

Osman I, father of kings

Bassem Fleifel ^[1] , et al

Abstract

Osman I. or Osman Bay (full form: Abū al-mulūk al-Sultān al-ghāzī Fakhr al-Dīn Qara'Uthmān Khān al-awwal bin Ertuğrul bin Sulaymān Shāh al-qayawi al-Turkumānī), was the leader of the Kayı Turkic clan, one of the border governors for the Sultanate of Rûm, and the founder of the Ottoman dynasty that ruled over the Balkans, Anatolia, the Levant, and North Africa for 600 years until it expired with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1922.

Keywords: Osman Gazi, Sultan Osman I

Introduction

Osman I. or Osman Bay (full form: *Abū al-mulūk al-Sultān al-ghāzī Fakhr al-Dīn Qara'Uthmān Khān al-awwal bin Ertuğrul bin Sulaymān Shāh al-qayawi al-Turkumānī*), was the leader of the [Kayı Turkic](#) clan and one of the border governors for the [Sultanate of Rûm](#), and the founder of the [Ottoman dynasty](#) that ruled over the [Balkans](#), [Anatolia](#), the [Levant](#), and [North Africa](#) for 600 years until it expired with the establishment of the [Turkish Republic](#) in 1922.

Although the exact date of Osman's birth is unspecified, some sources indicate that he was born in 656 AH / 1258 CE, to Emir [Ertuğrul Gazi](#), one of the border governors for the Sultanate of Rûm, and [Halime Hatun](#). It so happened that Osman was born on the same day that the [Mongols invaded Baghdad](#),^[1] the capital of the [Abbasid Islamic caliphate](#). The events were dramatically linked by the subsequent Ottoman and Muslim historians. Osman became Emir and the leader of the Kayı clan after the death of his father. He remained loyal to the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm, despite the turmoil and dangers threatening it by that time.

In 1295 CE, Osman began attacking the Byzantine forts in the name of the Seljuk Sultan and Abbasid Caliph. He conquered several forts leading his clan north and west towards the coasts of the [Marmara](#) and [Black Seas](#). When the Mongols overcame the Sultanate of Rûm and made it a sovereign state, Osman declared his independence from the Seljuks, and thus became the founder of a new Turkic state named after him:



Figure 1 | Sultan Osman ('Uthmān) Han I. [Konstantin Kapıdağlı/](#)PD-old

the *Osmanic* or *'Uthmānic* State, Anglicized as the [Ottoman Empire](#). Osman continued to rule his new state as an independent Emir until 1326. During this year, his son Orhan conquered the city of [Bursa](#), and Osman fell sick. Soon later, he died. His body was transferred and buried in Bursa, this gave the city a great symbolism in the eyes of later Ottomans. Osman's successors followed his example and continued the campaigns he started until the mid-seventeenth century, they successfully transformed the principality that he laid its foundations into a global empire spanning three continents.^[2]

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Although Osman is called “Sultan” or “Padişah” in many sources, he did not hold that title during his lifetime. However, he was to be called so, subsequently for establishing the dynasty of the Ottoman Sultans, thus he was titled *Abū al-mulūk* (father of kings). Osman was renowned for his simple way of living, being influenced by the beliefs of Sufi *Dervishes*. He maintained the old Turkic traditions that govern the relationship between the leader and clan members, which pre-dates Islam's arrival among the Turks, as long as they did not contradict *sharia law*.^[3]

Historical Background

Most sources agree that the Ottoman Turks belonged to the Kayı *Oghuz Turkic clan*, who, according to Ottoman traditions, fled their native homeland in *central Asia*, during the early 13th century, due to the Mongol invasions. The clan settled in Anatolia, in a region belonging to the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm.^[4] Other sources claim that the Kayı clan moved to Anatolia two centuries earlier than the previously mentioned date, alongside the Seljuks, when they left *Transoxiana* to *Khurasan* around 1040 CE to reside near the city of *Merv*. Then, the Kayı clan moved towards *eastern Anatolia* after 1071 CE,^[5] where it displaced alongside other Turkic clans. Later, it became involved in the army of Sultan *Alâeddin Kayqubad II* and fought against the *Khwarizmians*, *Mongols* and *Byzantines*, who were raiding Seljuk lands. According to several sources, the Kayı warriors were known for filling first lines in battles, and their fighting skills and bravery were among the major factors the Seljuks were victorious in many battles. This fact prompted Sultan Kayqubad to appoint Ertuğrul, the clan's Emir, as a *Moqaddam* (Lieutenant), and to reward the Kayıs some fertile lands near *Ankara*, where they settled and remained in the service of the Sultan for several years.^{[6][7]}

Later, Ertuğrul was granted dominion over the town of *Söğüt* in northwestern Anatolia on the Byzantine frontier.^[8] He also obtained the title of *Uç beyliği* or *Uç bey* (literally: marcher-lord). Granting this title was in line with the traditions of the Seljuk Sultanate, which is rewarding any clan chieftain who rises to power and is joined by a number of smaller clans, the title of marcher-lord. However, Ertuğrul had far-reaching political ambitions. He sought to expand beyond the lands rewarded to him. Thus, he started raiding the Byzantine possessions in the name of the Sultan successfully conquering several towns and villages, and slowly expanding his dominion during the half of the

century he spent as a Seljuk governor. In 680 AH / 1281 CE, Ertuğrul passed away at nearly 90 years of age.^[9]

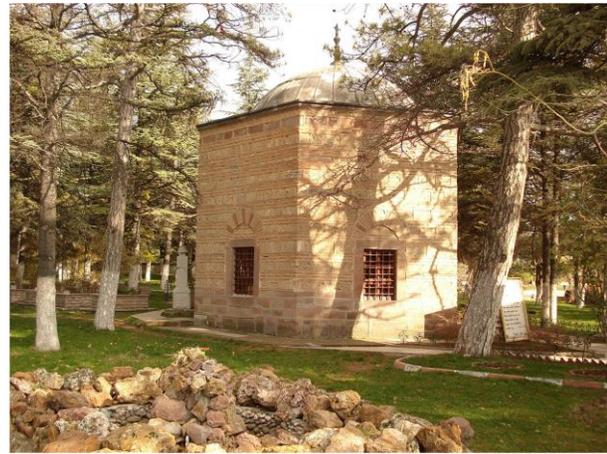


Figure 1 | Ertuğrul's türbe in Söğüt. *Maderibeyza/GFDL Cc-by-sa-3.0-migrated cc-by-sa-2.5,2.0,1.0*

Osman's lineage

Although the exact date of Osman's birth is unspecified, some sources indicate that he was born on 8 Safar 656 AH / 13 February 1258 CE, the exact same day the Mongol hordes invaded Baghdad, killing its inhabitants and ravaging its landmarks.^[1] Other sources, such as 16th century Ottoman historian *Kemalpaşazâde*, says that Osman was most likely born around the middle of the 13th century, possibly in 1254/5 CE.^[10] Information related to the early life of Osman is limited. However, the few available sources agree that he was born in the town of Söğüt, which his father Ertuğrul took as the capital of his emirate.^[11] The reason for the lack of information available about this stage of Osman's life, is due to the fact that the oldest known source about this time period, was written about a hundred years after Osman's death.

