

Idealizing themes of Osmanli origins in the historical texts of the 15th and early 16th centuries

KONSTANTINOS MOUSTAKAS

IDEALIZATION is a common feature of historiography throughout the centuries, the more so when pre-modern historical writing is concerned, dealing with rulers and dynasties that rose to distinguished power and established strong polities. The Ottoman dynasty makes an exemplar case of those historiographic attitudes. The obscure origins of its founder, the absence of any surviving contemporary historical writing focusing on the early history of the Ottomans, even the intellectual background of those who produced the earlier surviving historical accounts about the founder and the early history of the Ottoman dynasty, all result in a historical representation that is strongly embedded in myth, in so far as the origins and facts of Osman are concerned.

This study focuses on the different versions of the supposed ancestry and background of Osman, as they emerge in the earlier historical accounts that relate to this subject dating in the 15th and early 16th centuries. In this respect, we take into account the Ottoman texts proper, i.e. those written by Muslim subjects of the Ottoman sultans, mostly in Turkish and occasionally in Persian or Arabic, as well as those written by Greek and Italian writers, with the addition of a Slavic text too, the *Memoirs of a Janissary* by Constantine Mihailović. Regarding the latter group of texts, those discussed here are the ones that include original accounts, often based on first-hand information or on research in Turkish sources, or the first known record of a particular theme. Writers who synthesized from earlier Greek and (mostly) Italian texts, such as Francesco Sansovino or Johannes Leunclavius, are not included in this study, even though

their work became much influential to their posterior scholarship. In brief, the “western”/Christian writings about the origins of the Ottomans to be taken into consideration here are limited to the Greek *Histories* by Michael Kritoboulos and Laonikos Chalkokondyles, the *Historia Turchescha* by Giovanni Maria degli Angiolleli, as well as the work of Theodore Spandounes (Spandugnino) among the Italian ones, and finally the memoirs of Constantine Mihailović. Several other important authors of the 15th and early 16th centuries, mostly Italian, who dealt with the history, structure and characteristics of the Ottoman empire, such as Niccolò Secundino, Andrea Cambini, Giovanni Antonio Menavino and Paolo Giovio, were more interested in the origins of the Turkish people in general, than the origins of the Ottoman house, and have little to mention, if anything at all, about Osman’s background.

Among the several modern scholars who have made comment on one or another account of the origins of the Ottoman house, the most systematic study has been conducted by Colin Imber, who viewed the stories of Osman’s ancestry as one facet of the broader Ottoman “dynastic myth”, that also included the image of the first Osmanli rulers as “holy warriors”,¹ or the divine approval of Ottoman rule,² serving the establishment of an idealized image of the dynasty, as well as the legitimization of their rule, usually reflecting contemporary historical circumstances of the times when such stories and images were introduced. Imber notes the articulation, in the second half of the 15th century, of a standardized mainstream account of Osman’s ancestry, which is present in most of the Turkish texts dealing with the history of the Ottoman house that were composed in the second half of the 15th and the early 16th century, and distinguishes it from some alternative versions mostly appearing in non-Turkish works.³ On another occasion, Imber labels that mainstream story as the “canon” and the alternative ones as “apocrypha”.⁴ Building up on Imber’s fundamental contribution, the discus-

1 Imber 1987, 7-13.

2 Imber 1987, 20-22.

3 Imber 1987, 16-20.

4 Imber 1994, 117-19.

sion of relevant matters can be furthered up first by introducing more writers and their respective accounts, then by contributing to the commentary, and finally adding a more generalized approach, a sort of typology or modeling of idealizing themes.

The 15th and early 16th century mainstream account of the Ottoman texts had the Osmanlis to descend from Oğuz Han, scion of Japheth the son of Noah, through a line of descent leading to Osman's grandfather, named Süleyman Şah,⁵ who was the first of his line to come to Anatolia as a leader of nomadic pastoralists. Then Osman's father, Ertoğrul, or Osman himself, appear to have been authorized by Seljuk sultan "Alaeddin" onto the governorship of the region of Soğut, close to the Byzantine borders in Bithynia.⁶ Oğuz Han was a hero of central-Asian and Iranian epic, and legendary eponymous ancestor of the Oghuzian Turkish peoples, however, his conception as a forefather of Osman did not occur until well into the 15th century. An Oghuzian connection of Osman's origins first appears in Ahmedî's *Iskendername*, however, a proper genealogy of Osman going back to Oğuz Han is first recorded and was most probably introduced in the 1420's or 30's by Ali Yazıcıoğlu, who was inspired by the Persian text of Rashid ad-Din.⁷ Then it became a common theme of the well-known and popular Ottoman histories and chronicles that were composed during the second half of the 15th century, or even in the beginning of the 16th century, such as those by Şükrullah, Oruç, Aşıkpaşazade, the various versions of anonymous *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, Neşri.⁸

