



THE QUESTION OF THE FOUNDING OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND HOW IT SHOULD BE STUDIED

After the collapse of the state of the Seljuks of Anatolia under the pressure and oppression of the Mongols of Iran in the second half of the thirteenth century, a new political entity appeared in the fourteenth century on the Seljuk-Byzantine frontier in the extreme northwestern corner of Anatolia. Within a short time, less than a hundred years, it developed into a powerful state that ruled the Balkans and a large part of Seljuk Anatolia. The profound and lasting consequences that arose from this phenomenon can be considered one of the most fundamental issues of the history of the later Middle Ages. This subject, however, has not yet been properly addressed. It has not been rescued from the tales recorded by the medieval annalists and has remained an enigma until today.

In recent years, after the appearance of H. A. Gibbons' book entitled *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1916), the question of the founding of the Ottoman state has become the subject of research and disputes among Orientalists. Clément Huart, in the articles that he published concerning this book in *JA* and *Journal des Savants*, expressed certain reservations about its conclusions but generally accepted them and claimed that, thanks to this work, "we have escaped from the childish tales surrounding the beginning of Ottoman history."¹ The German Turkologist F. Giese, in an article that he wrote about this book, ac-

cepted some of Gibbons' conclusions but strongly criticized his basic theory about the founding of the Ottoman state and advanced some new ideas of his own.² Somewhat later, Rudolf Tschudi,³ W. L. Langer and R. P. Blake,⁴ and finally J. H. Kramers, who wrote the article on the Ottomans in *EI*^{1,5} studied this question to some degree. In addition to their work, a number of publications on certain points related to this problem have appeared in other places. Unlike Gibbons' book, however, most of them were not able to go beyond the narrow confines of the world of the Orientalists and remained unknown to historians in general. Nevertheless, despite all these works, which are satisfactory neither in quantity nor quality, and the optimistic conclusions of Huart, we must admit that the mystery surrounding the founding of the Ottoman state is still far from being solved.

It is for this reason, therefore, that this problem has been selected, which is as important as it is unknown, as the subject of this series of lectures. I will first summarize and criticize the most widespread opinions on this topic in order to show clearly our current elementary state of research. Then I will try to explain the kind of method one should follow, to the extent that the existing sources allow, in order to be able to shed light on this subject. And finally, I will attempt to present—in the most general fashion without going into detail—the results that can be reached according to this method and the questions that need to be answered but have not yet received attention. I do not claim to be able to solve quickly, especially in the limited framework of a few lectures, a puzzling problem like the founding of the Ottoman Empire, which up to now has not escaped from the traditions of the medieval annalists. Instead, it will be a great satisfaction to me if I can succeed in eliminating certain mistaken views on the founding of the Ottoman state and replace them, at least partially, with rational solutions.

A. Gibbons' Theory: Summary and Criticism

The most widely favored view today in Europe, not only among Turkologists, but also among historians in gen-

eral, concerning the question of the founding of the Ottoman state is that of Gibbons.⁶ After the Great War {i.e., World War I}, we find that he is always used "as the basic authority" on this subject, even, for example, in the general history series published in France. The author, who no doubt exerted great effort to produce his aforesaid work, succeeded in examining a number of secondary problems related to political and military history in a more serious manner than previous historians had done. He even made correct deductions about some fundamental questions. His idea, for instance, that the "Ottoman state was able to expand its territory in Anatolia only after the conquest of the Balkan peninsula" is quite right. Furthermore, he is also entirely correct in his opinion that "the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans were not raids made for the purpose of destruction and booty, but were part of a plan of settlement." Yet, despite these views, his basic thesis about the founding of the Ottoman state is too weak to be supported against the simplest historical criticism. Before proving this, let me first briefly describe the main features of his theory on this subject:

1. Ertughrul, the father of Osman, who gave his name to the Ottoman state, fled from Khwārazm in the face of the Mongol invasion. He was the chief of a small tribe which came to Anatolia in the reign of the Seljuk sultan 'Alā' al-Dīn Kai-Qubād I and established itself in Söğüd, in the northwest of the sultan's territory.

