from the time period in question. The two primary resources which have been examined tirelessly are Ahmedi's *History of the Ottoman Kings* and Asikpasazade's *History of the House of Osman*, both of which were composed nearly one hundred years after the events they seek to explain. Colin Imber argues these two resources represent nothing more than

oral tradition transcribed into popular literature, rather than a chronological history.¹ In fact, every single character and event, in both histories, were completely fictional, thus the primaries have little, if any, historical relevancy.² The primary exemplar is the character of Köse Mihal who supposedly assisted Osman in many of his conquests. He, however, did not exist and was purely an invention of Asikpasazade.³ Since the primaries themselves could be fabrications, skepticism is required when evaluating any history which utilizes these sources as quintessential to its thesis. Imber explained pre-Ottoman history thusly, “The best thing that a modern historian can do is admit frankly that the earliest history of the Ottomans is a black hole. Any attempt to fill this hole will result simply in the creation of more fables.”⁴

Every history composed by either the Ottoman court or by outsiders since, understood Ottoman tradition through the *Anonymous Chronicles*, the *History of Oruç*, and Asikpasazade’s work. Written in the beginning of the fifteenth century, these works share a no longer existent source which provides for them a commonality in dating.⁵ Imber outlined how historians will generally accept these “canonical” histories as incorrect in detail, but correct in terms of the general events and themes. Other contemporary histories composed by foreigners form what he considered as “apocrypha”. The memories of a Serbian, Konstantin Mihailović, are an exemplary apocryphal document. However, the only remaining intact writings found have been in Polish, Czech, or Church Slavonic, none of which were his native language.⁶ His work, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, reflected Ottoman dynastic tradition, with regard to the purported Seljuk Sultan

¹ Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300-1481* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), 1-2.

² Colin Imber, “The Legend of Osman Gazi,” in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)*, ed. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 1993), 67-73.

³ Colin Imber, “Canon and Apocrypha in Early Ottoman History,” in *Studies in Ottoman History in Honor of V.L. Menage*, eds. Colin Heywood and Colin Imber (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1994), 131.

⁴ Imber, “The Legend of Osman Gazi,” 75.

⁵ Imber, “Canon and Apocrypha,” 117.

⁶ Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, trans. Benjamin Stolz, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1975), xxii.

Alaeddin and the imperfect chronology utilized by the author.⁷ He also alluded to a nomadic past for the first Ottomans.⁸ The same symptoms are exemplified by Spandugino in *On the Origins of the Ottoman Emperors*. These histories, since they were composed by outsiders, cannot be considered entirely legitimate, but they do offer some insight into Ottoman history, thus these histories are not of a “canonical” nature. The histories compiled by foreign historians have echoes of the Ottoman canon, but still retain little historical actuality.

As the writing of Ottoman history continued to evolve from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century an elaborate myth had come to be which legitimized the Ottoman dynasty. The histories of Oruç and Ahmedî both drew upon living oral traditions when composing their work. Their efforts eventually came to reflect a reality wherein the Ottomans became tied irrevocably with the *gazi* ideal.⁹ By the 1500s, Ottoman ideology had developed an understanding of the Sultan as the supreme *gazi* which then became a “doctrine of the state.”¹⁰ Essentially Ottoman history became driven by the notion of the Sultan’s rule as ordained by God. Thus Ottoman historiography moved further away from historical actuality as the Ottoman Porte became more closely associated with orthodox Islam and the *shari’ah*.¹¹

Clearly, Ottoman history is a subject which is innately infused with historiography and the inherent implications therein. To understand the progression of Ottoman historiography, one must understand the evolutionary nature of modern Ottoman historians. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century, historians began to examine the expansion and political nature of Osman’s beylik with greater tenacity. Herbert Albert Gibbons was the first to

⁷ Imber, “Canon and Apocrypha,” 120-122.

⁸ Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, 31-32.

