

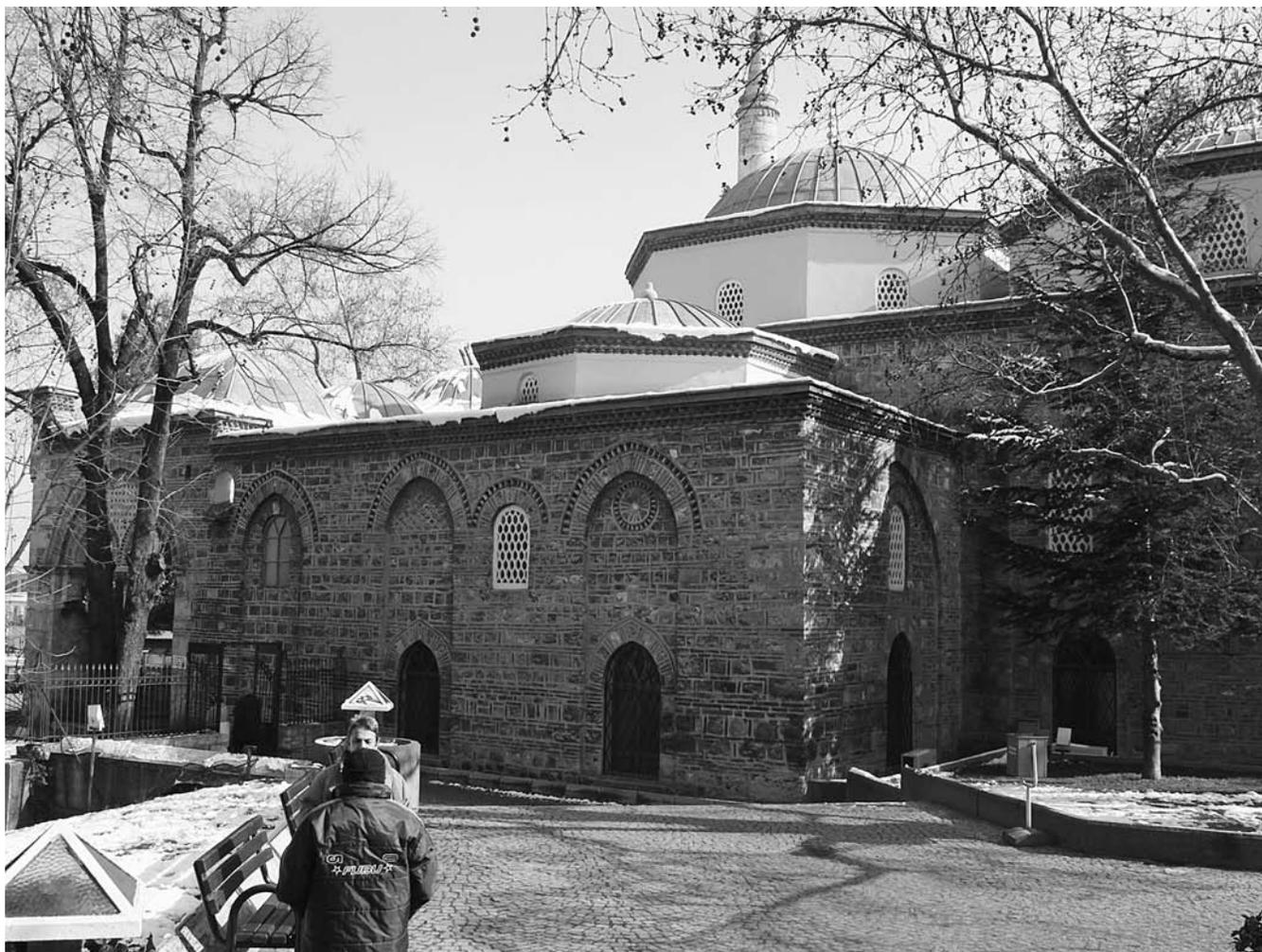
**Orhan Gazi** (1324–1362) *second ruler of the Ottoman dynasty* Orhan Gazi was the son of OSMAN I (?–1324?), the founder of the Ottoman imperial dynasty; Orhan's mother was the daughter of the sheikh Edebali. Orhan inherited the Ottoman emirate from his father in 1324 and expanded it to both Anatolia and the Balkans. Unlike his father's reign, the expansion and consolidation of Orhan's power is well documented. Orhan founded several mosques, dervish lodges, charitable institutions, and schools in the many important cities he conquered. In accordance with tradition, upon his ascendancy Orhan struck a silver coin, called an akçe, bearing his name. According to Turkish tradition, in 1299, Orhan married Nilüfer, the daughter of the Byzantine lord of Yarhisar (an unidentified fortress in the Sakarya River region in northwestern Asia Minor, Turkey). Their son, Süleyman Pasha, the conqueror of the Balkans, was the heir presumptive. However, his untimely death in 1357 resulted in the succession of Orhan's other son who became the first Ottoman sultan, MURAD I (r. 1362–89).