2. Osman and his small tribe were pagan Turks who lived as herdsmen. After entering the Muslim environment, they accepted Islam like the Seljuk Turks who were their kinsmen. This new spirit immediately aroused in them feelings of *prosélytisme*. They forced the Christian Greeks who lived around them, and with whom they had friendly relations, to become Muslims. Before Osman converted to Islam, there were only four hundred warriors in his company. They spent a quiet, idle, peace-loving life in their own environment. However, within ten years, from 1290 to 1300, their number grew ten fold.

Their borders expanded until they came in contact with the Byzantines. In this way a new race appeared, the Ottoman race which took the name of its chief. From its beginning, this was not a purely Turkish race, but a new, mixed race which was formed by welding together local elements as they were found. Pagan Turks and Christian Greeks constituted this new race together by converting to Islam.

3. Within a short time the Ottoman population grew to a great number. This event cannot be explained by natural increase. It is also a mistake to think that their number was supplemented by newly-arrived nomads from the east, because Ottoman territory was in the westernmost part of Anatolia and any groups of people who might have gone there would have been settled and taken into service by the other Anatolian *beyliks* {principalities} located to the east of Ottoman territory. Therefore, this increase can only be explained by the mixing {of Osman's tribe} with the local element, which was overwhelmingly Greek.

4. The quick and firm establishment of the Ottoman state in the Balkan peninsula cannot be explained by the above causes alone. The conditions in Byzantium, the Balkan states, and the Western world at that time certainly had a great effect. In addition to these external factors, however, the powerful personalities of the first Ottoman sultans must be taken into account. Furthermore, the Christians who fell under Ottoman rule in the Balkan peninsula had not been "the neighbors of Muslims for centuries" like the Christians in Anatolia. Consequently, in the reign of Murad I, different means were found to Islamize the large number of Christians in this new region. Prisoners of war who accepted Islam were saved from slavery, but their number was very limited and did not assure Islamization. Therefore, the law of *devshirme* was introduced which formed the janissary corps from Christian children and brought about their compulsory Islamization. Rather than give up their children, the Greek and Slavic elements in the Balkans found it very advantageous to immediately convert to Islam.

When we consider the fact that even in the fifteenth century the number of janissaries had not become particularly significant and they did not constitute the basic element of the army, then it is much easier to understand that the janissaries were only used as a means of conversion and were not an organization that was created to strengthen the army.

These then are the major ideas that are defended in Gibbons' book. It is clear that he tried to explain the establishment of the Ottoman state only by religion, and believed that the newly adopted religion created a new race, an Ottoman race. Before criticizing his evidence, it is necessary to state that an attempt to explain such a great and important historical event solely by a religious factor, that is, by "a one-sided explanation," even if it does contain some degree of truth, is contrary to the complexity of historical reality and is always inadequate. Furthermore, by always using the term "race" instead of "people," the author causes considerable confusion. Although the Ottoman Empire was a historical reality, there was never an Ottoman race. Indeed, no Ottoman people ever existed. Gibbons tried to present certain evidence from Ottoman sources to prove that the names "Turk" and "Ottoman" had referred to two races or peoples whose characters were completely different from each other—for this constituted one of his basic theses. But this is nothing but the result of a misunderstanding. According to the old annalists, the word "Ottoman," which was not an ethnic but simply a political term, always had the meaning of "a dominant or administrative class which was in the service of the state and earned its living from the state budget." I will return to this question in a more detailed fashion later. For now, let me examine the kind of evidence on which Gibbons bases his claim that Osman and his tribe were latter-day Muslims.

