The Making of the Modern Greeks

The Making of the Modern Greeks:

1400-1820

By

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To my wife Aliki Vaxevanoglou
and my son Stefanos Pizanias
For the future

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PROLOGUE

The Mediterranean Sea is the meeting point of the extremities of three out of the five continents of our planet: Europe, Asia and Africa. It was in the eastern Mediterranean basin that a long tradition of imperial power was born and developed: a tradition of conquering the known world, the world that was conceivable. Conceivable, with a horizon continuously broadening in terms of its political features, that is to say, the organization of imperial power, the expanse of conquered territory, and the populations ruled over by each empire. Egyptians, Hittites and, finally, Persians were the first who aspired to consummate imperial sovereignty over the entirety of the arc that comprised the eastern Mediterranean, from the Nile to the western coasts of the Balkan Peninsula. The Athenians, first and foremost, together with the Spartans, halted the Persian expansion in the European continent. Their successes, *inter alia*, enabled them –particularly the founders of political democracy, philosophy and science–, thanks to the complex strategic alliances they concluded with other Greek cities, on some occasions to expand old settlements, on others to subdue important coastal locations in the eastern Mediterranean basin.

The first to unite the lands of the eastern Mediterranean under a single imperial power were the Macedonians. The key prerequisite for establishment of the first but short-lived experiment in empire in the eastern Mediterranean was not just the military elimination of Athens as a city-state, given that it was already weak. For the Macedonians, the prerequisite was clearly the deposition of Athens as a symbol of democracy, which was a form of political organization antagonistic to the Macedonian despotism. For Philip II, this aspiration was the primary strategic objective. The defeat of Athens and its allied cities at the battle of *Chaeronea* meant that the Macedonians had succeeded where the Persians had failed. It was only then that the implementation of the campaign of conquest, whose aim was the defeat of Persia, began. It is evident that, in the course of the Macedonian conquest, the world was constantly expanding. For as long as there was land, there were prospects for the army, as well. The fact that Alexander roamed with his soldiers as far as today's India, after his victory over Persia, pursuing a geopolitically incoherent course of conquest, shows how impulsive and, so, inherently ephemeral, the first attempt at predatory state-building (*état prédateur*) in the eastern arc of the Mediterranean was. Perhaps this is why

it became a flawed cosmopolitan entity that soon dissolved in a scattering of kingdoms.

The Romans, after vanquishing Carthage, were the first to establish a cohesive expansionist state. They united the entire Mediterranean littoral, together with a wide expanse of the European continent, at the same time introducing all the rules for imperial domination that would be implemented by the later Byzantine and Ottoman empires. The establishment of a one-person, imperial type of power that began at the time of Octavian Augustus, was completed with the definitive establishment of the empire in the East. The Eastern Roman Empire, or else the so-called Byzantine Empire, consummated the concentration of all power in the person of the Emperor, as a vivid reflection of the single and unique God. Christianity was imposed as the official religion of the empire, succeeding, with the aid of the state structures, in uniting the various, until then usually mutually hostile, Christian churches. The hegemony of the Christian religion was grounded in its organizational and ideological activity, as well as in the common rules it elaborated through the first Ecumenical Synods. It was, however, based first and foremost on its alliance with the main body of the imperial legions of Constantine the Great and, secondarily, on the power of the Eastern Roman state. Christianity functioned as a unifying ideology of the state and, considerably later, of the subject populations. At the same time, it comprised the legitimating foundation of imperial power. By the time of Justinian, a process of successive shifts had been completed: from the Athenian democracy to the Macedonian imperial despotism, then to the secular Roman imperial *res publica*, and –ultimately– from the latter to the Byzantine theocracy, where religion legitimated the political and legislative monopoly of the emperor, with his state defined as "the vessel of God". Thus, the first purely theocratic state after Persia had been born from the cradle of imperial Rome. Notwithstanding the difference in religion, in some of its fundamental characteristics it was reminiscent of Xerxes' and Darius' empire.

The basic structure of the expansionist state, i.e. the relationship between the one-person state power and the various, small, subject communities across a vast expanse of territory, inevitably conducted all political conflicts to the summit: the emperor. Apart from that, the relentless competition among the ruling élites of the Christian empire who had claims on the throne, was an inherited behavioural pattern of aristocrats, from Roman times onward. The most significant conflict around the claim for imperial power in Byzantium –most significant in that it weakened the imperial power historically, i.e. irrevocably– began around the beginning of the second millennium. Quite a few competing élites groups of the Empire,

starting from the potentates in the Eastern administrative regions (*Themata*), gradually attempted, possibly by means of military force, to transform the free, peasant soldiers into serfs, and to convert military lands of the state into seigneurial lands. More than one emperor reacted because they were losing military, economic and, thus, political power. These conflicts weakened the cohesion of the central institutions that secured the empire's political effectiveness, decisively facilitating, as it appears, the secessionist tendencies of subordinate princes. The internal decomposition of imperial power provided political grounding for movements of annexation by external forces, such as the Seljuks who encroached lands on the southern and eastern Asia Minor front, the Turcomans, and, after that, the Latin crusaders, culminating in the first fall of the Empire's capital in 1204.