Byzantine authors such as Nikephoros Gregoras (1295–1359) and the Byzantine Emperor John Kantakouzenos (1341–54), both contemporaries of Orhan, provided vivid information about his reign, accounts that are invaluable since most accounts from Turkish sources were written more than a century after his death and are of legendary nature. The only exception among the Turkish sources is the chronicle of Yahşi Fakih, the son of Orhan's imam or prayer leader, but this is preserved only as part of a 15th-century chronicle.

Orhan participated in many raids organized by his father, whose troops controlled the littoral opposite Byzantine Constantinople. Orhan's first major success

against the Byzantines came in 1326 with the conquest of the city of BURSA (Prousa), which then became the first Ottoman capital. This choice underlined Orhan's strategic interest against the neighboring BYZANTINE EMPIRE. His uninterrupted raids on Byzantine lands terrorized his Byzantine neighbors but also allowed him to amass great booty and to establish himself as a successful military leader in the eyes of wandering Turkoman tribes looking for employment. The Byzantine inability to react to this challenge is reflected in the defeat of the army headed by Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos (r. 1328–41) in Pelekanon in 1329. The defeat demoralized the Byzantines and encouraged Orhan to concentrate his efforts on conquering the cities of Bithynia which had long been under siege. In 1331, Nicaea (Izmit) surrendered, and although in 1333 the Byzantine Emperor was forced to pay a great sum per year for peace, in 1337 the port of Nicomedia (Izmit) also fell to the increasing might of the Ottomans.

This phase of animosity between the Byzantines and the Ottomans was replaced by a period of cautious alliance. During this time Orhan's involvement in the Byzantine civil war (1341–47) on the side of Byzantine Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–54) was more beneficial to the Ottomans than to the Byzantines. Orhan's troops, led by his son Süleyman Pasha, complemented Kantakouzenos' lack of manpower, but came at a price. The dynastic marriage between Orhan and Kantakouzenos' daughter Theodora shocked the Byzantines but apparently did little to restrain Süleyman Pasha's brutal activities in the Balkans. Nikephoros Gregoras attacked Kantakouzenos' choice of allies, and the emperor's own chronicle apologizes for the havoc inflicted by



The mosque of Orhan Gazi in central Bursa. (Photo by Gábor Ágoston)

the Ottomans in Thrace, lamenting his subjects' loss of property and the enslavement of many who were involuntarily transferred to Ottoman territories in Anatolia. In 1352 Ottoman troops, now thoroughly familiar with the topography of Thrace, acquired Tzymbe, their first fortress in Europe, and in 1354, as a result of a devastating earthquake that destroyed the walls of several cities, the Ottomans were able to occupy the strategic fortress of Kallipoli (Gallipoli).

Thus the period of Byzantine civil war both brought Orhan valuable territorial gains and raised the international profile of the Ottoman emirate. In the 1350s Orhan concluded his first Genoese-Ottoman treaty and was negotiating a marriage alliance with the Serbian king Stefan Dushan. Aware that continued Ottoman expansion was dependent on the development of a NAVY and fleet, Orhan annexed the adjacent Turkoman emirate of Karasi around 1346, thus gaining access to the Aegean Sea. In 1361, Orhan's final conquest was of Didymoteichon, another important Thracian city. Orhan died in

1362, leaving as his legacy a formidable regional state with significant territories in both Anatolia and Europe.