⁹ Colin Imber, “The Ottoman Dynastic Myth,” in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), 306-308.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 318-322.

espouse the notion that the Ottoman Empire emerged through a union with the devolving remnants of the Byzantine Empire.¹² In doing so, the first Ottomans amalgamated the Byzantine form of government and thus, the Ottoman Empire would then have its roots in the European thought process.¹³ The amalgamation of Byzantine bureaucratic structures was by no means original to the Ottomans; other conquerors, i.e. the Normans in Sicily, Umayyads in Syria, and the Abbasids in Baghdad imitated the Byzantines. This argument was thrown aside, however, with the emergence of Mehmet Fuad Köprülü's nationalistic history and with the widespread acceptance of Paul Wittek's well read "*Gazi Thesis*". In the thesis the Ottomans were driven by a religious fervor to conquer the remnants of the Byzantine Empire. His thesis was originally published in *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*.

Wittek's thesis continues to be extremely influential in terms of the scholarly thought process and is still utilized as an explanation by the occasional historian today. According to the thesis, the Osman's men found their motivation in making war for the expansion of *Dar al-Islam*. The *gazis* found their success in waging holy war against the decrepit and fatefully nearby Byzantine province of Bithynia. One of Wittek's most vehement critics, Rudi Paul Lindner, attacked and dismantled the aforementioned thesis. Lindner flatly stated that the solidifying argument for Wittek's work had been based on a 1337 inscription on a mosque in Bursa which reflected a holy war ideology.¹⁴ The inscription read: "Sultan, son of the sultan of the ghazis, ghazi, son of ghazi, marquis of the horizons, hero of the world."¹⁵ Lowry went so far as to climb the mosque to view the inscription in person; upon doing so he found that instead of "Sultan",

¹² Herbert A. Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Frank Cass and Compant Ltd., 1968), 28-29, 51-53.

¹³ Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 9-10, 32-33.

¹⁴ Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1983), 3-4.; Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Lenox Hill Publishing and Distribution Co., 1938), 43.

¹⁵ Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2003), 33.

there was written “The Exalted Great Emir”.¹⁶ Which in and of itself proves Wittek did not take the time to view the inscription in person, or perhaps he knowingly altered it for his publication.

Lowry delved into an explanation of Ahmedi’s work, reflecting a tendency on the part of the author to portray his financier in the light of Islamic righteousness, i.e. waging *gaza*, rather than transcribing the factual events as they fell into place.¹⁷ Interestingly, Lowry also noted that apart from the first few sentences on the Ottoman dynasty of Ahmedi’s work, it was largely designed as a book of advice for future rulers rather than directly supporting the notion of *gaza*.¹⁸ Apart from the inscription, Ahmedi’s *History* was the only other piece of evidence that Wittek used to support his thesis. Continuing to discredit Wittek’s work, the first imperial edict was not issued until 1484 by Bayezid II which actually explained the formation of a *gaza* for conquest.¹⁹ Rather financial gain served to form *gazas*, not religiosity. A simple inscription and one primary source, however, do not allow a historian to fully grasp the circumstances, nevertheless the events, involved in the creation and growth of the Osman’s beylik.

Lindner also attacked Wittek’s thesis on the basis of historical evidence. Osman’s beylik did everything contrary to waging a *gaza*. The early Ottomans recruited the abused Byzantine peasantry as Bithynia was conquered and incorporated them into Orhan’s growing emirate; they were even allowed to continue their Greek Orthodox religious practices. In many cases a hybridized version of Islam and Greek Orthodoxy emerged as Turkic peoples spread across the Anatolian peninsula. Furthering the gap between the thesis and historical reality, the early Ottomans also fought against fellow Muslims.²⁰ Furthermore, the early Ottomans did not enforce strict religious practices; shamanism, Christianity, and pre-Islamic cults were prevalent amongst

¹⁶ Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁸ Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans*, 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁰ Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans*, 4, 20.

their ranks, all of which serves as evidence which directly contradicts any notion of Osman's beylik as a state whose existence was based upon holy war. The 1337 inscription, in combination with Ahemdi's *History*, came to form the basis of Wittek's thesis.