It is my observation that the comprehensive international literature on empires continues, in general, to respect the familiar, tripartite, chronological division in historical scholarship between antiquity, the medieval period and the modern age, notwithstanding some significant exceptions. If we distance ourselves, to some extent, from the specific characteristics of each empire, we can trace the reproduction of the imperial phenomenon in the Mediterranean for many centuries, a reproduction particularly stable in the Eastern arc where it arose. I believe that the transitional periods –such as the division of the Roman Empire into East and West, and the period of transition from the Byzantine to the Ottoman Empire– can be perceived as processes of reproduction of the imperial phenomenon, processes which, in the final analysis, proved to be a historically stable factor in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is a phenomenon of *longue durée*, with corresponding political, social and economic implications. In this study, we interpret the Ottoman Empire as the final variant of the imperial phenomenon in the eastern Mediterranean world, as the last inheritor of all the empires that had preceded it in the region, starting with the Macedonians –a system that was halted for the first time by the Greek Revolution.

CHAPTER 1

FROM THE CRISIS OF BYZANTIUM TO OTTOMAN HEGEMONY

END OF THE 13TH TO THE END OF THE 15TH CENTURY

Introduction

On what basis was the Ottoman Empire founded? The objective of establishing an empire cannot be regarded as a given fact for the Ottoman *ghazis* or for the brotherhoods of *dervishes* –at least not from the outset. What was given, was the holy war against the world of the "infidels", for the propagation and strengthening of the true faith. For the first Ottomans, it was the Eastern Roman Empire that, more than any other state, was the authentic voice of the infidels. The conquest of Byzantium was not and could not be, either materially or culturally, a clear and calculated objective that could motivate wars. Logically, in the process of local, holy wars against Christians and other forces in the Eastern regions of Asia Minor, through strategic needs and for ideological motives, the Ottomans reshaped the expansionist state, at the same time discovering the imperial model. They discovered the idea of world-wide empire. It was a model as grandiose as the pre-existing models in the Mediterranean, and, thus, befitting the grandeur of the God of Islam. A powerful state, able to give political substance to his grandeur and glory and, more practically, power to his faithful warriors.[1] Although the schema of holy war as a motive for conquest situates us in an appropriate perspective for considering the nature of these military conflicts in terms of an ideological rationale, it also has the disadvantage of fostering a certain idealization of historical reality. In order to relativize this, let us modify our perspective.

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[1] Halil İnalcık**,** "The question of the emergence of the Ottoman State", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, II, 2/1981-1982. For the opposing viewpoint see, George T. Dennis, "Defenders of the Christian People: Holy War in Byzantium", in Angeliki E. Laiou–Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Byzantium and the Muslim World. The Crusades from the Eastern Perspective,* Dumbarton Oaks 2000.

On the part of the Byzantines, major, internal differentiations had developed within the imperial state. They were manifested in clashes between the key Byzantine power groups, that is to say, between the emperor and palace aristocracy, i.e. some of the great generals, primarily in the Eastern districts (*themata*) of the empire. The conflicts between these two, most powerful groupings, in the Eastern Roman Empire, began around the final decades of the 10th century.[2] As dictated by a long-standing imperial tradition, these clashes between the various Byzantine leadership groups initially had only one objective: control of the imperial power.[3] Subsequently, this old aspiration underwent differentiation. It focused on the achievement of relative political autonomy by the various regions, well as on the control of the lands and their populations. This imparted to the Byzantine Empire the character of a voluntary union of the powerful, regional aristocracies with the imperial power. Did the rise of the regional *despotates* also signify the evolution of a variety of feudal relations?[4] At any rate, in parallel with the conflicts between the Byzantine élites of the 11th century, and, naturally, not unrelated to the weakening of the political power of Byzantium, the attacks of the Seljuks began, again, for the umpteenth time, primarily in the eastern regions (*themata*) of the Asian section of Byzantine territory. The two well-known, great defeats of the corresponding Byzantine emperors by the Seljuks, at Manzikert in 1071 and at Myriokephalon a little over a century later, mark the beginning of the disintegration of the Asian section of the empire. No other central power came to fill the gap. The collapse of the Byzantine state and the indifference

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[2] Évelyne Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec* : *Byzance, IXe-XVe siècle*, Albin Michel, Paris 2007, p. 217 ff. Also Luis Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance*, Albin Michel, Paris 1969, pp. 222-2.32

[3] Ibid p. 227 ff, and pp. 364-370**.** For the question of the Byzantine élite, Jean Claude Cheynet. *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance* (963-1210), Byzantina Sobornesia 9, Paris 1990. Also see a further investigation of the question by the same author, "L'aristocratie byzantine VIIIe-XIII siècle", *Journal des savants*, 2000, pp. 281-322.

[4] In her study *Un Moyen Âge grec* Évelyne Patlagean reintroduces, but in new and very interesting terms, the old question of feudalism in Byzantium, in a dialogue with the relevant literature. Also see her older article on the subject, "'Economie paysanne' et 'féodalité byzantine'", *Annales E. S. C*, No. 6/1975. In particular on the relationship between the organization of the land and Byzantine generals see, Paul Magdalino, "Byzantine Army and the Land: from Stratiotikon Ktema to Military Pronoia", *Byzantium at War (9th-12th century)*, ed. K. Tsiknakis, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute of Byzantine Research, Athens, 1997, pp. 15-36. A historicization of the content of the historical definitions is given by Alain Guerreau, "Fief, féodalité, féodalisme. Enjeux sociaux et réflexion historienne", *Annales E. S. C*, 1/1990.