Among these sources are: *Destan-ı Tevarih-i Al-i Osman* (the oral history of the Ottomans), written in the 14th century by the Ottoman poet and court physician *Tâceddîn İbrâhîm bin Hızîr* better known as *Ahmedî* (1334-1413 CE), *Behcetü't Tevârîh* (the joy of histories) by *Şükrollah* (d. 1464 CE), and *Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman* (history of the Ottomans) by *Derviş Ahmed Âşîkî* known as *Âşîkpaşazâde* (1400 - 1484 CE). Additionally, these remaining sources are not the originals, but rather copies, or copies of the copies that were rewritten over the years, leading to a probable loss or altering in the information.^[12] In fact, it is accepted that Ottoman, European, and Byzantine sources are not very reliable when considering the origins of Osman



and his clan. On one hand, the oldest known records originally written by the Ottomans all date back to the period that followed the [conquest of Constantinople](#) (1453 CE). On the other hand, none of the Byzantine historians did refer in their writings to the origin of the Ottomans. As for European historians, these Turkic Muslim peoples were out of their interests. However, that changed after a century of this period, when the Ottomans began to pose a threat to Europe.^[43]

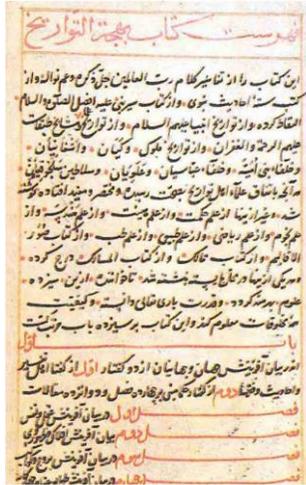


Figure 3 | Index of *Behcetü't Tevârih*, one of the Ottoman sources that talks about Osman's origins. Şükrullah/PD-Ottoman

Ottoman historian *Kemalpaşazâde* mentioned that Osman was Ertuğrul's youngest son and that he was raised in the traditional nomadic Turkic ways: he learned [wrestling](#), [swordsmanship](#), [horse riding](#), [arrow shooting](#), and [falconry](#), from an early age. He quickly mastered the previously mentioned skills outperforming all his brothers. He was also taught the principles of [Islam](#), and was influenced by the teachings of [Sufi Sheikhs](#), mostly his mentor Sheikh *Edebali*, and this was reflected in his personality and lifestyle.^[41]

In terms of proportions, the most popular and classic narration is that Osman is the grandson of *Süleyman Şah* who died drowning while crossing the [Euphrates River](#) on horseback. Turkish historian *Yılmaz Öztuna* considers that Osman's Grandfather, and Ertuğrul's father, is called *Gündüz Alp*, saying that it is more likely that *Süleyman Şah* is a name stuck in Anatolian popular memory, and it actually refers to *Süleyman bin Qutulmish* who founded the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm. Öztuna adds that it is possible that Ottoman historians tried forming a connection between the Ottomans and the Seljuks, especially since the Ottomans appeared on the stage of history claiming to be the legitimate successors of the Seljuks.

Based on this, Osman's assumed lineage is as follows: *Osman bin Ertuğrul bin Gündüz Alp bin Kaya Alp bin Gökalp bin Sarçuk Alp bin Kayı Alp*.^[45] Other researchers agree that the connection between Ertuğrul, Osman, and the Seljuks, may have been largely invented by court chroniclers a century later, and the true origins of the Ottomans thus remain obscure.^[44] On the other hand, some Ottoman sources indicate further lineage to Osman and the Oghuz Turks, which is closer to myth than reality, saying that these people are descendants of [Japheth](#) son of [Noah](#) and that Osman's genealogical tree contains 52 ancestors or more and ends with the Prophet Noah himself. This lineage includes *Gökalp* and *Oghuz Han* (which is said to be the father of Gökalp), and all the Oghuz Turkic peoples, including the Seljuks.^[43] In this claim, one can notice the features of some of what *Yılmaz Öztuna* pointed out in his hypothesis, that the Ottomans were always trying to connect or relate themselves to the Seljuks, and to appear as their heirs.



Figure 4 | An Ottoman miniature showing Osman during his younger years. Unknown author/PD-Art (PD-old-100)

Egyptian Mamluk historian, *Muhammad Ibn Iyās*, gave a totally different origin to Osman, in his six-volume book *Badā'ī' az-zuhūr fī waqā'ī' ad-duhūr* (Flowers in the Chronicles of the Ages). According to Ibn Iyās, Osman was of [Arab origin](#), born in 658 AH (1259 - 1260 CE) in [Hijaz](#), and he lived in *Wadi As Safra'* near the holy city of [Medina](#). When economic crises struck the region due to the Mongol invasions, followed by a severe drought, Osman fled Hijaz and headed north to Anatolia and settled in [Konya](#), capital of the [Karamanid Beylik](#). As time went on, he got used to wearing Turkic clothing, followed Turkic customs and traditions, and learned to speak the [Turkish tongue](#). Not long after that, he was in service to Emir *Alâeddin Ali bin Khalîl*, and became one of his most trusted men.

Thus, Osman was rewarded with titles and land, which increased his power and was himself followed by many men.^[15]

Rise of the Osmanic (Ottoman) Beylik

Osman became **Emir**, or **Bey**, upon his father's death around 680 AH / 1281 CE.^[8] According to some historians, Osman's accession to power wasn't peaceful as he had to fight his relatives before he got hold of his clan's leadership. One of Osman's major rivals was his uncle **Dündar Bey**, who might have plotted to kill his nephew or rebelled against him when the latter decided to attack a small Greek island. Dündar Bey saw that Osman's ambition as a threat that might put the whole clan in danger. However, Osman had to pull out his sword to kill his uncle for disobeying.^[16]

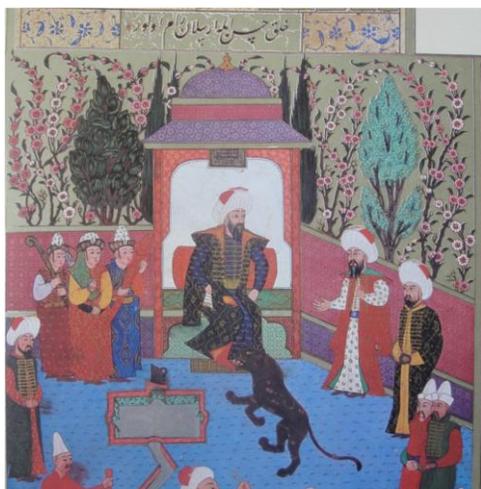


Figure 5 | Osman as the Kayı Emir, or Bey. Seyid Lockman/PD-Art (PD-old-100)