Seeking to further discredit Wittek's "Gazi Thesis", Colin Heywood explored the ideology surrounding its creation and formulation. Heywood believed Wittek found his ideology in a prewar Vienna, an era of idealized empires. Such idealism weaseled its way into his thought process, leading him to accept the notion of a leading heroic figure in Ottoman history. These proclivities led Wittek to unchanging assumptions about the nature of the early Ottoman state and its leadership; he never once revised or revisited what he wrote.²¹ Further discrediting Wittek's thesis, no contemporary Byzantine source mentioned any sort of *gaza*, i.e. George Pachymeres or George Sphrantzes.²² The Byzantine chronicler Doukas, instead of mentioning *gazis*, mentions the *achinzi*, or auxiliary cavalry. The efforts of Wittek however, still form the solidifying basis of understanding early Ottoman historiography despite the lack of a factual argument. Even Asikpasazade, while lacking in factuality, noted that Osman was a *gazi*, made clear that rather than spread Islam, he was more deeply concerned with plunder and gaining slaves.²³ When all the contemporaneous, foreign sources are juxtaposed to such a notion of *gaza*, which would be to spread the Abode of Islam rather than pillage, then clearly Wittek has run his course in history.

Despite their proclaimed Islamic ideology, where did the Ottomans come from in the first place? According to Ottoman myth, their empire began with a divine dream which was received by the first Ottoman, Osman. The dream was interpreted as his right to rule and the right to an

²¹ Colin Heywood, "A Subterranean History: Paul Wittek (1894-1978) and the Early Ottoman State," *Die Welt des Islams* 38, no. 3 (November 1998), 392.

²² Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

imperial office. “Osman’s Dream” was first recounted in Asikpasazade’s work. This popular and widely accepted notion provided the early Ottoman Sultans with the right to wage war and forge their empire. The early Ottoman rulers were deeply concerned with how the Sultan would appear in the eyes of other powers in the Islamic world and acted accordingly. The first Ottomans were “struggling to plant their authority [and] were less concerned with the date of the founding of their state than with the vision that underpinned their right to rule.”²⁴ Despite the cosmological myth, the Ottoman Empire simply did not appear out of a black hole, a widely accepted notion of the middle age thought process as it pertained to nomadic peoples, or through an experience of divine intercession.

Revisiting Mehmet Faud Körüplü’s work on the early Ottoman state, he explained how the predecessors of the first Ottomans arrived with the invasion of the Seljuk Turks in the eleventh century.²⁵ The assumptions of his work run too deep; he staunchly claimed that the first Ottoman royalty were members of the Qayi branch of the Oğuz Turks. Evidence against this claim can be found in the Byzantine sources that barely mention the nomads in the first place, but even more rarely as the Oğuz and never as specifically as the Qayi branch.²⁶ This lack of acknowledgement may have found its basis in the Byzantine understanding of all nomads as merely barbarians because as sources they typically only noticed sedentary states; the Byzantine sources typically referred to the nomadic Turks as “Scythians” or “Persians”. Since the Byzantine sources were the only contemporary sources to record the happenstances of this period of Anatolian history, surely Pachymeres would have considered such royalty noteworthy.

²⁴ Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 2-3.

²⁵ Mehmet Faud Körüplü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, Gary Leiser, trans., (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 9-10.

²⁶ Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “The Oğuz tribes: the silence of the Byzantine Sources,” in *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans*, (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), I 8-10.