of the Seljuk victors in regards to any notion of completely taking over the Asian part of the empire, enabled the populous Turcoman tribes to expand, until they occupied almost all of Asia Minor. At the same time and in the same former Asiatic territory of the empire, a series of events such as military conflicts between the Ghazi *beys* who fought initially in the name of the Seljuk emirs, and a succession of alliances alternating with wars against the Turcoman tribes, together with the wars against the defecting Latin mercenaries initially in the employ of the Byzantine emperors, all led to the political fragmentation of the territory of Asia Minor. The consequence was the creation of conditions of total lawlessness, if not the destruction of the most basic material prerequisites for the survival of the populations in many parts of Asia Minor.[5] From 1208 to 1261, the Empire of Nicaea did not succeed in restoring political unity of its population or of its territory. Its power was limited, to a large extent dependent on alliances with certain Ghazi *beys*, on a mercenary army, and, at times, on Turcoman irregulars.[6] Within the rather volatile correlation of forces among the various protagonists who allied with each other and vied for predominance in unstable combinations, the territory of the erstwhile Byzantine state had dissolved into a plethora of sovereign territories.[7] Each of them corresponded to one of the many warring power centres.[8] The imperial model that had been established in the Roman, if not in the Macedonian times, retained its lustre and power, and was at the epicentre of the conflicts. The rulers of the sovereign territories, such as Stefan Dušan, claimed the imperial model for themselves or, at minimum, sought to be part of it, allying themselves with or fighting against the Byzantine emperor of their time, who was none other than the ruler in occupation of Constantinople.[9] The symbolic prestige of the seat of the empire aroused political expectations even in distant European leaders, but nobody acquired the power to pursue such a quest.[10] From 1204 until the definitive fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans two and a half centuries later, the empire made a temporary recovery in two brief periods. The first one was until

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[5] Spyros Vryonis, *The decline of mediaeval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Islamization process (11th-15th century),* Athens 1996, p. 61ff.

[6] Donald M. Nicol, *The last centuries of Byzantium*, Athens 1999, pp. 15-72.

[7] Historic cartography highlights this fluidity in bold relief see, www.euratlas.com

[8] For a collection of studies on many of the sovereign territories constituted in the period between 1204 and the end of the 15th century see, Angeliki Laiou (ed.), *Urbscapta. The Fourth Crusade and its consequences. La IVe Croisade et ses conséquences*, Paris 2005.

[9] Évelyne Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec,* p. 287 ff.

[10] Ibid, p. 327 ff.

1282, chiefly in the Empire of Nicaea, and the second one was from 1403, when the wars between the sons of Vayazit for the succession to their father's throne gave the Byzantines a temporary respite, a fortuitous and uncertain recovery. In both these periods, the recovery was followed by fierce internal political struggles, including military clashes and aggravation of the empire's political fragmentation.[11]

In the course of the two-and-a-half centuries prior to the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, the territories occupied by the Byzantine Empire were transformed at an implacable rate, and with relatively brief intermissions, into a boundless terrain of generalized military confrontation. In the 13th century, numerous *beylikia* sprang up throughout Asia Minor, each with fluid boundaries. There were also raids from the Mongols in the northern and eastern regions of the former Byzantine territory, and even local Balkan principates, Western protectorates and dukedoms, not to mention semi-independent cities in the wake of uprisings. Finally, despotates were established, and, from the mid-14th century, *beylikia* appeared on European territory.[12] Because of their great duration and intensity, the wars were catastrophic in their consequences for the populations of the former Byzantine regions. In these conditions of protracted social insecurity, to the frequent accompaniment of catalytic disasters, we may well surmise that the populations living in the Eastern parts of the Empire would probably aspire to the stabilization of the conditions of social security, rather than engage in consideration about the religion of the power that would be imposing the peace.[13]

The little sultanate of the Ottomans, which was established by the Ghazi forerunners of Osman in the north of Asia Minor towards the end of the 13th century, developed into the later Ottoman Empire. The imperial Ottoman state was forged in a multitude of protracted clashes between antagonistic systems: the nomadic tribal system of the Turcomans and, mainly, the Golden Horde of the Mongols, the small in size, expansionist *beylik*, the Latin baronies and dukedoms and, naturally, the far more effective and attractive system of the Eastern Roman Empire, i.e. the centuries-old imperial tradition.[14] This last-mentioned system comprised a model at that time, notwithstanding the fact that, in the way it had been expressed for centuries, it had irrevocably entered into a crisis of territorial sovereignty

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[11] Donald M Nicol, *The last centuries*, p. 73ff, 530-576.
[12] The Muslim *beylikia* in Asia Minor have been mapped and dated by S. Vryonis, *The decline of Mediaeval Hellenism in Asia Minor*, p. 225.
[13] A similar point was made by S. Vryonis, *The decline*, pp. 242-244.
[14] See the questions raised by Tim Jacoby, "The Ottoman State: A Distinct Form of Imperial Rule?", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2/35/2008.

and, even worse, into a process of decomposition of its political hegemony. We know that, in any case, what remained of the Byzantine Empire had been defeated by Islam decades before the fall of Constantinople, certainly since the defeat of the Bulgarian forces at the Evros River in 1371. By 1402, Bayezid I had established the first completed form of the Ottoman Empire and controlled large sections of the Balkans. The defeat of Bayezid I by the Mongols during the same year at Ankara, and the subsequent clashes between his sons in their claim for the throne, did not prevent the Ottoman imperial system from reorganizing itself within a space of two decades and from increasing its power.

The Expansion of Islam

The Ghazi warriors of Islam, knights of the Crescent, began founding their states in Asia Minor in the 13[15]th century. The imperial model for uniting territory and controlling populations at that point in time embodied a centuries-old tradition in the Mediterranean, particularly in its east. Were the Ghazis aware of the imperial model, with the result that they wanted to appropriate it? I think that such a hypothesis, albeit plausible, does not correspond to the historical reality. It would be more logical to accept that the Ghazi knights of the Crescent had become familiar with the Byzantine imperial model, either through their acting, as we said, as mercenaries or allies of the Byzantines or by virtue of their continual protracted raids against the Christians of each of the Eastern border regions of Byzantium. These raids did not differ in any fundamental way from the raids conducted by leading groups of other regions in the European continent, such as the socially up-and-coming knights of the West, from around the 8th century onwards, and the corresponding Byzantine *akrites* or border guards. The repeated raids in the name of propagating the faith of each of the hordes, provided the victor with hosts of slaves along with other sources of wealth, and the large states achieved a certain stabilization of their geopolitical position. Of course, despite the crucial significance of plunder and pillage for the perpetuation of the conquests of all the protagonists, the stable, basic source of wealth for all the states in every case was production, i.e.