The structure of the Ottoman emirate under Orhan remains an area of heated debate among scholars. Byzantine contemporary sources stress only the pastoral nature of Orhan's state and the rigor of his raids, but Orhan's conquests and the consolidation of his holdings began to bring about remarkable new cultural effects. Through mixed marriages, Byzantine Christians in Anatolia lost first their daughters, then their religion, and last their language, a shift lamented by Gregory Palamas, the bishop of SALONIKA, in letters written while he was in captivity in Orhan's territory in 1354. Palamas grieved over the number of conversions to Islam and described a society that was already producing bilingual members accustomed to the habits of the conquerors, and while his account does shed some light on Christian and Muslim inter-communal affairs under Orhan's rule, it is not sufficient to explain the policies of Orhan toward his Byzantine Christian subjects.

This complex cultural moment has resulted in vigorous debate among scholars as to the nature of administration in the early Ottoman emirate. Some focus on the tribal nature of Orhan's state and concentrate on the concept of jihad (holy war) as the major driving force of expansion. Yet this view is challenged by Byzantine and Turkish accounts which report the participation of local Christians in the Ottoman expansion. In response, some scholars suggest that the local society was brought together by shared ideas and values regarding valor and by the already diverse nature of Muslim culture. Other scholars propose that the commingling of converts together with the Turkish people resulted in a new "race" that became the driving force of early Ottoman society, a theory that has found few supporters. A revised version of this argument proposed that the early administrative apparatus had largely adopted the Seljuk tradition modified in accordance with the "accommodationist" policies of the rulers to include numerous practices inherited from the conquered states. Within Orhan's early Ottoman state, then, emirs clearly saw the need to adopt customs and other elements of the conquered peoples, resulting in a hybrid that enabled the continued expansion of the state and which would come to be a fundamental characteristic of the emerging Ottoman Empire.

Eugenia Kermeli

**Further reading:** Halil İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600* (London: Phoenix, 1994); Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

**Osman I (Osman Gazi)** (?–1324?) *founder of the Ottoman dynasty* Osman I, son of Ertoğrul and grandson of Süleyman Shah, is the acknowledged founder of the Ottoman (Osmanlı) imperial dynasty, also known as "the House of Osman." Reliable information regarding Osman is scarce. His birth date is unknown and his symbolic significance as the father of the dynasty has encouraged the development of mythic tales regarding the ruler's life and origins, however, historians agree that before 1300, Osman was simply one among a number of Turkoman tribal leaders operating in the Sakarya region. During the first decade of the 14th century, shrewd military tactics and good fortune enabled the ambitious Osman to conquer vulnerable but important territories from the BYZANTINE EMPIRE and to accumulate these holdings into his own nascent empire. Osman is thought to have died shortly after the conquest of Prousa (BURSA, Turkey) on April 6, 1326. He was succeeded by his son ORHAN GAZI (r. 1326–59).



The tomb of the eponymous founder of the Ottoman dynasty Osman Gazi in Bursa, as restored in the 19th century. (Photo by Gábor Ágoston)

Osman's success seems to have been founded on his contact with the settled peasant population of the Bithynian countryside which fostered a sympathetic relationship with the local Byzantine population. This group had long been disenchanted with Byzantine rule which had imposed heavy taxes and provided inadequate security in the wake of destructive wars with Rome and the West. Because this Anatolian region was under constant attack from tribal Turkoman groups, individual populations established local alliances to provide for their own security, creating the opportunity for Osman to establish his interest in the northern part of Bithynia (Sakarya region) to the detriment of Byzantine holdings. After an important victory over the Byzantine army at Bapheus, a district around Izmit (Nikomedia) in 1301, Osman assumed undisputed leadership of a large number of independent Turkoman tribes. And in cooperation with these tribes and local Christian agents, Osman then launched devastating looting raids against the countryside surrounding great Bithynian cities. Through this plan, the Bithynian cities were cut off from their countryside and the consequent economic "strangulation" paved the way for greater territorial gains for Osman. Luck also allowed