Gibbons has no real evidence to support this interpretation, one which Th. Nöldeke⁷ and A. Rambaud⁸ had previously accepted and which F. Babinger⁹ and R. Grousset¹⁰ have more recently espoused. Based on certain

late ethnographic observations of very doubtful value, he says that "the Turkmen tribes of northern Syria were Muslims only in name," and that according to some annalists, "they were related to the tribe of Osman." But this proves nothing. Gibbons relies on two legends found in the old Ottoman chronicles as his strongest evidence in this matter. He knew of course that these were legends, but believed that such legends could be used, albeit with care and caution, for periods for which the historical documents were lost, because he believed that they contained the reflections of certain historical events altered in the collective imagination. These legends appear in different forms in the Ottoman chronicles. Indeed, in some of them Ertughrul is mentioned in place of Osman. These legends can be summarized as follows:

1. Osman spent one night at the home of a Muslim mystic, Shaikh Edebalı. Before going to sleep, the owner of the house brought out a book and put it on a shelf. When Osman asked what kind of book it was, he said it was the Koran. To a question about its contents, he answered, "it is the word of God which was brought to the world by the Prophet." Osman consequently took the book in his hand and stood reading it until morning. As morning approached, he dropped off to sleep. He had a dream in which an angel appeared and brought him the good news that because of the reverence that he had shown {to the Koran}, he and his descendants would become powerful and respected.

2. Osman wanted to marry the daughter of Shaikh Edebalı. The *shaikh* would not agree to this for two years. One night while sleeping in the shaikh's home, Osman had a dream: A crescent rose from the breast pocket {*koyun*} of Edebalı and entered Osman's breast. A tree then grew from Osman's navel. The shade from its branches covered the entire world. Edebalı interpreted the dream and said Osman's family would rule the world. Then he gave his daughter to Osman.

As Giese rightly stated when he criticized Gibbons, it would be extremely rash to attempt to reach any conclu-

sions about "Osman's conversion" from these legends. At the very most, one could see in them "a desire to give a divine legitimacy to the Ottoman family for the establishment of hegemony over the other Turkish tribes in Asia Minor."

Although Giese's observation is undoubtedly correct, I would like to examine this question a little more closely and show the kind of mistaken deductions that can be reached in this respect if "internal criticism" of the old chronicles is neglected. This might be considered, perhaps, an unnecessary digression within the limited and general framework of these lectures, but it is needed in order to fully elucidate the nature of the legends which form the basis of Gibbons' manner of explaining the founding of the Ottoman state. At the same time, this will show what great caution must be exercised in using the information that the Ottoman chronicles give on this early period.

In the *Ṭabaqāt-i nāsirī* by the thirteenth century historian Jūzjānī, we find a tale which is similar to the legend according to which a tree sprang from Osman's navel in a dream and spread its shadow over the whole earth. Sebük-Tegin, the father of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, the conqueror of India, had a dream an hour before the birth of his son. In this dream, a tree grew from a brazier in his house and cast its shadow over the entire world. An interpreter of dreams explained this to mean that "he would have a conqueror for a son."¹¹ We find another version of this legend of the tree which appears in a dream in the section containing the traditions of the Oghuz in the great work of Rashīd al-Dīn, namely, his *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, the first universal history, which he wrote at the beginning of the fourteenth century at the court of the Ilkhānids. Here a certain Toghrīl and his two brothers are mentioned among the legendary rulers of the Oghuz. Before they founded a state, their father had a dream in which three large trees sprang from his navel. The trees grew and grew. They cast a shadow in every direction and their tops reached to the sky. He described this dream to the tribal soothsayer and asked him to explain it. The soothsayer, who had already announced that a great ruler would appear from within the tribe, warned the man say-

ing, "your children will become rulers, but you must not reveal this secret to anyone."¹²