The **Philosopher** and mystic **Hājī Baktāš Walī** tells of another story about Osman's accession to power, in the **Vilayetname**. According to Hājī, **Gündüz Alp**, Osman's younger uncle, was the one who became Bey after Ertuğrul's death. During that time, Osman and several other warriors started organizing raids on Byzantine lands adjacent to Söğüt, such as **Yarhisar**, **Bilecik**, **Inegöl**, and **İznik**. As a result, the Byzantine **Tekfur** (governor) of **Bursa** was provoked, and he sent envoys to the Seljuk Sultan **Alâeddin Kayqubad III**, complaining about these constant assaults. Thus, the Sultan ordered **Gündüz Alp** to bring forth his young nephew to stand before him, and so Osman was arrested and sent to Konya. According to this narration, Sultan Kayqubad admired Osman's

courage and deeds, and didn't wish to punish him, instead, Osman was sent to Hājī Baktāš Walī to consider his matter. Osman was warmly received by the Sufi mystic, who then ordered his release saying: "I have been waiting for someone like him for years". After that, Hājī Baktāš Walī wrapped Osman's head with the same **turban** associated with Sufi sheikhs, and sent him back to Konya with a message to the sultan, asking that Osman to become the Kayı Emir. Thus, Osman became the clan's leader.^[17]

Importance of the Osmanic Beylik location

From a military point of view, the location of Osman's Beylik had a significant impact on his success as a conquering warrior. His capital Söğüt was located on a hill in a well-defended position, mediating the main road from **Constantinople** to Konya. The importance of this site emerged due to the political fragmentation of Anatolia that gave small states greater importance than they originally had.^[18] Being an Emir to a **beylik** bordering Byzantine lands, Osman had the opportunity to direct all his efforts towards war and **jihad** following the footsteps of the Seljuks with intentions to conquer all Byzantine territories, and absorb them into the **Islamic Caliphate**. Encouraged by the weakness of the ancient Empire and its ongoing wars in **Europe**, Osman had the chance to expand towards western Anatolia crossing the **Dardanelles** to **southeastern Europe**.^[18] Commenting on these actions, some historians argue that Osman's strategy of increasing his territories at the expense of the Byzantines was due to his intention to avoid conflicts with his more powerful Turkic neighbours.^[8]

Politically, Osman showed great skills forming and applying new administrative systems in his beylik. During his reign, the Ottomans made great strides towards transitioning from the **nomadic tribe system** to settling down in permanent settlements. This helped them consolidate their position and rapidly develop into a major power. Moreover, the beylik's location in northwestern Anatolia, next to **Christendom**, imposed a military policy on the Ottomans, which gave them better chances to grow and expand compared to the beyliks of the interior.^[18] Osman's beylik was also relatively far from both the **Mongol invasions** and the influence of the powerful Turkoman beyliks in southern and southwestern Anatolia. Add to that, its proximity to the **Silk Road** linking Byzantine lands in the west to areas controlled by the Mongols in the east, gave it prominent strategic and economic characteristics. Also, the Osmanic beylik was the only Islamic base facing the yet

unconquered Byzantine regions, which made it a magnet to many Turkomen farmers, warriors, and Der- vishes fleeing the Mongols, and aspiring to conquer new lands for economic and religious reasons.^[19]

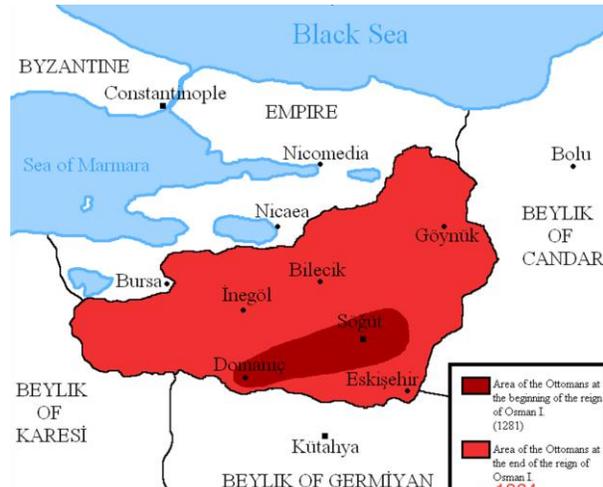


Figure 6 | Area of the Ottoman Beylik during the reign of Os- man I. *DragonTiger23/cc-by-sa-3.0 GFDL*

Osman's Dream

Osman had a close relationship with a local religious leader of dervishes named Sheikh *Edebalı*, whose daughter he married. A story emerged among later Ottoman writers to explain the relationship between the two men. According to the writers, *Osman had a dream* while he was staying in the Sheikh's house. The story appeared in the late fifteenth-century chronicle of *Aşıkpaşazade* as follows:

“ He saw that a moon arose from the holy man's breast and came to sink in his own breast. A tree then sprouted from his navel and its shade compassed the world. Beneath this shade there were mountains, and streams flowed forth from the foot of each mountain. Some people drank from these running waters, others watered gardens, and yet another group caused fountains to flow. When Os- man awoke he told the story to the holy man, who said 'Osman, my son, congratulations, for God has given the imperial office to you and your descendants and my daughter Malhun shall be your wife.’^[20] ”

The dream became an important foundational myth for the empire, imbuing the House of Osman with

God-given authority over the earth and providing its fifteenth-century audience with an explanation for Ot- toman success.^[21] The dream story may also have served as a form of compact: just as God promised to provide Osman and his descendants with sovereignty, it was also implicit that it was the duty of Osman to provide his subjects with prosperity.^[22]

Political relations at the beginning of Os- man's reign



Figure 7 | A map of independent Turkic beyliks in Anatolia during the 14th century, showing the neighbouring Ottoman and Germiyanid beyliks. *Morningstar1814 (English Ver- sion)/CC-BY-SA-4.0*