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[15] Paul Wittek, *The genesis of the Ottoman Empire*, Athens 1988, pp. 33-53.

New realms on the territory of Byzantium between 1204 and 1265

Empire of Trebizond

Mongols and Seljuk Turks

Lesser Armenia

Antiochia

Mamelukes

Kingdom of Cyprus

Wallachia

Bulgaria

Byzantium

Serbia

Byzantium

Despotate of Epirus

Great Wallachia

The Duchy of Athens

The Duchy of Achaea

Despotate of the Morea

Duchy of the Archipelago
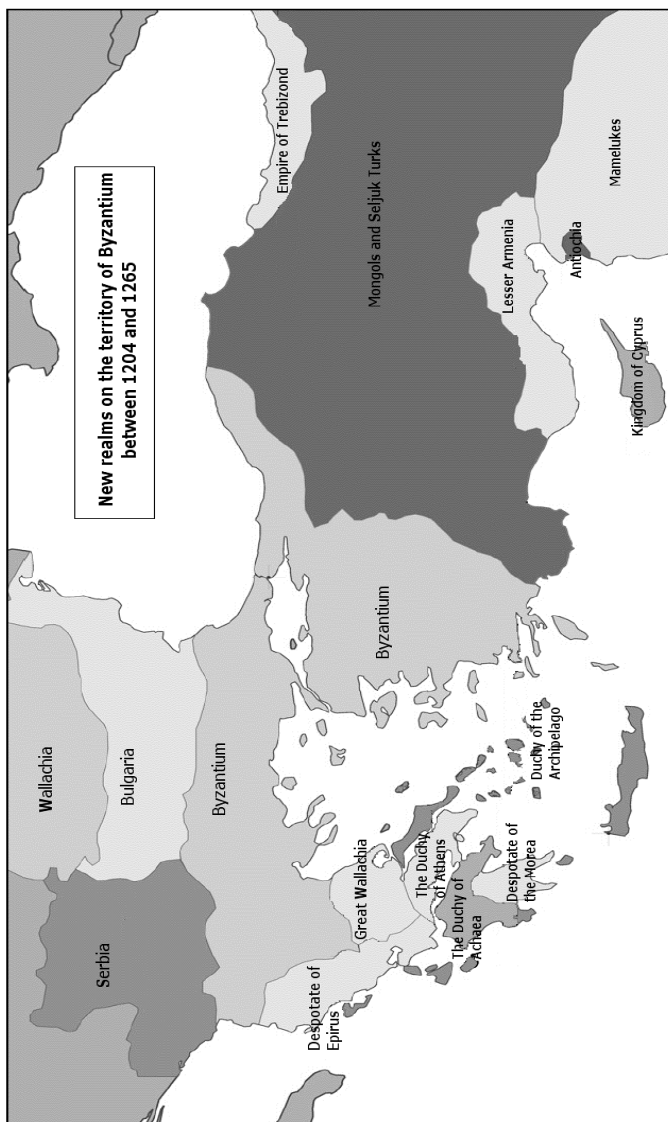
agriculture.[16] The second object of dispute between the opposing factions was, therefore, productive populations and the control of the cities.

So, the raids of the Ghazi horsemen of the Crescent, initially in Asia Minor from the 11th century onwards and, almost two centuries later, in the Balkans, were no different in terms of practice or motivation from the raids led by the Western and/or Byzantine leadership groups. As noted by Paul Wittek, when the Ghazi knights had established the first *beylikia* in Asia Minor, they began carrying out raids for the purpose of propagating the True Faith. The repetitive character of the continual raids of conquest enabled them to find out what they did not know, and, so, that they recreated the imperial model employing their own cultural criteria: war against the infidels in the name of the true faith, conquest of the known world to win supremacy for the authentic God, dominion of his word on Earth through the rule of his faithful warriors over the infidels, and peace for God's flock.[17] Of course, behind the ideological banner lies, first and foremost, political force and its reproduction through war, well as plunder as a necessary material prerequisite for war and, finally, the taxes imposed on the populations that were conquered and assimilated.

The expansionist, conqueror state (*état prédateur*), which we have already defined as the imperial model of power, is reproduced in a process of continuing expansion, at the same time generating its hierarchical pyramid, shaping its internal structures and allotting its offices. The constitution of the state was always based on a generalized distinction from the society it was conquering. It acquired supremacy over other societies and, subsequently, administered them, imposing its own particular principles, its own terms for the reproduction of its dominance.[18] Its rule was extrapolated from assumptions of religious faith, in terms of which every political action was assessed, along with all social practices. In brief, it was a system of theocratic rule, possessing all the requisite mechanisms for generating pre-modernist social consensus around its own dominance. It

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[16] Angeliki Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant society in the late Byzantine Empire*, Athens 1987, p. 192 ff.

[17] Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Ottoman State*, New York 2003, p. 131 ff. For the same subject, treated somewhat discursively see, Stanford J. Sow, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Empire of the Gazis*, Vol I, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 12 ff.