5 A fictional figure that reflected the facts of Süleyman Ibn Kutlumuş, the first Seljuk ruler of Anatolia (1081-1086).

6 Those references relate to a mythologized version of sultan Alaeddin Kaykubad I (1220-1237), even though there is sometimes a confusion with sultan Alaeddin Kaykubad II (1298-1303). Imber 1987, 13. The placing of sultan Alaeddin into the stories of Ertoğrul and Osman served the presentation of the Ottomans as rightful successors to the Seljuks, consequently legitimizing their rule over the Anatolian Turks. Imber 1987, 13-14. Imber 2002, 122.

7 Imber 1987, 16-17.

8 Atsız 1985, 12-16. Unat and Köymen 1949, 8-21, 50-73. Öztürk 2007, 2-13. Giese 1925, 6-18. Imber 1987, 13-19.

There are only two Turkish texts of the 15th century that deviate from that standard to some extent. The *Düstürname* of Enveri (c. 1465) and the chronicle of Karamanlı Mehmed Paşa (c. 1480) do keep in line with Osman's descent from the line of Oğuz, but in so far as Osman's grand-father is concerned, they mention Gündüz Alp instead of Süleyman Şah, the former being a person whom Yazıcıoğlu mentioned as Ertoğrul's companion.⁹ Moreover, Enveri has Oğuz Han to descend not from Japheth but to be the son of a Hijjaz Arab and companion to the Prophet, Iyad, in this respect being in line with the Arabic text of Ibn Hajar.¹⁰ Apparently, the latter accounts give priority in stressing the religious ideal. Genealogical versions relating with an Arabian connection became more common in the course of the 16th century, even suggesting Oğuz to be a scion of Shem instead of Japheth, in response to new political and ideological considerations arising from the Ottoman expansion in the Middle East, the attribution of the Caliph's title to the Ottoman sultans, and their posture as champions of Sunnî orthodoxy in their long conflict with the Shi'i Safavid dynasty of Iran.¹¹

Among the non-Turkish writers, Laonikos Chalkokondyles is the one who is most in line with the 15th-century mainstream of Ottoman genealogy. He is the only one among the non-Turkish writers studied here, who mentions Ertoğrul as Osman's father. He also acknowledges the "Oghuzian" identification of Osman's supposed forefathers, describing the Oğuz as "*a distinguished and noble branch of the Turkish people*". His genealogy is concerned with Osman's recent ancestors, however, he deviates from the standard account of most Ottoman texts about Ertoğrul's father, instead he shows Ertoğrul to be son of a certain Oğuz Alp (*Ογουζάλπης*), and grandson of Gündüz Alp (*Ιονδουζάλπης*), in this respect giving an account that is close to the variable of Enveri and Karamanlı Mehmed.¹²

9 Imber 1987, 19.

10 Imber 1987, 18. Imber 1994, 128, 135.

11 Imber 2002, 123.

12 Darkò 1922, 9-10.

Some probable facts of Chalkokondyles' life and his associations may allow us to suggest the use of Enveri's *Düstürname* as a source of his writings. Chalkokondyles' life details are only known up to the year 1460, when he is presumed to have been living in Mistra, until the town was annexed by the Ottomans. Then, being in his thirties, he is supposed to have moved to elsewhere and several scholars have speculated as to whether he settled in Italy, or Venetian Crete, or even in Athens where he originated from.¹³ However, recent research has pinpointed the two sub-archetypes among the surviving manuscripts of his work, one of which has been shown to be copied by George Amiroutzes, around 1470, while the second one was copied by George Moschos in Italy. The obvious association between Chalkokondyles and Amiroutzes gave ground to the suggestion that it was in Constantinople where Chalkokondyles lived after 1460, which can explain his contacts with the Byzantine court scholar of sultan Mehmed II.¹⁴ Amiroutzes was a cousin of and closely related to *grand vizier* Mahmud Paşa.¹⁵ Having in mind that Enveri composed his *Düstürname* under the *grand vizier's* patronage, to whom he dedicated it too,¹⁶ one may regard this text as more easily accessible to Amiroutzes, and consequently consultable to Chalkokondyles, amidst the other still very few historical texts that were produced in the Ottoman environment until then.¹⁷