According to the *Bektashi* narration, whose accuracy cannot be confirmed since it was only mentioned in *Bektashi* sources, plus the fact that it did not enjoy much support from the majority of researchers; *Hājī Baktāš Walī* was one of the *Wafā'īyyah tariqah* der- vishes, a *murid* of *Bābā Eliyās al- Khorāsānī*.^[23] Once *Bābā Eliyās* died, both *Hājī Baktāš Walī* and Sheikh *Edebalı* became among his 60 succes- sors, and grandmasters of the *Ahyān Rūm* brotherhood of warriors and farmers, who enjoyed great influence among the people. When Osman married Sheikh *Ede- balı*'s daughter, he secured his control over the broth- erhood, and soon became their new grandmaster. As a result of this marriage, all the *Ahyān* sheikhs became under Ottoman control. This has a major impact on the establishment and development of the Osmanic beylik after Osman's death during the reign of his son *Orhan*.^[24] Some argue that Osman's marriage to sheikh *Edebalı*'s daughter was his first brilliant political undertake.^[25] On the other hand, Turkish historian Professor *Cemal Kafadar* considers that the intermar- riage between the Osmanic and *Edebalı*'s houses, ex- plains the hostilities that later rose between the Otto- mans and the *Germiyanids*, since the *Germiyanid* Turk- oman house was rewarded lands and titles by the Sel- juks because of their services in subjugating the *Bābā'ī revolt* in 1240 CE, and because Sheikh *Edebalı* was con- sidered by his followers a leader and successor to *Bābā*



Ishāq, they all became the focus of attention of the Germiyanids.^[26]

Kafadar adds that early in Osman reign, the young Emir showed political ingenuity forming relations with his neighbours. Osman's alliances transcended tribal, ethnic, and religious lines. and he may have followed his instinct and the requirements of his political aspirations, not mistaking the future results of the family connections he created and secured for his son after him. Osman reconstituted the political culture of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm in line with the needs of his beylik. He was more creative than his Turkomen neighbours in combining Turkic, Islamic, and Byzantine traditions.

Additionally, the Emir also cooperated with the Byzantine *Tekfurs* of the neighbouring cities and villages. He forged an agreement, so his clan, whenever they move between grazing areas in the summer, leave their belongings in the Byzantine fortress of Bilecik, and upon their return, they give its governor a token of appreciation, in the form of cheese and butter made from sheep milk and preserved in animal skins, or a good carpet made from wool. This agreement reflects the coexistence between herders, farmers and urban dwellers, during Osman's reign.^[26] Osman's friendship with *Köse Mihal*, governor of *Chirmenkia* (modern *Harmanköy*), was the culmination of this coexistence between Muslims and Byzantines. As for his relations with other peoples, such as the Mongols, most of whom moved to the borders of western Anatolia, and the Germiyanid Turkomen, it was hostile. That is because the Turks, in general, despised the Mongols, and the Germiyanids were probably of non-Oghuz origin.^[26]

Osman allied with the *Ahyan Rûm* brotherhood, they formed organized groups, members in each of which worked in a single trade. The brotherhood took the responsibility to preserve justice, prevent injustice, stop oppression, follow sharia law, dictate good morals, and carry out military duties if the need arises, to defend their rights and the rights of Muslims.^{[27][28]}

The Emir also allied with newly arrived Turkomen clans to Anatolia. In general, the nomads have always had a strong militarized spirit compared to people installed in the cities. Thus, the clans were more active and effective than their city-dwelling kin. Soon enough, they become the beating heart of the Seljuk border provinces in total, and the Osmanic beylik in particular. Osman also enticed many Turkomen from the region of *Paphlagonia* to join his forces.^[18] These Turkomen were fine warriors, eager for jihad and conquest, each of them followed a *tariqah* (an order of Sufism) and

was supervised by a sheikh who taught them the meaning of jihad alongside many Islamic principles. However, another section of these Turkomen did not have close ties to Islam for various reasons, thus Osman entrusted them to several sheikhs and dervishes to be given proper Islamic education and be satiated with the values that glorify conquests aiming to **spread the word of Islam**. In fact, these sheikhs and dervishes were very enthusiastic about promoting the *Turuq* of the Khorasani *Walis*, and Osman's request gave them this chance.^[29]

As for the ruling hierarchy, Osman was firstly subordinate to the *Chobanid* Emir in *Kastamonu*, followed by the Seljuk Sultan through the Germiyanid Bey in *Kütahya*, who was in turn subordinate to the Mongol Ilkhan in *Tabriz*. During this period, the Seljuk Sultans had lost their power over their local Emirs, and the Mongol Ilkhan practised his authority in Anatolia through his appointed Generals, where he requested that every local governer, including Osman, sends him soldiers whenever he requests so.^[30] As for the hierarchy of name delivering in *khuṭbah*, Imams used to pray for the guidance of the: *Abbasid caliph in Egypt first*, the *Mongol Ilkhan in Tabriz*, *Seljuk Sultan in Konya*, and finally the local Bey or Emir.^[30]

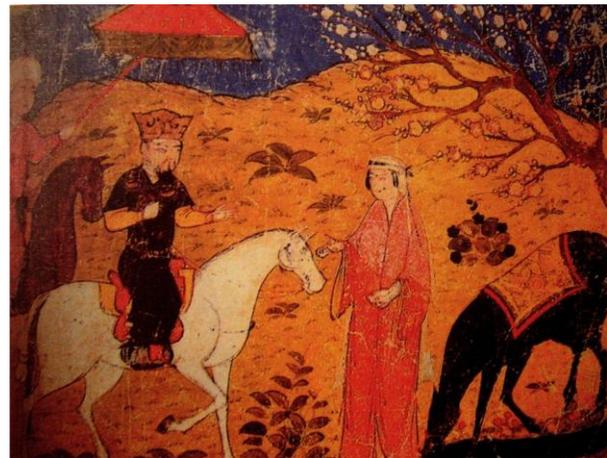


Figure 8 | Ilkhan Mahmud Ghazan (on horseback), higher ruler of Anatolia during the early years of Osman's reign. All Turkomen Beys or Emirs were subordinate to him despite the inherent hostility between Turks and Mongols. *Rashīd al-Dīn al-Hamadānī*/PD-Art (PD-old-100)

Expansion of the Osmanic Beylik

Conquest of *Karacahisar*



Figure 9 | Illustration of Osman rallying his warriors into battle. Unknown author/PD-Art (PD-old-100)