As further evidence will show, the proverbial portrait of the Ottoman past can be repainted. The facts expose the reality that the Osmanlis were never Oğuz Turks of the Qayi branch, as Ottoman tradition so proudly attests. Körüplü's work largely reflected Turkish nationalism and an unwillingness to acknowledge the slightest Mongolian influence on Turkish history. Kadafar, Heywood, and Lindner acknowledge the origins of Osman's beylik grew out of the political turmoil created by the Mongol invasion of Anatolia in the thirteenth century. Other Mongolists, such as Timothy May and David O. Morgan, attest that the Ottoman beylik emerged through some sort of interaction between the Mongol Empire and the intrinsic political chaos created in its wake. The Mongol invasion destroyed the centralized power of the Seljuk sultanate, destabilizing the region and allowing for the emergence of new regional polities.

A better attempt at explaining prehistory is found in Lindner's argument; he argued if one were to read in between the lines when interpreting Asikpasazade's *History of the House of Osman*, one could delineate the origins of the Ottomans. His *History* may nearly be a complete fabrication, but Lindner states it still has historical relevancy because he argues that a grain of truth can be found in the murky realm of oral tradition. By tracing the path of Süleymanshah, grandfather of Osman, he concluded the ancestors of the Ottomans arrived in Anatolia after the Mongolian onslaught in Khwarezm. Even within the Turkish primaries, the name of Osman's grandfather has never been agreed upon; nevertheless, Lindner argued first Ottomans were pushed into Anatolia to escape the predation of the Mongol hordes. He illustrated how the evidence provided in the *History* points to an origin wherein the Ottomans arrived either with the Mongols or as refugees attempting to escape their warpath.²⁷ While Ottoman prehistory certainly bears relation to the influence of the Mongol Empire, Lindner's argument still finds itself based

²⁷ Rudi Paul Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 21-34.

deeply in ambiguity. Asikpasazade's *History* may have merely been created to further direct skeptics of Ottoman origins away from historical actuality. Due to a lack of evidence, perhaps the first Osmanlis were not of a Central Asian origin after all; other arguments as to the Ottoman origins have been formulated as well.

Cemal Kadafar believes the origins of the Ottomans bear in relation to the political turmoil brought to the Pontic steppe through the Mongolian hordes. Kadafar found the history compiled by Zeki Velidi Togan to be highly significant when compiling his work. He postulated how the *gaza* ethos was originally brought to Anatolia by Muslim Turks who fled eastern Europe after the defeat and death of their leader Prince Noghai. These nomads fled the wrath of the victor Tokhtamish and settled near Söğüd in western Anatolia around 1299. He argued the recently converted Ilkhanids found the Islamic enthusiasm of these newcomers to be welcome and provided them with support. The *gaza* ethos, however, was prevalent throughout Anatolia before the arrival of the Osmanlis. The Seljuks claimed to be *gazis* upon their invasion of the Levant in the eleventh century. Furthermore, Kadafar and Lindner agreed with Togan that the location at Söğüd fell right at prime Byzantine-Ilkhanid trade routes, making it a natural location for the refugees.²⁸

Colin Heywood sought to give a deeper explanation to the events surrounding the settlement of eastern European Turkish tribes in Anatolia. His highly debated article provided much needed insight as to the speculative origins of Osman's polity. After the death of Kublai Khan, the continuity of the Mongol Empire ceased to exist and out of this dissolution the Ottoman emirate first emerged in the "conflict enflamed matrix" between the Black Sea and the

²⁸ Kadafar, *Between Two Worlds*, 44-45.