[18] Lawrence Krader, "The origin of the state among the nomads of Asia", in *Production pastorale et* société, pp. 221-234, Paris 1976, and Philip Burnham "Spatial mobility and political centralization in Pastoral societies", op. cit. pp. 349-360.

The first Muslim beyliks in Asia Minor
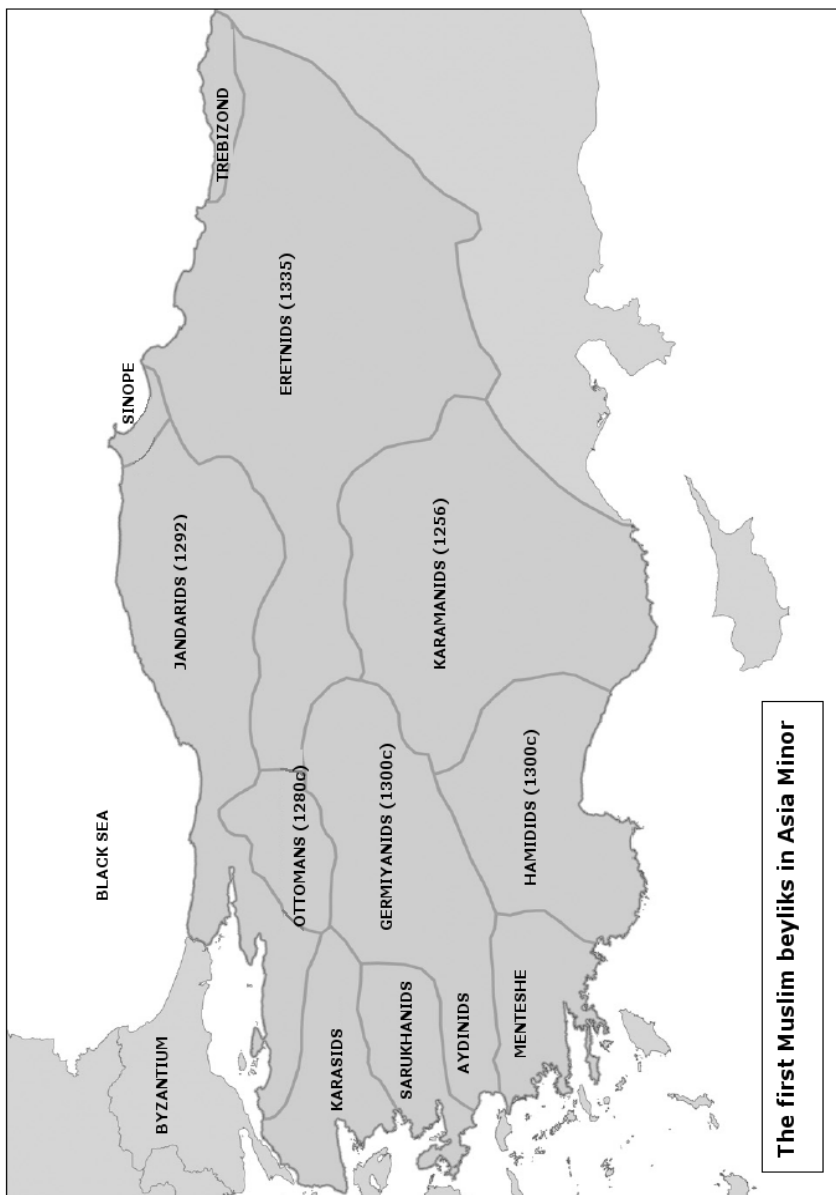
Source: Spyros Vryonis, *The decline,* p. 225.

also had at its disposal mechanisms for exercising ideological influence, if not hegemony, over the communities on which its supremacy was based.[19]

Behind the almost ceaseless frontier wars, chiefly in the cities of Asia Minor that had shifted towards Islam, sections of the urban population, mostly young, who had earlier played a role in the militia, adopted the institution and principles of *futuva* and accordingly organized themselves in brotherhoods of the same name, in the early thirteenth century.[20] The name *futuva* initially signified the guiding principle of the young people. It developed into an institution founded by networks of urban Muslim groupings, perhaps of the socially distinguished. It also prescribed the ethical model for its members, the sacred obligation, and the appropriate stance towards life, as defined in the predominant interpretation of the Koran corresponding to each current situation, an interpretation usually provided, in those days, by the brotherhoods of the Sufi dervishes.[21] The brotherhoods of the dervishes were the other significant élite propagating the religion of Islam, and the pole for legitimating the expansionist activity of the Ghazi beys initially, and later of the Ottomans.[22]

With the emergence of the *futuva* principles and organizations, the leadership groups of Ghazi warlords acquired shared religious models with the leadership groups of the urban populations, where they had consolidated their hegemony. They most probably also instituted a uniform system of secular social values, and, in all likelihood, a kind of common political identity. Through their leading social position, the *Ahis* (brothers), as adherents to *futuva* principles and as members of the corresponding brotherhoods, substituted for the local Muslim *ghazi* leaders, where they were not present.[23] The three groups –*ghazis*, *ahis*, and dervishes–, each with a different role, spearheaded the movement led by urban social groups, which promoted and consolidated Muslim expansionism in Asia Minor. This expansionism dates from around the time that the first competing Muslim *beyliks* were being formed in the 13th century, up to the time that the first significant, united Ottoman Empire came into existence, at the end

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[19] Halil İnalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest", *Studia Islamica*, II, pp. 103-129.

[20] Spyros Vryonis, *The decline*, p. 351. Also, Irene Melikoff, "L'origine sociale des premiers Ottomans", in Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389),* Rethymnon 1994.