The other Byzantine scholar who gave an account of Osmanli ancestry, Michael Kritoboulos of Imbros, moved in totally different lines from the Ottoman historical texts. Kritoboulos did not write a history of the Ottomans in general. His text focuses on the person and reign of sultan Mehmed II only, to whom he presented his work. He was not interested in previous Ottoman rulers and hardly mentions any of them; he did not include any genealogy of the Osmanlis either,

13 Nicoloudis 1996, 44-45, 47-57.

14 Reinsch 1999, 79-80.

15 Stavrides 2001, 78-81, 86-90.

16 Mélikoff-Sayar 1954, 27-28. Stavrides 2001, 14.

17 Şükrullah's *History* too was patronized by Mahmud Paşa, but that text was written in Persian (Imber 1987, 14), which would make it more difficult for Amiroutzes or Chalkokondyles to consult.

however, he makes a statement about their ancestry. Kritoboulos has the Osmanlis to descend from the Persian Achaemenids. In this respect he pertains to the commonplace of most Byzantine writers who describe the Turks as “Persians”. With regard to the more specific description of the Turks as “Achaemenids”, other Byzantine writers too call the Ottoman Turks in general as such, including Makarios Makres and emperor Manuel II Palaiologos among others.¹⁸ However, in their case, the use of this particular appellation is only an expression of the usual Byzantine literary habit of antiquarianism. Kritoboulos did not confine himself to this, but attributed an actual Achaemenid ancestry to the house of Osman, moreover he suggested a remote Greek origin of them, asserting that their distant Achaemenid ancestors were the scions of Perseus, and another supposedly Greek hero, Achaimenes.¹⁹ Kritoboulos asserted his statements about the Achaemenids to be based on Herodotus, indeed they reflect a somehow corrupted knowledge deriving from the latter’s relevant passages.²⁰

Kritoboulos’ choice to attribute such an ancestry to the Osmanlis may be interpreted in the first place as a reflection of his strong antiquarian tendencies, even by his probable will to pay some tribute to the “Father of History”. Furthermore, his account may not be irrelevant with sultan Mehmed II’s fancies, since he addressed and presented his work to the sultan. In this respect, one can bear in mind Theodore Spandoune’s assertion about Mehmed II’s dissatisfaction with the Turkish genealogical and ancestry stories of the Osmanli house that circulated in his day, which he regarded as humble ones.²¹ If there was some truth in this story, and Kritoboulos was aware of

18 Trapp 1966, 6. Argyriou 1996, 112.

19 Reinsch 1983, 15-16.

20 Herodotus presents the Achaemenids and other noble Persian houses to descend from Perseus, yet without mentioning any particular “Greek” ancestor called Achaimenes. In so far as Perseus’ and his descendants’ ethnicity is concerned, Herodotus (VI 54) claims that Perseus himself had become Greek from Assyrian, but not his descendants. On another occasion, he has Xerxes’ ambassadors to Argos support a parental relation between the Persian royal house and the citizens of Argos through the medium of Perseus (VII 150).

21 Sathas 1890, 139.

the sultan's tastes, he would put forward to the sultan an alternative ancestry of utmost nobility. In any case, his work was not written for the sultan only. Kritoboulos hoped it would be much read by Greeks, as well as by Italians, and for this reason he expected the sultan to welcome it,²² as its general perspective was to assert the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. In this respect, his presentation of the sultans as being of distant Greek origins can also be interpreted as serving the purpose of legitimizing their rule over the Greek people.²³

While the work of Chalkokondyles met with great success, and was much read in the West, influencing the later Italian writings about the Ottomans, the *History* of Kritoboulos did not fulfill its author's hopes. It seems that the sultan to whom it was offered was fully indifferent toward it. It was forgotten in the palace library indeed, and remained unnoticed to later scholars. This was not the case with the rest of writers discussed here, whose work became much known and influential. Moreover, all of the three remaining writers to be discussed here, Spandounes, Angiollole and Mihailović, were in an advantageous position to reproduce first-hand information or to have good access to Ottoman sources.