Sea of Marmara.²⁹ Heywood understood the significance of Noghai's pivotal role in steppe affairs. Coinciding with the traditionally accepted founding date of the Ottoman Empire 1299/1300, the death of Noghai fell in the year 1299.³⁰ His death created a need to find lands for his former followers; their flight was originally documented by the Persian historian Kwandemir in 1520. He noted how an "Ataman" had led 10,000 tents through Caffa to found the Ottoman Dynasty.³¹

Previous to his death, Noghai's men had become acquainted with Byzantine and Anatolian political turmoil through efforts to disrupt the Ilkhanate and in an effort to spread Noghai's influence. Noghai's troops also fought for the Byzantines in Bulgaria because of a matrimonial alliance from 1272-1282, which would have introduced them to the region's political turmoil and political actors.³² However, with the death of Michael VIII Palaeologos, Noghai's influence became even more felt as he expanded his independent *ulus* and as a king maker in Bulgaria and on the Pontic steppe. Furthermore, 10,000 Ak-Tav Tatars were sent by Noghai to aid the Byzantines in Anatolia in 1298.³³ *Bashis* had made numerous contacts with other Tatar states, such as Kazan and the Crimea, and were involved in Russian affairs as well.³⁴ These *bashis* were noted in Uighur writings, originally uncovered by Joseph Hammer-Purgstall; the documents related to the Noghais were originally part of a collection in Muscovy.³⁵ Such interconnectivity would have allowed for the Noghais to conceivably comprehend the areas available for potential settlement after their defeat. Another interesting tidbit related to Noghai's

²⁹ Colin Heywood, "Filling the Black Hole: The Emergence of the Bithynian Atamanates." Cicek, K., et al., eds. *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation* vol. 1 (2000): 109.

³⁰ Heywood, "Filling the Black Hole," 110.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

³² István Vâsâry, *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans 1185-1365* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 86-87.

³³ Heywood, "Filling the Black Hole," 114.

³⁴ István Vâsâry, "Bemerkungen zum uigurischen Schrifttum in der Goldenen Horde und bei den Timuriden," in *Turks, Tatars and Russians in the 13th-16th Centuries* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), X 121-122.

³⁵ Vâsâry, "Bemerkungen zum uigurischen," X 115.

death in 1299, in Anatolia a “chief magician” or *bakhshi* of Noghai’s court was attempting to cross into Anatolia to join his family but accidentally ended up in Byzantine territory.³⁶ His entrance and the circumstances he was involved in were noted by Pachymeres, who recorded his Christian baptism, and he joined the *basileus*’ service thusly. Clearly the Noghais were well involved in Bulgarian, Byzantine, and Anatolian affairs before they were defeated at the hands of Tokhtamish.

These scattered pieces of evidence serve to enhance Heywood’s argument. Noghai’s former followers would have known the route to new and abandoned lands because of previous exposure either through trade, diplomacy, or warfare. The lands near to and in Bithynia had fallen into neglect as the Byzantines turned their eyes towards Europe, and Anatolia had been thrown into chaos after the defeat of the already weakened Seljuks at the hands of Mongols. Apart from the crumbling Ilkhanid-Seljukid state in province of Rum, no power truly dominated. The Levant was broken into a mosaic of polities that maintained their regional interests, such as the principalities of Aydin, Germiyan, and Karaman. The Ottomans, in time, were to eventually conquer and assimilate each of these into their empire, but Anatolia was by no means a power vacuum.³⁷

These Turkish immigrants found their new homes in lands north of the Karasi emirate. Lindner, Kadafar, and Heywood all agree on the original city which first espoused Osman’s beylik, Söğüd. Coinciding with the Diaspora of Turkish peoples from the Crimea to the Danube and then on to Anatolia, the word “Ataman” or “Atman” evolved as well. A linguistic discovery

³⁶ Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Observations on Some Turcica of Pachymeres,” in *Romania and the Turks (1300-1500)* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), I 262-263.