[21] Ibid, pp. 350-354. For details of the early Ottoman state see, Georgios Georgiadis-Arnakis, *The first Ottomans. Contribution to the problem of the fall of Asia Minor Hellenism (1282-1337),* Athens 2008.

[22] See in relation to this Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, *History and legends of the old sultans 1300-1400,* Athens 1999, pp. 34-36.

[23] Spyros Vryonis, *The decline*, p. 352.

of the 14th century, an accomplishment of Bayezid.[24] During this period, the *ahis* almost completely lost the power and significance they had initially possessed, probably because their activity was increasingly being taken over by Ottoman state institutions.

The opposing trajectories of state institutions on the one hand and *ahis* on the other, are reflected in a certain interpretation of the Muslim historical period in question, an interpretation that emerged at that time: according to it, the initial expansion was to be attributed to the dominant war clan and its founder, Osman I Gazi.[25] We should, I think, see this account as a formal interpretation of origins of Ottoman beginnings, as a founding myth, offering powerful indications as to the real beginnings of a relatively deep-rooted Ottoman dynasty and, at the same time, of the first successful moves towards constructing sturdy institutions of state.[26] The fact that a single person is presented in the legend as the founder and originator of all the accomplishments of the Ottomans, should lead us to reflect not only on his bravery, of course, which is the main point of emphasis of all such founding myths, but on something different. As hegemon, Osman must have been the first tribal chieftain to succeed in securing autonomy and control, to some extent, of the decision-making process, which was, until that time, in the power of the Turcoman warlords' councils and the assemblies of every type of brotherhood. He secured autonomy in political decision-making, gradually turning it into a monopoly of the leader, and, probably, shaped basic, specialized, institutional means for exercising policy, first and foremost in his own *beylik*. Did the army gradually become the object of control by the emerging sultan? This is very probable, if indeed we link it to the janissaries. The corps of rifle-bearing janissaries, an invention of the Ottomans introduced around 1360 and a pioneering innovation in the military tactics of the time, was placed under the exclusive personal control of each sultan. It is very probable that this corps, of which we shall speak again presently, was the military force that secured for each sultan the monopoly of political decision-making over his high-ranking and powerful officials.

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[24] For the Muslim emirates in Asia Minor see in particular the contributions assembled in the volume of Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)*, Rethymnon 1994.

[25] Colin Imber, "The Legend of Osman Gazi", in Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (ed.), *op. cit*, and Irène Beldiceanu, "Les debuts: Osman et Orkan", in R. Mantran (Dir.), *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, Paris 1989, pp. 29-30.

[26] Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650. The structure of Power*, London 2002, p. 87 ff.

By the final decade of the 14th century up to 1402, the time of Bayezid, and, more comprehensively, by the termination of the conflicts between his sons for the succession, which ended in 1413 with the ascendancy of Mehmed I (Mehmed Çelebi), the basic structure of the Ottoman imperial state had been established.[27] The process of establishment of the structure was effected through a gradual shift of political decision-making, from the councils of the heads of the war bands to the special groups of *ghazis* and *ahis*, and from them to the imperial state, the officials, culminating, finally, around the middle of the 15th century, in the absolute personal power of the reigning sultan. Politically, the power of the sultan was underpinned by the state administration of the palace, the multitude of specialized schools for the training of the cadres of the state, the regular army, and, particularly, the infantry of rifle-bearing janissaries. Economically, he was in possession of everything in his empire, material wealth and lives. As the sole proprietor of persons and wealth, he had the monopoly over regulation of income, distribution of land and wealth in general, for the totality of subjects under his rule, and for his officials. Property was at every moment subject to recall, for everyone, on condition of course that the balance of forces made this possible.[28]

The political and ideological arc of support of the Ottoman central power was, thus, personalized in the reigning sultan. The sultan was Caesar and emperor, and from 1517 he was also a religious leader (*caliph*), representative of the community of the faithful, and in relation to him, all of his officials were, in terms of status, servants and slaves. This slave state (which amazed Machiavelli) professed a form of theocratic despotism that was consummated by Mohammed II the Conqueror, after the fall of Constantinople.[29] The historical precedent for the power of the sultan is, of course, the Caesaropapist form of absolute power of the Byzantine emperor.[30] The difference is that the régime of the Ottoman officials as servants and slaves, although such a logic was not absent from the Byzantine

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[27] Paul Wittek, "De la défaite d'Ankara à la prise de Constantinople", *Revue des études islamiques*, XII/1938, pp. 1-34.

[28] Gilles Veinstein, "L'Empire dans sa grandeur XVI siècle", in R. Mantran (Dir.), *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, pp. 167-169.

[29] Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, Princeton University Press 1992. Specifically on the State see, pp. 432-461.

[30] Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre. Étude sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantine*, Paris 1996, For the relation between the institutions of the caliph, the sultan, and the Roman emperor see, Paul Veyne, "Qu'était-ce qu'un empereur romain?", in Ibid, *L'empire gréco-romain*, Paris 2005.

court, appears to have more in common with despotism of the Eastern type.[31] The model that comes to mind is that of ancient Persia.