Theodore Spandounes (Spandugnino) descended from a notable Byzantine family that had found refuge in Venice after the fall of Constantinople. His family ties linked with several aristocratic houses of late Byzantium and the Balkans and important personalities were his relatives, such as Mara Branković who was his aunt and under whose custody he spent much of his childhood.²⁴ He sojourned in Constantinople after the end of the Venetian-Ottoman war of 1499-1502, probably in 1503, where he stayed for quite a long time, in order to settle the affairs of his merchant brother. It was there that he carried out his study on the origins and history of the Ottoman sultans, using Turkish sources as he claims, and being facilitated by his family relation with two great Ottoman statesmen, the *viziers* Mesih Paşa (a scion of the Palaiologoi family who converted

22 Reinsch 1983, 4-5.

23 Moustakas 2011, 223.

24 Nicol 1997, vii-x.

to Islam) and Ahmed Paşa Herzegović.²⁵ An act of endowment by Ahmed Paşa lists the contents of his library, which included the chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade, an anonymous *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, and the *Selcukname* of Ali Yazıcıoğlu (in which Ali appended his account on the origins and early history of the Ottomans).²⁶ In discussing the contents of Ahmed Paşa's library, Heath Lowry reasonably suggests that it could be the place where Spandounes conducted his research, and the aforementioned historical texts to be the works of "Turkish historiography" he claimed to have used.²⁷

Spandounes focused on the recent ancestry of Osman, starting his narration with a forefather who emerged in the times of Seljuk sultan "Alaeddin", as one of a group of shepherds who came from "Tartaria". He related to the Oğuz connection of Osmanli origins describing those shepherds as belonging to the "nation" (or tribe) of *Oghuz*.²⁸ His references to sultan "Alaeddin", that allude to Alaeddin Kaykubad I (1220–1237), and to the *oghuzian* identification reflect the influence of his Ottoman sources. His use to some extent of those sources also becomes evident by his reference to the battle of Dinboz, of which there is no record in Greek or Italian texts.²⁹ For the rest of his story of Osman's origins he deviated from them. More importantly, he regarded Osman's origins as humble. His view of Osmanli origins as such becomes apparent in his presentation of sultan Alaeddin's degrading view of Osman's ancestor as a "mad shepherd",³⁰ as well as in his descriptions of sultan Mehmed II as dissatisfied with the Turkish stories of the sultans' ancestry, that had his house originate from "shepherds". Spandounes presents Mehmed

25 Nicol 1997, x-xi, xvi-xix. Lowry 2003, 65-66, 119, 122-23.

26 Lowry 2011, 8-9.

27 "...*Havendo io con ogni diligendia et sollecitudine fatto cercare li hystoriographi de Turchi che trattano della origine dela potentissima casa de ottoman...*". Sathas 1890, 138. Lowry 2011, 9.

28 "...*trovò per quanto ho potuto intendere, quella esser discesa di Tartaria da pecorari della natione de Ogus*". Sathas 1890, 138.

29 Sathas 1890, 139. Therefore, the doubts raised by Donald Nicol (1997, xix), as to whether Spandounes actually made any use of Turkish sources cannot be sustained.

30 Sathas 1890, 138.

II to believe that his family had distant Byzantine origins, descending from a renegade prince of the Komnenian dynasty, a story that Spandounes asserted to be a wrong one.³¹

Since he considered the nomadic background of the Osmanlis as a humble one, Spandounes would not understand the *oghuzian* discourses of the Ottoman texts in any other way than as a tribal identification. In this respect, he would have no interest in reproducing the long genealogies of the Ottoman texts. Neither does he give a proper name of the Osmanli ancestor he began his narration with,³² nor his exact relation with Osman. He simply relates that after that man distinguished himself in battle, sultan “Alaedin” rewarded him with the town and region of *Ottomanzich* as a “fief”, from which his descendants took their name.³³ More precisely, Osman’s ancestor is shown to have defeated an extremely strong and valiant Greek fighter in a duel.³⁴

31 Sathas 1890, 139. This story is based on the 12th-century facts of John Komnenos, son of the *sebastokrator* Isaac thus nephew of emperor John II (1118-1143), who, according to Niketas Choniates, had defected to the Seljuk court of Konya, become a Muslim and married a daughter of sultan Masud. Van Dieten 1975, 35-37. The link of John’s story with Osman’s ancestry must have been articulated in the second half of the 15th century by a person of Byzantine origins, probably in the Ottoman service, who knew 12th-century Byzantine history and the text of Choniates. Irrespective of whether sultan Mehmed II knew of that story and believed it or not, it can be interpreted as fitting the ideals and the imagination of highly positioned converts in the Ottoman service, who previously belonged to the Byzantine and Balkan aristocracies (such as Mahmud Paşa, the Palaiologoi brothers Hass Murad Paşa and Mesih Paşa, Ahmed Paşa Herzegović). I plan a detailed study of this subject on another occasion.