³⁷ Claude Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey: A general survey of the material and spiritual culture and history*, trans. J. Jones-Williams (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1968), 360-365.

made by J.H. Kramers, the word “Osman” evolved from the title “Ataman”.³⁸ Ataman was a Pontic term to describe a leader of a tribe; this discovery serves as evidence for a connection between the Pontic steppe and Osman’s beylik.³⁹

Furthermore, the Pachymeres gave the name “Ataman” or “Atouman” when discussing Osman.⁴⁰ In fact, in no contemporary source is Osman even mentioned. Pachymeres was also the only contemporary source to mention the mysterious “Ataman”.⁴¹ Perhaps then the name provided in the Byzantine sources signals a time when the Turks had yet to become fully assimilated into Anatolian, Muslim culture. Thus, the use of the name “Ataman” is unlikely a misnomer to be ignored as merely an irregularity. Then the conclusion might be drawn amongst Western historians that Ottoman derived from “Ataman” rather than Osman. They must have viewed the original Greek sources and derived the title thusly. As these Pontic peoples became assimilated into Turkish, Anatolian culture the word “Ataman” evolved and replaced with Osman, or Uthman in Arabic, which appears in the Turkish sources. Certainly Heywood’s work leaves much to speculation, but it does offer a more solid basis than other proposals that merely assume the authenticity of the original Turkish primaries. Heywood’s case makes use of the solid contemporaneous sources to provide a new judgment on the actuality of early Ottoman history.

Providing further evidence against the notion of the early Ottoman as a *gazi*, Heywood pointed to the silence of the Byzantine sources.⁴² The Byzantine sources provide an excellent resource for any discourse on early Ottoman history, and the complete absence of any mention of holy war, can only serve as evidence for the creation of a new understanding of early Ottoman history. Furthering our conception of a new history, as mentioned earlier by Lindner, Lowry, and

³⁸ Heywood, “Filling the Black Hole,” 113.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁴⁰ Kadafar, *Between Two Worlds*, 124.

⁴¹ Colin Imber, “Othman I,” in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), 334.

⁴² Heywood, “Filling the Black Hole,” 114.

Heywood, the early Osmanlis sided and paid tribute to the Ilkhanids. Direct, physical evidence also points to this conclusion. In 1300 silver coinage was minted in Söğüd exhibiting an affiliation to the Ilkhan Ghazan.⁴³ Only one token coin was uncovered. Further specie has been discovered that shows clearly Ilkhanid influence was felt well into the 1320s; coins were minted for tribute to Öljeitü Khan.⁴⁴ Other finds have been uncovered near Bursa as well, which were minted for the Ilkhan Abu Sa`id, soon after its conquest in 1326/27 by Orhan.⁴⁵ More research over these finds needs to be performed, but numismatics lends evidence which supports a conclusion wherein a Mongolian political influence on early Ottoman prehistory and history should be supported. Any Mongolian presence has been traditionally considered an injustice on Turkish tradition, as the Mongols were framed as the unjust force in Ottoman traditional histories with the Ottomans battling such a pagan influence.⁴⁶

Until more findings are uncovered, these conclusions can offer merely a suggestion.⁴⁷ The appearance of such numismatic finds does point to the previous conclusions drawn by Togan and Heywood. Lindner continued by saying that perhaps the first Ottomans acted not as a separate power, but rather out of an obligation to the Ilkhanate. Expanding further, Orhan, son of Osman, was listed on an Ilkhanid accounting treaties, the *Risale-yi falakiye*.⁴⁸ This treaty listed the emirates and provinces that owed taxation to the Ilkhanate; Orhan was listed amongst the frontier lords of Rum. As the fourteenth century progressed, the power of the Ilkhanate rapidly began to crumble and rot; the Osmanlis were then able to gain their independence and suzerainty. Heywood argued that it was not until the 1320s when the Osmanlis began to first gain their true

⁴³ Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory*, 97-99.

⁴⁴ Rudi Paul Lindner, "Between Seljuks, Mongols and Ottomans," Cicek, K., et al., eds. *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation* vol. 1 (2000): 118.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

⁴⁶ Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 17-18.

⁴⁷ Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory*, 98.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

“color”.⁴⁹ As they assimilated into Anatolian, medieval society they took on the religious and political aspects traditionally acknowledged in Ottoman history. In that moment, the Ottoman scribes conveniently and intentionally overlooked that they had even been associated with the Ilkhanate.