Let us, then, summarize the outline for the conquest. During the period of Ottoman expansion, the Muslim leadership élite gradually discovered the imperial model. They reconstituted it in their own terms and on their own account, and, little by little, made it an alternative to the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire. The historical process of recomposition of the imperial state began with simple actions, such as the traditional mass raids for purposes of plunder. As the conflicts between different forces sharpened, like for example in the *beyliks* of Asia Minor in the 13th century, the straightforward raids evolved into more complex acts of war against the hostile powers, usually neighbouring states, i.e. into acts with significant ideological implications. Due to this factor, complex alternating alliances proved necessary with existing political forces, namely with Byzantine generals, Latin knights, minor local *pronoiàrioi* (local elders), and others. Reaching the level of forging alliances, we are already in transition from mere war for booty, to war for expansion of political predominance – though we cannot, of course, disregard the booty motive as a factor, still. Political dominance requires control of every conquered population, its integration as much as possible into the mechanisms of reproduction of the new regime, i.e. into the mechanisms of State. It must have been around the middle of the 13th century that well-established state institutions began being founded in the cities, while the older institutions acquired new importance.[32] The local leading élites of the subject populations now tended to represent the new rulers on their own small, social and geographic scale –as in Roman times. In other words, the rulers acquired a firmly established local representation in the subject population or, in legal terms, installed local subordinate proxies, not only in the cities but also in their vast rural periphery. This process of consolidation of the new power was recognizable to the local populations from as early as the years of Byzantine, not to mention Latin, predominance. This meant, for a start, that Ottoman rule was becoming more easily acceptable. The conquered populations, for their part, willingly offered their fealty and provided tax revenues and manpower for further extension of conquest, in return benefiting from the security guaranteed by the victors' peace or, more correctly, protection and order.

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[31] Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the absolutist state. The House of Islam,* London 1979. For a detailed description see, Nicoara Beldiceanu, "L'organisation de l'Empire ottoman (XIVe-XVe siècles), in R. Mantran (Dir.), *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman,* pp. 119-123.

[32] For general information see, Nicoară Beldiceanu, *Le Monde Ottoman des Balkans (1402-1566): Institutions, Société, économie,* London 1975.

Through this process, the old, medieval relations of dominance began to be reconstituted by the Ottomans, and the expansionist occupation was gradually transformed into a well-established state, an agricultural theocratic despotism of the Eastern type.[33]

Defeat and incorporation of the Byzantine leadership groups

When referring to the Ottoman state, many Balkan historians of ethnocentric proclivities misrepresent the tremendous political power that it ultimately established, so much so that they make it appear as if the Ottoman domination over the Balkan populations was the result of constant application of pure armed violence, with the populations portrayed as something like prisoners of war, for century after century. On the other hand, the protracted, serious destruction caused by two and a half centuries of war, made the Pax Ottomanica, where it held, an acceptable solution for the subject populations. This latter viewpoint is advanced by Turkish historians, the best among them, though many cloud the specific historical reality by turning it into a chronologically indeterminate commonplace.[34] So let us make a start, remembering that, while in the course of the conquest, from the 13th century to the beginning of the 15th century, there were numerous popular insurrections, not to mention armed reactions by local leaders against the occupiers, these began to flag noticeably from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, by which time Ottoman sovereignty had become established, albeit not completely. One interpretation is that, in

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[33] The first empirical analyses of the Ottoman system of rule were conducted by Venetian ambassadors in Constantinople see, Lucette Valesi. *Venise et la Sublime Porte. La naissance du despote*, Paris 1987. For almost all the European powers, the Ottoman regime and, in particular, the tremendous power of the Sultan, was the mirror in which they saw their own structures of power reflected, assessed, and, as far as possible, defined. It was Machiavelli who set the ball rolling. The fact that Ottoman power mirrored 18th century Europeans is analyzed by Alain Grosrichard, *Structure du sérail: la fiction du despotism asiatique dans l'Occident classique,* Paris 1979. Finally, it was Montesquieu who established the Aristotelian terms 'Despot' and 'Despotate' for the Ottoman system of domination. There followed, in the 19th century, the more complicated analyses of J. Von Hammer, of Max Weber and others. Nevertheless, I think that of the purely scientific works of the 20th century, the analysis of Perry Anderson, notwithstanding its brevity, is to date irreplaceable.

[34] Halil İnalcık, "L'Empire Ottoman", *Actes du Premier Congrès international des études balkaniques et Sud-Est européennes*, Sofia 1969, pp. 80-86. Ibid. *The Ottoman Empire*, op cit. p. 49 ff.

Europe, too, during the rise of the absolutist states at about the same time, uprisings took place, but according to another interpretation, more widely accepted, the power of the Ottomans was such that it left no leeway for reactions to their domination. I believe that we should conclude the opposite, beginning from the end, and formulating something like an axiom.

In the Balkans, the Christian populations living under occupation – notwithstanding the exceptions that we will discuss later, such as the *armatoloì*– coexisted relatively peacefully with the conquerors, or, to be more precise, without considerable tension.[35] The duration of this coexistence, between four and seven centuries, depending on the occupied area, was too long for us to assume that it was maintained exclusively by the force of arms. The duration in itself, renders the assertion of numerous Turkish and European historians, that the initial relief of the conquered Balkan populations at the imposition of the Pax Ottomanica in the 16th century was extended, generally speaking, into the following centuries, equally untenable. But, in order to discuss these issues, let us return to the period of Ottoman conquest, to investigate the shaping of the relations of domination between the subject populations and the Ottoman rulers.[36]

From testimonies of Byzantine chroniclers of the time, we see that the conquest, as we have frequently underlined, was a process that proceeded on many fronts, through many-sided but ephemeral alliances.[37] Small and middle-ranking Byzantine *pronoiàrioi* were transformed of their own accord into Ottoman *timariot Sipahis* (cavalry), so as to be able to fight at the side of this or that Ottoman warlord, only to revert to their former status of Byzantine *pronoiàrioi*, when the ups and down of the war in their region shifted again. This stance did not appear all of a sudden, during the period of Ottoman conquest. It was a centuries-old practice, and it could only naively be seen as opportunistic. The local communities of peasants, communities with a culture different from that of imperial states, had become familiar with the Ottomans, as they had with other conquerors, during the various wars against the long-drawn-out episodes of imperial domination. We may, therefore, assume that the local communities had developed a kind of expertise in dealing with these conditions, some sort of

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[35] Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des États balkaniques jusqu'à 1924*, Paris 1925, pp. 22-25.