After establishing his beylik, Osman had to fight on two fronts: one against the Byzantine, and the other against the Turkomen beyliks that opposed his rule, especially the Germiyanids. Osman focused on expanding at the expense of the Byzantines, and since that time, the primary Ottoman goal became the conquest of the remaining Byzantine lands.^[31] Some accounts indicate that the first battle Osman launched against the Byzantines was aimed to revenge a defeat that he suffered in the spring of 683 or 684 AH / 1284 or 1285 CE, where the Byzantines, led by the *Tekfur* of Bursa, ambushed him and his men. It is in doubt that Osman knew about this ambush from one of his spies. Nevertheless, he chose to clash with the Byzantines and he was defeated and forced to withdraw with casualties, including his nephew *Koca Saruhan bey*, son of *Savcı Bey*.^{[11][32]} Based on this, around 685 AH / 1286 CE, Osman went forward to *Kulacahisar* at the head of a military force of three hundred fighters, it was a fortress located two leagues away from *İnegöl*, within the scope of mount *Uludağ*. The Emir attacked the fort at night and managed to conquer it, extending his beylik northwards toward Lake İznik's proximity. The Ottoman victory at *Kulacahisar* triggered the fort's governor, who refused to be a subordinate subject to a Muslim ruler, especially a border Emir, so he allied himself with *Karacahisar*'s governor, and both men agreed to fight the Muslims aiming at retaking all Byzantine lands that were lost recently. Thus, the Ottomans and the Byzantines met again in battle, somewhere between *Bilecik* and *İnegöl*, where fierce fighting took place in which Osman's brother *Savcı Bey* and the Byzantine commander *Pilat* were killed. The Battle ended with an Ottoman victory. Then, the Ottomans entered *Karacahisar* where they, reportedly for the first time, converted the town's church into a mosque. Osman appointed a *Qadi* (magistrate) and a *Subaşı* (chief of police) for the newly conquered city.

Historians differed in determining the date of this conquest, yet none made it prior to 685 AH / 1286 CE, or exceeding 691 AH / 1291 CE. Osman made his new city a staging base of his military campaigns against the Byzantines, and ordered that his name be delivered at the Friday *khuṭbah*, which was the first manifestation of his sovereignty and authority.^{[8][31]}

Osman's latest victory was his greatest up to that date. Seljuk Sultan *Alâeddin Kayqubad III* expressed his deep appreciation for Osman's accomplishments in the name of the Seljuks and Islam, giving him the title of *Ḥaḍrat 'Uthmān ghāzī marzubān 'Āli Jāh 'Uthmān Shāh* (the honourable conqueror and border guardian Osman Shāh).^[33] The Sultan also bestowed upon Osman the governance of all the land he did conquered as well as the towns of *Eskişehir* and *İnönü*. Moreover, The Seljuk Sultan issued a decree exempting Osman from all types of taxes. Osman also received several gifts from the Sultan reflecting the new high stature to the Seljuk court. These gifts included: a golden war banner, a *Mehter* (war drum), a *Tuğ* (a pole with circularly arranged horse tail hairs), a tassel, a gilded sword, a loose saddle, and one hundred thousand *dirhams*.^{[30][34]} The decree also included the recognition of Osman's right to be mentioned in the Friday *khuṭbah* in all areas subject to him, and was permitted to mint coins in his name.^[35] Thus, Osman became a Sultan, but lacking only the title.^[36]



Figure 10 | A Mehter war drum, similar to the one sent to Osman from the Seljuk Sultan. Quinn Dombrowski/CC-BY-SA-2.0

It is narrated that when drums were beaten announcing Sultan's *Kayqubad*'s arrival, Osman stood up in glorification, and remained so till the music halted. Since that day, Ottoman soldiers enacted standing in glorification for their Sultan whenever drums were beaten.^{[37][38]}

Conquest of *Bilecik*, *Yarhisar*, and *Inegöl*

Soon after the conquest of *Karacahisar*, Osman marched with his soldiers north towards *Sakarya River*. Upon his arrival there, he raided and looted the forts of *Göynük* and *Yenice Taraklı*. Many argue that during this time, Osman received a message from his Byzantine friend *Köse Mihal*, warning him of a secret conspiracy that is being prepared to by *tekfurs* of *Bilecik* and *Yarhisar*. The two were aiming at killing Osman after inviting him to attend their children's wedding. Osman was disappointed in being betrayed by *Bilecik's* *tekmur*. That is because he considered the relationship with *Bilecik* to be built on trust and good faith, especially that his clan was used to leave their belongings in this fortress whenever they moved between grazing areas, as previously mentioned. Osman devised a plan to escape the trap and take over the fortress. He sent forty of his soldiers carrying some of the clan's belongings to be kept in *Bilecik*, while most of its inhabitants were outside attending the wedding. Once his men entered the fort, they quickly overpowered its small garrison, and it fell to the Ottomans. Then, Osman went the feast followed by some Byzantine knights who were easily ambushed by his men later. A short battle took place in which Osman was victorious, and most of the Byzantines were killed. After that, Osman rode towards *Yarhisar* and took it by surprise; A large part of the fort's garrison was killed, while the rest were taken prisoners. The *tekmur's* daughter *Holophira*, was also captured in this action, she soon became Osman's daughter in law, having married his son Orhan sometime later, and her name was changed to *Nilüfer Hatun*.^{[39][40]} Afterwards, Osman and several of his men took over all towns and villages surrounding *Inegöl*, before laying siege on the fort itself and taking it with ease. Osman ordered the execution of *Inegöl's* *tekmur* since he was known for persecuting his Muslim neighbours, then placed a new garrison for the town, and distributed the loot among his men.^[39]

Fall of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm, and the Osmanic Beylik's independence

Osman aspired, after his multiple victories, to expand on two axes, aiming to isolate the Byzantine cities he was looking to conquer. First, he blocked the road leading to *İznik* from the eastern side. Then, he advanced from the west towards *Lopadion* and *Evrenos*. After that Osman turned around *Mount Uludağ* from both north and south, avoiding the fortified city of Bursa, connecting with his Muslim neighbours in the southeast. During that time, the Byzantine Empire was

preoccupied with ongoing clashes with its powerful enemies in Anatolia, such as the *Germiyanids* and the coastal beyliks, not to mention suppressing unrest and discord in Constantinople and the *Balkans*. The Empire was unable to face Osman's threats, thus, he felt free to expand at the Byzantines expense exploiting the current situation.^{[31][41]} At the same time, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm was seeing its final days. The Sultanate grip was slowly weakened over its Turkoman Beyliks. Sultan *Alâeddin Kayqubad III* became deeply unpopular after he purged the Seljuk administration of his predecessor's men with extreme violence. This prompted the Mongol Ilkhan *Mahmud Ghazan* to call upon *Kayqubad* to appear before him, and once the latter did in 1302, he was executed and replaced with his predecessor *Ghiyâth ad-Dîn Mas'ûd bin Kaykâwûs* in order to keep the peace in Anatolia.^[42] According to another account, Mongol and *Tatar* hordes raided Asia Minor in 699 AH / 1300 CE, and killed Sultan *Kayqubad* in his capital Konya. It was also said that *Kaykâwûs* himself killed his rival, coveting his own return on the throne. Another story suggests that *Kayqubad* escaped and sought refuge in the Byzantine court where he remained until his death.^[36] In all cases, *Kaykâwûs's* rule was short-lived, lasting between 4 and 6 years at most, and when he died in 1308 CE, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm was no more to be mentioned in the historical records,^[42] giving the way for the Turkoman beyliks to emerge as independent states.