One more example. The motif whereby a family will have a great future because of respect for the Koran is also found in a small *saljūqnāme* from the fourteenth century, a source that predates the Ottoman traditions. When Lokman, a forefather of the Seljuks, was going to get married, seven copies of the Koran, which according to the custom of the time were given as part of the trousseau, were placed on reading stands in the bridal chamber. Lokman would not enter that chamber out of respect for the Koran. Those who saw this suggested that the books be removed and taken to another place, but Lokman did not think that this was proper. So the bridal chamber was moved to another house and he entered it. That night he saw the Prophet in a dream. Because of the respect that Lokman had shown to the Koran, the Prophet prayed for him and his children to acquire prosperity and glory in this world and the hereafter.¹³

One frequently comes across such dream stories in both ancient and medieval chronicles, beginning with Herodotus. The prototype of Osman's dream is clearly seen in the above legends. The Oghuz tradition recorded by Rashīd al-Dīn had either existed as an oral tale among the Anatolian Turks and then passed from this popular form to the Ottoman chronicles, or, perhaps with greater likelihood because of the considerable importance given to Rashīd al-Dīn's work at the Ottoman court in the fifteenth century, this tradition was taken directly from it and ascribed to the Ottoman family.¹⁴ The description that is given below of religious conditions in Anatolia and among the Turkmen tribes at the beginning of the fourteenth century will show even better how untenable is Gibbons' point of departure.

There are more such general legendary motifs in the early Ottoman chronicles. For instance, in the story of the conquest of Bilecik {in northwestern Anatolia}, we have the motif of men who hid among the cargo {destined for the city} and thus slipped into the fortress. Different versions of this motif are found in the Muslim stories about the con-

quest of Samarkand,¹⁵ in the *Ṭabaqāt-i nāṣirī*,¹⁶ in the Anatolian story of Dānīshmend Ghāzī, one of the famous conquerors of Anatolia,¹⁷ in the *Zafarnāme* of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, which contains material about Tīmūr,¹⁸ and later in Evliyā Chelebī’s *Seyāhatnāme*.¹⁹

In an attempt to find additional evidence to support his arguments and make them more forceful, Gibbons states that there was absolutely no historical record of the tribe to which Osman belonged—and other tribes like it which fled before the Mongol invasion and came to Anatolia—being Muslim. In his view, the Seljuk Turks who were established in Anatolia after the battle of Malazgird were true Muslims, but the tribes which fled before the Mongol invasion and appeared on the borders of Anatolia at the beginning of the thirteenth century had never fallen under the powerful influence of Islam, even though they had lived for several generations on the frontier of Iran. The small tribe to which Osman belonged had only given up its old paganism and adopted Islam after moving to the Muslim Turkish environment of western Anatolia. These opinions of Gibbons, who had no information at all on the religious conditions in Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, are, in numerous respects, as unfounded as his claims based on the aforesaid dream. Moreover, although Gibbons had no idea at all about the ethnic formation of the Turks and the manner in which they established themselves in Anatolia, he believed that the name “Seljuk” was an ethnic term—exactly like the term “Ottoman”—and was not a political term taken from the founder of the dynasty. But there is a more fundamental mistake here than this, which must be clearly described in order to demonstrate in particular how indefensible is Gibbons’ explanation of the establishment of the Ottoman state.

First, it can by no means be considered as an historical axiom that the tribe to which Osman belonged was one of those which fled before the initial Mongol invasion and came to Anatolia in the thirteenth century and established itself there. The information given in this regard in the early Ottoman chronicles, the oldest of which has been

shown to date from the last part of the fourteenth century, are totally unworthy of belief. And Gibbons, by the way, who was no Turkologist, had absolutely no knowledge of the oldest and most important of these chronicles. In the sources for the Seljuk period, there is no record whatsoever that such migrations to the western regions of Anatolia took place at that time. As explained below, in light of our present knowledge, it is much easier to conclude that the tribe to which Osman belonged was one of those which had come to Anatolia during the very first Seljuk invasion.²⁰ Gibbons' great error has been embedded for centuries in the old Ottoman chronicles and in the old European works based on them. It was usually accepted as a fact by all Eastern and Western authors who discussed Ottoman history after J. von Hammer{-Purgstall}. It would therefore be unfair to attribute the responsibility for it to Gibbons. He saw no need, however, to criticize this tale, which had been created by the mentality of the medieval annalists, and wanted to use it to prove his own theory.