32 However, he describes him as *pazzo*, meaning “fool”. Sathas 1890, 138. In this respect, Imber (1994, 118-19) suggests that Spandounes misunderstood Osman Gazi of the Turkish texts as “Osman son of Gazi” and also confused the word *gazi* with *deli*, that actually means “mad, insane”, but also means “recklessly bold”.

33 This is a corruption of the common theme of the Ottoman texts, that had Ertoğrul to be appointed *emir* of Soğut by the Seljuk sultan. Spandounes follows either Jacopo di Promontorio or the *Historia Turchesca* that had previously identified *Ottomanzich*, a geographically misidentified location, as the early base of Osman’s family. Pertusi 1970, 479. Ursu 1909, 4.

34 Sathas 1890, 138.

Brief references to Osman's humble origins are found in Secundino's and Jacopo di Promontorio's texts, without any signs of idealization or of any other connotations, that do not need any special attention.³⁵ More important are Osman's depictions as such that can be derived from Angiollelo's *Historia Turchescha*,³⁶ as well as from the *Memoirs of a Janissary* by Constantine Mihailović. Both of them were much based on their personal experience, reflecting trends and ideas that circulated within the Ottoman society of the second half of the 15th century. Giovanni Maria degli Angiolleli from Vicenza was in Negroponte in 1470, when the town was stormed by the Ottoman army. He was taken prisoner, carried to Constantinople and declared a sultanic slave, serving first in the palace, then in the army until 1481, when he escaped to Italy.³⁷ In his *Historia Turchescha*, he is not specifically interested in the origins or the ancestry of the Osmanli house, however, he briefly relates some information about Osman's background. He refers to Osman's father naming him Zich and describing him as a peasant, ploughman and tiller of the soil.³⁸ The name of Zich as given to Osman's father, as well as his humble background, appear also in the writings of Paolo Giovio,³⁹ most probably taken from the *Historia Turchescha*.

Constantine Mihailović of Ostroviča had a more or less similar life experience of Ottoman realities as Angiollelo. He was a Serbian

35 "...uno chiamato ottomano, piccolo signore, nato in Ottomangic..." (Jacopo di Promontorio). Pertusi 1970, 479. "...Otthomanus quidam exigui tantum census et obscuri inter privatos nominis..." (Secundino, *de Familia Otthomanorum Epitome*). Philippides 2007, 58.

36 Angiollelo had actually provided the material and early drafts of that work, while the final draft was completed by Donado da Lezze around 1514. Pertusi 1970, 480.

37 Nicol 1997, xxi-xxii.

38 "*La progenie della casa ottomana principiò del 1300 di Christo, il primo di questa gente fu villano, arator, et zapatore di terra per nome chiamato Zich. Costui hebbe un figliuolo alla morte sua, di anni 15, per nome chiamato Ottomano, dal quale fu denominate la casa ottomana*". Ursu 1909, 4.

39 "*Cominciò circa al 1300 de la Natività di Cristo avere nome, forze e reputazione Ottoman figliuolo di Zich, il quale fu di bassa condizione*". Michelacci 2005, 73-74.

soldier, that was taken prisoner during the Ottoman capture of Novo Brdo (1455). Then, he served in the Ottoman army as a *kapıkulu* soldier and eventually converted to Islam. He was captured again, by the Hungarians this time, in 1463, reverted to Christianity and finally settled in Poland. His *memoirs*, originally written in a non-surviving Serbian version (c. 1498), were later translated in Czech and Polish and became popular in central and eastern Europe.⁴⁰ His description of the origins of the Osmanli house relates that: “*The Turkish emperors are called Otmanowiczy, for Otman’s reign was the earliest beginning. Otman was a peasant, or a man of humble birth, but an excellent husbandman. He had thirty plows ...*”⁴¹ In another passage too he alludes to Osman’s peasant identity having him to sell grain in a Byzantine town.⁴² Imber has properly interpreted the depiction of Osman in the two texts as rising from a humble peasant background, as reflecting the views and ideas of *kapıkulu* troops, which the two authors would naturally be very familiar with. Most of those soldiers were of a peasant background, therefore, it would be logical to imagine their sultan as distantly originating from a similar background as theirs.⁴³

A generalizing view on all accounts discussed above allows us to basically distinguish the idealizing discourses of Osmanli origins into two categories: those that proposed a noble ancestry and background, against those that pertained to a humble one. The former include the accounts of all Ottoman writers, as well as the Greek texts of Kritoboulos and Chalkokondyles. To these, we can add the brief reference by Andrea Cambini about Osman, being: “*uno certo Ottomano huomo fra Turchi di grand nobilita et di mediocre riccheze ...*” (without any other details about his origins).⁴⁴ On the other hand, Spandounes, Angiollelo and Mihailović attribute a humble background to the house of Osman.