Figure 11 | The declining Sultanate of Rûm, vassal of the Mongols, and the emerging beyliks, c. 1300. *Khateeb88/CC-BY-SA-3.0*

The demise of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm gave Osman autonomy over his dominion, he soon dubbed himself *Padişah Âl-i 'Osmân* (sovereign of the *house of Osman*).^[31] After that, Osman set his sights towards conquering the last of the Byzantine cities, towns, and fortresses in Anatolia. According to one account, after Sultan *Alâeddin Kayqubad III* was killed by the Mongols, vizirs and notable leaders met and decided that

since the late Sultan had no offspring, one of the local Emirs should take his place, and they found Osman perfect fitting the candidacy. Thus, the leaders offered the Emir the position, and Osman accepted becoming a Sultan since that date. It is likely that *Kayqubad's* and *Kaykāvūs's* deaths led the to Sultanate of Rûm falling into chaos, and promoted many of its regular soldiers to join the armies of local Emirs, including Osman. This gave the latter a great momentum and important military experiences enriching his army for the upcoming conquests.^[43]



Figure 12 | Osman, an independent Emir, on his *Takht*. Arif Paşa/PD-old-100

Battle of Bapheus

Soon after Osman secured his independence and established control over all fortresses he conquered, he sent messages to all remaining Byzantine *tekefurs* in Anatolia asking them to choose between accepting Islam, Ottoman sovereignty and paying *Jizyah*, or war. Some of these *tekefurs* ended up accepting Islam, including Osman's old friend *Köse Mihal*, who became the Turkic leader's companion, and would play a considerable part in the upcoming expansions of the Ottomanic beylik. His descendants became known in Ottoman history as *Mihaloğulları* (children of Michael, plural of *Mihaloğlu*).^{[44][45]} Other governors acknowledged Osman's sovereignty, while the rest kept their loyalty to the Byzantine Emperor. Thus, Osman started harassing their fortresses such as Bursa and Nicaea which was besieged in 1301 CE.^[46] The Ottoman raids also threatened the port city of Nicomedia with famine, as the Ottomans roamed the countryside prohibiting peasants from harvesting wheat. This provoked Bursa's *tekefur* among others to unite their efforts in order to eliminate this new emerging Islamic power.^[47]

In the spring of 1302 CE, Emperor Michael IX launched a campaign which reached south to Magnesia. The Ottomans, awed by his large army, avoided an open battle. The Emperor sought to confront The Ottomans,

but he was dissuaded by his generals. Encouraged by that, The Ottomans resumed their raids, virtually isolating the Emperor at Magnesia. Soon, the imperial army started dissolving without engaging in a single battle, that is because the local troops left to defend their homes which were continuously raided by the Ottomans, and the Alan mercenaries left as well, aiming to rejoin with their families in Thrace. The Byzantine emperor was forced to withdraw by the sea, followed by a wave of refugees.^{[48][49][50]} To counter the threat to Nicomedia, Michael's father, Andronikos II, sent a Byzantine force of some 2,000 men (half of whom were recently hired Alan mercenaries), under the *megeas hetaireiarches*, Giorgios Mouzalon, to cross the Bosphorus and relieve the city.^{[48][49]}



Figure 13 | A section of the remaining Byzantine fortifications in Nicaea. Carole Raddato/CC-BY-SA-2.0

The Byzantine response was a warning for the Islamic border villages and towns. However, when the locals noticed Osman's leadership and military strength, as well as his devotion to Islam, they rallied to support and stand with him in order to consolidate a new Islamic state that would unite them and form an impenetrable wall against the Byzantines.^[35] Several Byzantine deserters joined Osman as well, some of which were liberated prisoners of war who chose to align with him, reportedly due to his good treatment during their custody. Many Islamic warrior brotherhoods also joined the Ottomans. For example, the *Gazi Rûm's* (Raiders of the Romans), they were stationed on the borders of the Byzantine Empire and repelled its attacks on Muslim lands since the Abbasid era, gaining great experiences and knowledge in Byzantine strategies and tactics. Another example is the *Hajjian Rûm's* (pilgrims of [the land of] the Romans), a brotherhood of Muslim clergy concerned with teaching local villagers and recent converts the basics and different aspects of Islam, and had a side objective of assisting the *Mujahideen* in combat.^{[51][52]}

The Byzantine and Ottoman armies eventually met on 1 Dū al-Ḥijjah 701 AH / 27 July 1302 CE at the plain of Bapheus located between Nicomedia and Nicaea. The Ottoman army consisted of light cavalry under Osman himself, and they numbered around 5,000, while the Byzantines numbered around 2,000 men. The Muslim cavalry charged toward the Byzantines fast, whose Alan contingent did not participate in the battle. As a result of the attack, the Byzantine line was broken, forcing Giorgios Mouzalon to withdraw into Nicomedia under the cover of the Alan force.^{[48][49][50][53]}

Bapheus was the first major victory for the nascent Ottomanic Beylik, and of major significance for its future expansion: the Byzantines effectively lost control of the countryside of Bithynia, withdrawing to their forts, which became isolated and fell one by one eventually. The Byzantine defeat also sparked a mass exodus of the Christian population from the area into the European parts of the empire, further altering the region's demographic balance.^[53] Coupled with the defeat at Magnesia, the Ottomans were able to reach the coasts of the Aegean Sea, threatening Byzantium with a final loss for their territory in Asia Minor.^[50] According to Turkish historian Halil İnalcık, the battle allowed the Ottomans to achieve the characteristics and qualities of a true state.^[54]

Byzantine-Mongol convergence attempt



Figure 14 | Mongol soldiers, in *Jāmi' al-tawārikh* by Rashīd al-Dīn al-Hamadānī. *Rashīd al-Dīn al-Hamadānī/PD-Art (PD-old-100)*

After the victory in Bapheus, Osman divided the conquered lands among his kin and army leaders establishing Islamic hegemony and ending the Byzantine era in his new areas. He gave *Eskişehir* to his brother *Gündüz bey*, *Karacahisar* to his son Orhan, *Yarhisar* to *Hasan Alp*, and *Inegöl* to *Turgut Alp*.^[41] By that time, Emperor Andronikos II felt the pressure of the Ottoman expansion. The Emperor watched in fear how the demographic changes were

rapidly taking place in Anatolia, and he decided to stop it. Yet, being recently defeated, Andronikos II couldn't face the Ottomans in an open battle. To add insult to injury for the Byzantine, conflicts were taking place in the Balkans. Thus, Andronikos II had no choice but to try making an alliance with the Mongols in Persia, who were controlling central and eastern Anatolia. To achieve that, the Emperor sent a letter to Ilkhan Mahmud Ghazan offering him a family rapprochement through marriage and establishing an alliance between both Empires.^{[32][55]}