Togan also discussed a connection between the reinvigorated *gaza* ethos with the newly arrived Osmanlis. This is purely an assumption; doubtlessly the alliance between Osman and the Ilkhanate was based on tribute and military service rather than a purely religious affiliation. In fact, the first Osmanlis were a religiously pluralistic society.⁵⁰ The Ilkhanids likely based their association from a strategic standpoint. The *gaza* ethos found its origins in earlier sources, such as the Seljuks, who attempted to reinforce Islamic values through force.⁵¹ The ethos was prevalent in neighboring emirates, but not in Osman’s beylik until the 1320s, which coincides with Heywood’s argument on the evolutionary nature of Ottoman ideology.

The *gaza* requires that Muslims fight in a holy war against the infidel in order to expand the borders of Islam; however, the meaning of holy war became molded to the diverse circumstances prevalent in medieval Anatolia.⁵² Most emirates were inclusionary in nature and would accept Christians into their ranks, permitted Christian religious practices, and intermarriages occurred between the two peoples; the Ottomans, of course, were no exception. The confusion between ideology and actuality appeared thanks to later Ottoman historians, such as Ahmedi and Asikpasazade, who certainly wanted their empire’s history to be bathed in Islamic thought and practice, which in turn ensured their patron’s, i.e. the Sultan, monarchical legitimacy. Adding to the confusion, *gazi* was also given as a title to signal certain

⁴⁹ Heywood, “Filling the Black Hole,” 114.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁵¹ Kadafar, *Between Two Worlds*, 66.

⁵² Ibid., 72.

accomplishments and entitlement of an individual, similar to the title of knight in medieval, Catholic Europe.⁵³

Solidifying the role of the *gaza* as an ideology, the arrival of Islamic scholars in Anatolia during the 1320s furthers this conclusion; these men ran the bureaucratic enterprise of the growing Ottoman beylik under Orhan.⁵⁴ These individuals fused the nomadic milieu of the early Ottomans with an Islamic ideology. Not only were Islamic styles of governance imbued into the Ottoman system, the Byzantine bureaucratic system and bureaucrats themselves were integrated into the running of significant commercial centers such as Bursa and Iznik; in doing so, the Osmanlis created a well-run, efficient, and inclusive state. While the Ottomans and their followers certainly were not orthodox Muslims, their scholars were. The results of conquering Christian Byzantine territory created the appearance that the first Osmanlis emerged as a byproduct of holy war. The nomadic element prevalent in Ottoman society allowed for the acceptance of wayward and displaced warriors in need of a new lord, rather than expanding *Dar al-Islam*.

As new research continues to be formulated to aid scholars in understanding Ottoman prehistory, early history, and historiography, the historical reality will emerge out of ambiguity. The evidence and arguments founded by Lindner, Heywood, Imber and Kadafar all point to a new understanding of early Ottoman history. The Osmanlis were definitely not fighting an explicit holy war against Byzantium, rather they were nomads placed under the hegemony, even if nominal, of the Ilkhanate. The scholars of the middle ages and the historians of the modern day still attempt to create an illogical historical reality wherein the Ottomans still bear their relation to the Oğuz Turks. A revisionist historian could even go so far as to consider replacing Osman

⁵³ Kadafar, *Between Two Worlds*, 91.

⁵⁴ Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans*, 34-35.

with Ataman, being as there was no mention of this mysterious individual in any contemporary Turkish document; clearly the Ottoman historians of the fifteenth century went to great lengths to recreate their history in order to frame it into an Islamic, Central Asian mold. The anthropological, linguistic, historical, numismatic, and archaeological evidence all run contrary to drawing a conclusive portrait of early Ottoman history wherein the first Ottomans originated out of Central Asia. Much of early Ottoman history still requires revisionary work and in-depth research to clearly delineate between fact and fiction.

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