40 Pertusi 1970, 483. Nicol 1997, xxii-xxiii.

41 Stolz and Soucek 1975, 31.

42 Stolz and Soucek 1975, 32.

43 Imber 1994, 128, 136-37.

44 Cambini 1529, 3a-b.

The discourses about Osman's supposed nobility do not need any special comment about their idealizing character. However, his depictions as arising from a humble background could be idealizing too, and this is the case indeed with the three accounts discussed here. The model of "New David" was not uncommon in general as an element of dynastic ideological constructs. It was strongly idealizing to depict a ruler as rising from humbleness to glory by God's favour and his own extraordinary qualities.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the image of an ideal future emperor, who would rise from humbleness, is quite common in discourses of political prophecy and eschatological ones, which are encountered in various historical contexts.⁴⁶

None among the three writers of the "humble model" wrote in a pro-ottoman perspective. On the contrary, all perceived their work as contributing to the necessity of making the enemy known. Spandounes, addressing the final recension of his work to *dauphin* Henry of France, openly stated that his text concerned the destruction of his own fatherland, and urged his addressee to take up arms for the defense of Christianity.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this perspective was not incompatible with the expression of respect toward the enemy, and the inclusion of idealizing images of his, either deliberately or not. In this respect, a distinction has to be made between Spandounes and the other two writers.

Angirollelo and Mihailović do not seem to consciously project an ideal image of sultanic origins. Angirollelo in particular had a negative view of Osman, describing him as "vicious" and "sinful".⁴⁸ Sustaining Imber's interpretation, the two writers simply reflect the views of their fellow janissaries, without necessarily realizing a reproduction from their part of the idealizing element of those views. Adding more to Imber's comments, it can be supported that janis-

45 Cf. the relevant comment by Athanasios Markopoulos (1994, 163) with regard to Byzantine emperor Basil I (867-886).

46 Alexander 1985, 130, 153-54, 182.

47 Sathas 1890, 135-36.

48 Ursu 1909, 4. "*Era huomo vitioso, et di mala natura...*".

saries, and generally *gulams* in middle and high administrative and military posts, perceived themselves in an ideal condition by following a discourse that had their service under the Ottomans to have raised them from humbleness to prominence, and such a construct was crucial in guaranteeing their loyalty to the Ottoman rulers. This ideology is best exemplified in the speech that *grand vizier* Bayezid Paşa supposedly delivered to an assembly of Ottoman dignitaries in 1421, as cited by Doukas.⁴⁹

In contrast to Angiollelo and Mihailoviç, Spandounes rather seems to have consciously articulated an ideal image of Osman's ancestor. The duel story in particular, that Spandounes exposed as that man's first remarkable deed, is not encountered, to the best of my knowledge, in any earlier text from which he could have copied it. Spandounes probably introduced that story out of self inspiration. Even if he reproduced some record or hearsay of it whatsoever, he would realize its idealizing aspect in presenting Osman's ancestor as a "New David" defeating the Byzantine "Goliath", therefore he would opt to sustain it. Moreover, his descriptions of sultan Alaeddin's displeasure toward "Pazzo", even his plan to have him killed,⁵⁰ have a parallel in the biblical accounts of king Saul's attitude toward David.

Having distinguished the stories of Osman's background and ancestry into those that pertained to a noble model against those of the humble one, and having proposed that both models could be idealizing, it can be added here that his depiction as deriving from a noble background took enough time to emerge in an environment that widely acknowledged the dynasty's humble origins. Imber has noticed a trace of that older tradition, and also the evolving image of Osman from humble to noble in the text of Oruç. Contrary to the general view of his text, that acknowledged Osman's noble origins (citing the Oğuz genealogy etc.), Oruç at some point implies Osman's peasant identity, at least for some time during his young age, in having Ertoğrul to have given him fields, while later on Ertoğrul

49 Grecu 1958, 171.

50 Sathas 1890, 138-39.

and his sons appear to be pastoral leaders in control of summer and winter pastures, thus evolving from peasants to pastoralists.⁵¹

All previous depictions of humbleness that can be related with the Ottoman social and cultural context relate the notion of humbleness with peasant identity. Apparently, in the set of values and the mentality of many Turks, peasants were regarded as the lowest level in society, while pastoralists were much more highly esteemed, the more so of pastoral clan leaders who could even be considered a noble category. On the contrary, in the urban cultures of Byzantium and Renaissance Italy peasants were regarded as humble enough, yet pastoralists were considered the humblest. In this respect, Span-dounes could not realize the connotations of pastoralism in terms of the Turkish social imaginary, as they were reflected in his Turkish sources, therefore, he depicted his *pecorari* in a sense of utmost humbleness.