Figure 15 | Mongol offensives in the Levant, 1299-1300. The decisive Mamluk victory at Marj al-Saffar played a major role in folding any Byzantine-Mongol alliance. *MapMaster/CC-BY-3.0*

At that time, The Mongols were passing through a period of high tension with the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria, this did overwhelm the relations with the Byzantines, especially that Ghazan was preparing for another campaign to Damascus and Palestine after his first invasion in 699 AH / 1299 CE, in which many civilians were massacred and where the Mamluk army suffered a massive defeat at the Battle of Wadi al-Khaznadar near Ḥimṣ. The Mamluks themselves were preparing for the upcoming war with the Mongols aiming to wash away the shame of their previous defeat. As a result, On 2 Ramaḍān 702 AH / 20 April 1303 CE, the Mongols and Mamluks engaged in a fierce battle on the outskirts of Damascus, known as the Battle of Shaqhab or Battle of Marj al-Saffar, in which the Mamluks won a decisive victory.^[56] This devastating defeat had a heavy toll on Ghazan and seems to have contributed to deteriorating his health further more, until he died in Qazvin on Sunday 11 Shawwāl 703 AH / 17 May 1304 CE.^[57] This eliminated any hope of a Byzantine-Mongol alliance, and allowed the Ottomans to continue on with their conquests.

Byzantine-Catalan alliance

After Ghazan's death, the Byzantine Emperor was forced to seek other solutions to the problem of Ottoman expansion. Thus, he hired a [company of Catalan mercenaries](#) led by [Roger de Flor](#). The mercenaries had become unemployed after the signing of the [Peace of Caltabellotta](#) between the [Crown of Aragon](#) and the French dynasty of the [Angevins](#) in 1302 CE. The company arrived at Constantinople in January 1303 CE, where they were received by the Emperor himself, then, the mercenaries were housed in the district of [Blachernae](#). The Emperor arranged the wedding of Roger de Flor to his niece, the 15-year-old princess Maria Asanina, daughter of the [Tsar of Bulgaria Ivan Asen III](#) and [Irene Palaiologina](#). De Flor was named [Megas Doux](#) (Great Dux, i.e., Commander of the Imperial forces), and was promised a four months payment for him and his men.^{[58][59]}



Figure 16 | Roger de Flor being received by the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos. [José Moreno Carbonero](#)/PD-old-70-1923

The Catalans soon crossed to Asia Minor and fought against the [Karasids](#) and [Germiyanids](#) winning a fast victory. Afterward, they resolved to attack the maritime provinces of the Ottomans and moved to the town of [Philadelphia](#) which was besieged by Osman, who suffered a defeat at the hands of the Catalans and was forced to lift his siege and retreat. This victory proved that Byzantium had been able to gather sufficient military forces and material capabilities, it would have been able to eliminate the emerging Ottoman power, but it had neither. It was not long before the Catalans abandoned fighting the Muslims and turned their attention towards the Byzantines themselves. The reason for that was that the local population of [Magnesia](#) beheaded the Catalan garrison and stolen its treasure, which infuriated Roger de Flor and made him march towards that city intending on revenge. The Byzantines were horrified by the mercenaries attacks,

and became preoccupied in defending themselves.^[59] Roger de Flor was soon killed by order of the emperor's son Michael IX, who saw the indiscipline of the Catalan mercenaries as a growing danger,^[60] as did the people of Constantinople, who rose up against the Catalans and killed many of them. Once the news reached the main Catalan force in [Gallipoli](#), they went on a killing spree of their own, killing all the local Byzantines.^[61] Soon after this the Byzantines and the Catalans were at war with each other, giving way to Osman to move on with his conquests.

Conquest of *Yenişehir* and Its surroundings

After securing his northern borders by reaching the Black and Marmara seas, Osman turned his attention towards the southern borders of his beylik. Thus, he attacked the Byzantine towns, villages, and fortresses surrounding the city of [Yenişehir](#) preparing to conquer it. Osman sent a large campaign to the fortress of [Yāvandhisar](#) and annexed it. Then, he attacked [Yenişehir](#), took it with ease, and made it his temporary capital after fortifying and strengthening its defenses.^[62] Soon after that Osman started sending more campaigns against the remaining Byzantine cities conquering several fortresses including [Lefke](#), [Akhisar](#), [Koçhisar](#), [Yenicehisar](#), [Marmaracık](#), and [Köprühisar](#). In fact, conquering the aforementioned forts aimed at imposing a security belt around [Yenişehir](#), thus Osman surrounded it with a series of front forts to ward off any invasions.^[55]

Conquest of Bursa

With [Yenişehir](#) in hands, Osman focused his efforts on isolated large cities starting with Bursa, unaware that this will be his last campaign.^[63] He gave the orders to start building two forts overseeing and surrounding the city, then, when the construction was completed, Osman provided the forts with large garrisons. This allowed his men to tighten the blockade and prevent any provisions reaching Bursa.^[64] The Ottoman siege lasted between six and nine years, this was due to the fact that the Ottomans had no [Siege engines](#) and they had never captured a large fortified city before.^[65]

During the long siege, Osman and some of his military commanders conquered the smaller Byzantine fortresses on the vicinity of the beylik, in which several [tekfurs](#) acknowledged Osman's sovereignty, and became among his subjects, some of them accepting Islam in the process. Soon after that, Osman started suffering from [Gout](#), and couldn't accompany his men in any more campaigns or witness the [siege of Bursa](#), so he entrusted his son Orhan to complete this major

task, while he retired in his capital. Orhan's continued the siege without any fighting, but he continued isolating Bursa from its surrounding forts, conquering *Mudanya* to cut off the city's connection to the sea. He also captured the city of *Praenetos* on the southern coast of *İzmit*, changing its name to *Karamürsel*, after the Muslim leader who took it "Karamürsel Bey". The last fort to fall was *Beyce*, which was considered Bursa's key as it overlooked it, and it was renamed *Orhaneli*.^{[64][66]}



Figure 17 | Gate of Bursa's Byzantine castle, which witnessed the long Ottoman siege. *Citrat/CC-BY-SA-3.0-migrated GFDL*

Orhan tightened the blockade around Bursa till its garrison fell into despair. Soon, the Byzantine emperor realized that the fall of the city into Muslim hands was inevitable, thus, he made a difficult decision ordering his governor to evacuate the city. Orhan entered Bursa on 2 Jumādā al-ʿŪlā 726 AH / 6 April 1326 CE, its people were not subjected to any harm after they recognized Ottoman sovereignty and pledged to pay *Jizyah*.^[67] Saroz, the garrison's leader, surrendered to Orhan and pledged allegiance to his father Osman. He also converted to Islam and was given the title of "Bey" out of respect to his courage and patience during the long siege.^[68] According to some sources, Osman passed away just before the fall of the city,^[65] while others suggest that he lived long enough to hear about the victory on his death-bed.^{[69][70][71]}