[36] Nikolaos I. Pantazopoulos, "Coexistence and confrontation in Balkan societies 17th-19th centuries", *Honorary tribute to N. I. Pantazopoulos*, Thessaloniki 2000, pp. 69-84.

[37] Georges Pachymérès, *Relations historiques*, translated and edited by A. Failler. Also see, Albert Failler "Chronologie et composition dans l'histoire de Georges Pachymérès (livres VII-XIII)", *Revue des etudes byzantines*, 48/1990.

a tradition, about which we know very little, but about which we can, to some extent, speculate. The movements of local populations from one warring party to its enemy, only to move back subsequently in the other direction, or even submit to some third warring party in the end, make it clear that every small local population, spearheaded by local, small-scale leadership groups, did not trouble itself with religious criteria (and, of course, in no way with national criteria that appeared much later, in any case) when deciding which side it would choose to support in these wars. Though there are very few relevant historical testimonies, I regard it as a plausible hypothesis that, in conditions of protracted war, what was decisive for the unarmed population was to survive and, only after that, to start wondering about the terms of one's survival.

The example of the minor *pronoiàrioi* acquires immediate political significance when the same volatility is to be observed in the alliances forged by powerful Byzantine officers, and indeed officers of crucial significance for the war, mighty generals in control of vast territories (*themata)* or aristocratic courtiers. At the beginning of this study we saw the Byzantine élite demanding the conversion of tracts of territory into personal *archonties*, lands they had formerly controlled on behalf of the emperor. Demanding, in other words the transformation of these lands into feudal estates and, so, the enslavement, the physical dependence of the population on the aristocratic *horodespotis*. The anti-Western stance of certain Byzantine aristocrats emerged as a result of the conquest of the empire by the Latin Catholics.[38] After the collapse of the Empire in 1204, and because this potentially favoured the further development of large and small *horodespoteies*, totally antagonistic vested interests emerged between Byzantine and Latin aristocrats, given that both sides wanted control not only of offices but also of the lands and the population.[39] Anti-Western as they were, with interests opposed to those of the Latins, it is in no way surprising that Byzantine aristocrats and generals established mixed military formations with Ottoman warlords, seeking, through such an alliance, to reinforce their relative strength, the control of their areas and probably the Orthodox faith against the Catholic.[40] Those, in any case, were the terms –when they were able to articulate terms– that the Byzantine generals submitted to their

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[38] Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580: From Lyons to Alcazar*, London 1992, pp. 49-79.
[39] Alain Ducellier, "Le rôle de la fortune foncière à l'époque de la conquête turque", in *Rich and poor in the society of the Greek-Latin East*, C. A. Maltezou (ed.), Venice 1997, pp. 71-72.
[40] Ibid, pp. 53-64. Particularly Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the early Ottoman State*, p. 115 ff.

Muslim allies, possibly exploiting other parallel rivalries between the Ottomans and the independent Seljuk beys.[41] They went into every alliance with all their power, assembling semi-independent, mixed unions of conquest for the purpose of waging war.[42]

The ephemeral and the more permanent alliances of many Byzantine aristocrats with the Ottomans arose out of the personal aspirations of some Byzantine office-holders, for maintaining the strength they had at their disposal, or simply out of a personal concern to secure their survival, or, indeed, due to purely ideological or, simply, political motives. These alliances did not differ in their basic structure from the concatenation of casual alliances concluded by the kings of the Byzantine states after 1204, and by the various Balkan hegemons (Serbs, Bulgars, Albanians, etc.), particularly during the periods of conflicts between themselves –the Byzantine civil wars, as they have been called.[43] Emperors, princes, local potentates, court officials, generals in the *themata*, petty local grandees, all seem to have been operating *ad hoc*, forging temporary or more permanent alliances with Ottoman warlords against Balkan Byzantine princes and vice versa, or, sometimes, they allied with some Latin knight.[44] Others, such as the local dignitaries Kladas of Mani and Bouas of Arta, well as local populations living in mountainous Central Greece, in the Himara region in today's Albania and elsewhere, resisted the Ottoman occupation but were ultimately assimilated as *rayah* by the Ottoman regime.

The Christian élites of the Balkans had been defeated, as we said, long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453. From 1371, the Byzantine Empire, or, to be more precise, what was encompassed by today's Eastern Thrace and the capital, became a vassal state paying tribute to the Sultan. A few years later, an Ottoman judge was ruling on the differences between Ottomans and Byzantines.[45] Soon, the Bulgarian leaders found themselves in the same position, and, from 1389 onwards, after their defeat at the battle

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[41] Nicolas Vatiny, "L'ascension des Ottomans (1362-1451)", in R. Mantran (Dir.) *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, pp. 38-41.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Many such sporadic cases are mentioned by George Ostrogorsky, *Histoire,* pp. 520-574.

[44] One case in Moldavia and Wallachia is analyzed by Oana Rizescu, "Un jeu politique avec trois partenaires. La corruption ou le ver dans le fruit", in *International Roundtable of the Marie Curie program for European Ph. Ds in Comparative History. Theory and Anthropology of European Legal Systems*, (posted at http://www. n. iorga. home/ro/oana).

[45] Konstantinos G. Pitsakis (ed.), *Draft Laws or Hexabiblos of Konstantinos Armenopoulos,* p. 9, Athens 1971.