The distinction between the writers who advocated the noble model against those who pertained to the humble one demonstrates that the former can be identified as those who lived in the Ottoman empire and were Ottoman subjects, obviously including all the Turkish ones, as well as Kritoboulos and, probably, Chalkokondyles.⁵² Their depiction of the dynasty's noble origins obviously reflected the demands of official ideology in the second half of the 15th century. By then, the noble model had become a norm in Ottoman historical writing, however it cannot be ascertained as to whether it had spread in society and become popular yet. The janissary depictions of Osman's background, as they are reflected by Angiollole and Mihailović, point to the contrary, at least in so far as the janissaries are concerned. This might also be true for other social groups as well.

An example from Byzantine history that presents an exactly similar pattern concerns the depictions of emperor Basil I's (867-886) origins in official ideology. His humble origins and background were

⁵¹ Imber 1994, 128.

⁵² The other group of writers had an experience of living in the Ottoman environment too, but that was much anterior to their writing. Moreover, they took the pen after they had broken those ties.

properly acknowledged in his day,⁵³ as they are exemplified in an anonymous contemporary versed encomium, that praised him as a “New David”, and “*unknown to men but known to God*”.⁵⁴ His first depictions as deriving from a noble descent, more precisely from the Armenian Arsacids, emerged quite late during his reign, with Photios being claimed to have introduced them, then after his death, as they are exposed by his son (?) and successor Leo VI (886-912) in Basil’s funeral oration.⁵⁵ Some half a century later, however, the supposed utmost nobility of Basil’s origins had been fully consolidated. When his grandson, emperor Constantine VII (945-959), composed his biography, he presented him to descend from the Armenian Arsacids on his father’s side, and from both Constantine the Great and Alexander of Macedon on his mother’s side.⁵⁶

When the origins of a dynasty became a part of ideological discourses, not only their noble depictions but also the humble ones could be idealizing. In this respect, the case of Osmanli origins appears much similar to the patterns of the Byzantine example cited before. In the Ottoman case, the imagination of humbleness as pertaining to the dynasty’s origins resisted much longer in time. It was only during the 15th century that a supposed nobility of those origins emerged, gaining momentum in the second half of the century, when it became a norm of all historical writing that was composed in the Ottoman environment, not only by Turkish and generally Muslim writers, but also by the Byzantine ones, Kritoboulos and Chalkokondyles. Nevertheless, it seems that the humble perceptions of the sultans’ background had not lost their popularity in society yet. This conclusion can be deduced from at least the two non-Ottoman historical texts, the *Historia Turchesca* and the *Memoirs* of Constantine Mihailović, that reflect the views of the janissaries. In Italy and elsewhere in Christian Europe, it seems that the view of the Osmanlis as arising from a humble background predominated well into the 16th century.

53 Markopoulos 1994, 161, 163.

54 Agapetos 1989, 289, 293-94. Markopoulos 1994, 161.

55 Markopoulos 1994, 161-63.

56 Bekker 1838, 212-16.

Pertaining to this view, Theodore Spandounes, though not a pro-Ottoman writer, consciously depicted that humbleness in an idealizing perspective, by articulating an image of Osman's ancestor that parallels the biblical image of David.

Konstantinos Moustakas
Assistant Professor
Department of History and Archaeology
University of Crete
moustakas@phl.uoc.gr



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Εξιδανικεύσεις της καταγωγής των Οσμανιδών στα ιστορικά
κείμενα του 15ου και του πρώιμου 16ου αιώνα

ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ ΜΟΥΣΤΑΚΑΣ

Περίληψη

ΜΙΑ ΑΠΟ τις όψεις της ιστορίας των Οσμανιδών που σταδιακά θεωρήθηκε μέσα από ένα εξιδανικευτικό πρίσμα είναι και η υποτιθέμενη καταγωγή τους. Η παρούσα μελέτη επιδιώκει να εμπλουτίσει τη συζήτηση περί του συγκεκριμένου θέματος, συνεχίζοντας την εκτενή διαπραγμάτευσή του από τον Colin Imber, εισάγοντας επιπλέον κείμενα και θεματικές. Ενώ στο επίπεδο της ανάλυσης, προτείνεται η κατάταξη των σχετικών θεμάτων σε γενικότερα μοντέλα, που στη συγκεκριμένη περίπτωση είναι το μοντέλο της ευγενούς καταγωγής έναντι αυτού της ταπεινής.