Osman's Death

According to the sources that say Osman lived to hear of the fall of Bursa, Orhan rushed back to Söğüt to inform his father of his great victory. Once he reached it, he was immediately summoned to Osman, who was on his death-bed. Soon after Osman heard the news, he passed away from natural causes. However, Osman managed to name Orhan to be his successor, although the latter was not Osman's first-born. Yet the dead Emir believed that Orhan better fits to rule compared

with his elder half-brother *Alâeddin*, who was more passive and pious than Orhan.^[68] As for the exact cause of Osman's death, it is well-known that he suffered from gout for several years, which seemingly caused his eventual death. This is confirmed by what *Aşıkpaşazade* mentioned in *Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman* when he talked about the late period of Osman's life, saying: "Osman had a bad foot from which he experienced severe pain". It is noted that *Aşıkpaşazade* used a similar expression when he talked about the death of Sultan *Mehmed the Conqueror*: "The cause of his death was the issue in his feet". It is now known that gout is a *genetic disease* in the Ottoman dynasty, and many sultans suffered from it.^[72]



Figure 18 | Osman's tomb. *Darwinek/CC-BY-SA-3.0 GFDL*

The exact date of Osman's death is debatable. It is said that he died on 21 Ramađān 726 AH / 21 August 1326 CE at 70 years old. The 15th century Ottoman Historian *Rouhi Çelebi*, who wrote down the history of the Ottoman Empire until 1481 CE, indicates that Osman died in 1320. However, *Uruç adiloğlu*, another Ottoman historian who lived during the time of Sultans Mehmed the Conqueror and *Bayezid II* up until 1502 CE, says that Osman died in 1327 CE. Contemporary Turkish historian *Necdet Sakaoğlu* states that, despite the absence of documents mentioning Osman's name after the year 1320 CE, there are documents confirming Orhan's ascension to the throne in 1324 CE. Based on this, Osman's death might have occurred in the previous year.^{[11][72]} It is also certain that Osman's death was three or four months after the death of his father-in-law, Sheikh *Edebali*, and two months after the death of his wife, Malhun Hatun, because it is known that Osman buried the two in *Bilecik*.

Once Osman died, Orhan ordered the transfer of his body to Bursa, his new capital. Thus, Osman's body was laid there to rest.^[73] His grave is located today in the neighbourhood of *Tophane*. The reason behind the transferring Osman's body was due to a will Osman did tell his son about during the early years of besieging



Bursa: "My Son, when I die, bury me under that silver dome in Bursa". However, Osman's current tomb dates back to the time of Sultan 'Abdü'l-'Azîz (1861 - 1876 CE), because the first tomb was completely destroyed in a severe earthquake that struck the region in 1855 CE, it was rebuilt by the aforementioned Sultan. Sultan Abdü'l-Hamîd II (1876 - 1909 CE) also constructed a shrine in Söğüt where Osman was buried for a while before he was moved to Bursa.^[72]

Osman's Will

According to some sources, Osman left a written will to his son Orhan instructing him to move on with conquests and jihad against the Byzantines, that he abides by the teachings of Islam, accompany the 'Ulamā', amend his parish, and dedicates himself to spread the word of Islam:^{[74][75]}

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

My Son: Never be concerned with something that God, Lord of the Worlds, has not commanded, and if you encounter a dilemma in your ruling, follow the advice of religious scholars. Son: Honor those who follow you and accept your rule, bestow possessions upon your soldiers, allow not Satan to deceive you with your soldiers and your kingdom, and never stray far from the people of the *sharī'ah*. My son: know that our goal is to gain God's grace, and that through jihad that the light of our religion shall pervade and shine to all horizons. My son: We are not among those who start wars seeking the lust of ruling a land or controlling its people, for we live by Islam, and by Islam, we die. And this, my son, is what I know you are capable of doing. Know, my son, that spreading the word of Islam, guiding people to it, and protecting the Muslims families and possessions, is the task I entrust to you, and that God Almighty will ask you about it [on Judgment day].

My son: I pass on next to our Almighty Lord, proud and certain that you will be fair and just with your people, striving in the path of God, to spread the religion of Islam. My son: protect the scholars of the *Ummah*, maintain their care, venerate them, and listen to their advice, for they only command benevolence. My son: Do not do something that does not satisfy God Almighty, and if you faced any difficulties then ask the 'Ulamā', for they will guide you to the right path. And know, my son, that our only path in this world is that of God, our only intention is to spread God's religion, that we are neither fortune nor worldly possessions seekers. My will to my children and companions: persist in transcending Islam, hold high its honourable banner, carry

the *tawhīd* to the furthest of lands. [May] whoever of my lineage deviates from the path of truth and justice be deprived of our Prophet's intercession. My son: all in this world shall be subjected to death, and my life has come to its end by the command of God, I surrender and entrust this state to you, and bid you farewell, seek justice in all your affairs.

Legacy

Osman is considered the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, He started an imperial line that will expand to include *thirty-five sultans*, who ruled one of the largest and mightiest Empires in history. The Ottoman empire will last till 1918 CE, where it collapsed alongside the other *Central Powers*, after their defeat in the *First World War*. Osman is often referred to as the 1st in the line of Ottoman Sultans, although he himself never carried this title in his life, and was instead called "Bey" or "Emir". One endowment written in *Persian* and dating back to 1324 CE, indicates that Osman was given the titles *Muḥiuddin* (Reviver of the faith) and *Fakhruddin* (Pride of the faith).^[30]

Osman's descendants are distributed today in several American, European and Arab countries after the royal Ottoman family was expelled from *Turkey* in 1924 CE shortly after the declaration of the Republic, by *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk*.^[76] Eventually, several family members returned to Turkey, after the Turkish government allowed the females to return in 1951 CE.^[76] However, male descendants had to wait until 1973 CE to be able to enter Turkey again.^[77] Other members remained in the countries where their ancestors had sought refuge, such as *England*, *France*, the *United States*, *Egypt*, *Saudi Arabia*, among others. Osman's descendants are known today as the *Osmanoğlu (son of Osman) family*.

Osman's best-known relic is his *Sword*, which was used during the coronation ceremony of the Ottoman Sultans,^[78] since Sultan *Murad II*.^[79] It is said that this sword passed to Osman from his mentor and father-in-law Sheikh *Edebalı*, who grieved him with the "sword of Islam".^[80]

Additional information

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