Η αρχικά κυρίαρχη, για μεγάλο χρονικό διάστημα, θεώρηση της δυναστείας ως έχουσας ταπεινή καταγωγή, σταδιακά έδωσε τη θέση της σε μια αντίληψη περί παλαιόθεν ευγένειας. Η εξέλιξη αυτή πραγματοποιείται στη διάρκεια του 15ου αιώνα, και κατά το δεύτερο μισό του αιώνα αυτού καθίσταται κυρίαρχη στην επίσημη ιδεολογία, καθώς και στις ιστορικές συγγραφές που συντίθενται εντός της οθωμανικής επικράτειας από υπηκόους του οθωμανού σουλτάνου, όχι απαραίτητα τούρκους ή γενικά μουσουλμάνους, όπως δείχνουν οι περιπτώσεις του Κριτόβουλου, πιθανώς και του Χαλκοκονδύλη.

Η παλαιότερη όμως αντίληψη περί ταπεινής καταγωγής της δυναστείας δεν είχε ακόμη εκλείψει στην αντίληψη ευρύτερων κοινωνικών ομάδων. Ενδεικτικές είναι οι αναφορές δύο χριστιανών συγγρα-

φέων διαβιούντων εκτός της οθωμανικής επικράτειας κατά το χρόνο της επεξεργασίας του έργου τους, του σέρβου πρώην γενιτσάρου Κωνσταντίνου Μιχαήλοβιτς, και του ιταλού Αντζιολλέλο, που είχε υπηρετήσει στο παλάτι και στο οθωμανικό στράτευμα ως «σκλάβος του σουλτάνου». Αμφότεροι φέρουν τον Οσμάν να προέρχεται από ένα αγροτικό υπόβαθρο, και οι αναφορές τους αυτές έχουν ερμηνευθεί ως αντανakλούσες τη γενικότερη αντίληψη των γενιτσάρων, με την οποία οι δύο συγγραφείς κατά τεκμήριο ήταν καλά εξοικειωμένοι. Ο τρίτος χριστιανός, μη οθωμανός, συγγραφέας που έθιξε, και μάλιστα εκτενώς το ζήτημα της καταγωγής του Οσμάν, ο Θεόδωρος Σπανδούνης, με τις προσλαμβάνουσές του διαμορφωμένες από τη βυζαντινή και την ιταλική αστική κουλτούρα, δεν μπορούσε να αντιληφθεί την αξιολογικά υπέρτερη θέση των νομάδων στην τουρκική αντίληψη· και έτσι τις αναφορές των τουρκικών πηγών του περί της νομαδικής ιδιότητας των προγόνων του Οσμάν τις αντιλήφθηκε ως δηλούσες ταπεινή καταγωγή.

Γεγονός είναι πάντως ότι εξιδανικευτικό δεν ήταν μόνο το μοντέλο της ευγενούς καταγωγής, αλλά και αυτό της ταπεινής. Σε πολλές περιπτώσεις μοναρχικής ή δυναστικής ιδεολογικής εκφράσεως, από διαφορετικές ιστορικές οντότητες, εντοπίζεται η ιδεατή θεώρηση ενός μονάρχη ως «Νέου Δαβίδ», για να χρησιμοποιήσουμε έναν χαρακτηρισμό γνωστό από τις διατυπώσεις της βυζαντινής πολιτικής ιδεολογίας. Από τα κείμενα που προβάλλουν την ταπεινή καταγωγή του Οσμάν, οι Αντζιολλέλο και Μιχαήλοβιτς πιθανώς δεν αντιλαμβάνονται τις εξιδανικευτικές συνδηλώσεις αυτής της αντίληψης των γενιτσάρων την οποία αναπαράγουν, και οπωσδήποτε δεν επιδιώκουν να τις προβάλλουν συνειδητά. Ο Σπανδούνης, αντίθετα, αν και το έργο του δεν διακρίνεται από φιλοθωμανική διάθεση, δεν διστάζει να συγκροτήσει και να προβάλλει συνειδητά μία εξιδανικευτική εικόνα του προγόνου της οθωμανικής δυναστείας στον οποίο αναφέρεται, εκθέτοντας τη δράση του μέσα από εμφανείς παραλληλισμούς με τις βιβλικές αναφορές περί του Δαβίδ.