But this mistake pales in significance compared with a second error, which I will now describe. This misguided idea was to imagine that the Ottoman state merely arose from a small "nomadic or semi-nomadic tribe composed of 400 tents," and to try to explain, based on this erroneous and simplistic view, a very great historical event, like the founding of the Ottoman state. This approach to explaining the rise of the Ottoman Empire, which has been repeated uncritically from the old Ottoman chroniclers all the way to Gibbons—and could not even be discarded after him by Eastern and Western historians because of the inertia of simple custom—is contrary to positive thought and the historical mentality. The medieval chroniclers, in conformity with their own theological mentality, explained this miraculous event by supernatural causes, like the dream legend for example. In the twentieth century, however, there is no reason to continue to be satisfied with the same kinds of explanations—no matter how much one wishes to impose, in a more positive manner, certain forced interpretations. In order to maintain his hypothesis, Gibbons remains strongly

committed to the story that the Ottoman state arose from a people of 400 tents. Were there no Turks who had come to Anatolia before or with the Ottoman tribe and joined the Ottomans? Could such a small and primitive tribe create on its own an organization to compete with Byzantium, no matter how weak it was, and rule the Balkans? Gibbons has no difficulty finding answers to these elementary and logical questions, which immediately come to mind, and defending his own hypothesis at the same time. Instead of relying on a single historical document and taking into consideration the historical conditions in Anatolia at that time, he makes new erroneous deductions based on the mistaken premises that he had presented: "Before the end of Orkhan's reign, the nucleus of Asiatic adventurers which had gathered around Osman in the little village of Sögüt had grown to half a million. It could not have been by natural increase. It could not have been by the flocking in of nomads from the East. Orkhan was cut off from contact with the Asiatic hinterland. His rivals, that is, the other Anatolian beyliks, wanted to attract adventurers from abroad before he did. Orkhan formed his nation from the local elements as they were found. These were mostly Greeks {p. 63}." After stating that these local elements formed the Ottoman race by adopting Islam, the author adds that the elements required to create the state organization "were found among the Greeks who were more capable of doing this than the nomadic Turks." In this way, he answers our aforesaid questions. This view, which had been current among Western historians before Gibbons, continues to be repeated even today as an axiom.²¹

As will be described below, his entire series of conclusions consists of a *préjugé*, a fantasy which does not accord at all with historical reality. Among the great men of the Ottoman state who won fame in the fourteenth century, and even the fifteenth century, there were very few Christian converts, like the family of Köse Mikhal for instance. Not only was the bureaucracy, which had been established according to Seljuk and Ilkhānid practices, composed entirely of Turkish elements, but those at the head of the govern-

ment and army were also almost invariably Turks. All the historical documents in our possession show this to be definitely the case.²² The decline in the power and influence of this Turkish aristocracy which administered the state, and the coming to power of the devshirme children who displaced it, began primarily in the second half of the fifteenth century. It makes no sense to attribute this transition {"to the fact that"} "nomadic Turks had no ability to establish the organization for a state," for it resulted from completely different causes and was necessary for an absolute empire established over various elements. Even if the small tribe of Osman had been nomadic or semi-nomadic, the Ottomans certainly would have discovered during the initial founding of their state, that is, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, that urban life among the Anatolian Turks had sufficiently developed so that they could easily find the necessary elements for the administrative machinery of their newly-established state among the Turks who had gained experience in the administrative organizations of the Seljuks, Ilkhānids, certain Anatolian beyliks founded before the fourteenth century, and even of the Mamlūk Empire of Egypt and Syria. Completely contrary to Gibbons' claims, we can say that the border area in which the Ottoman state developed was attractive enough to lure, for many reasons, a certain number of emigrant caravans from different places in Anatolia, indeed, to attract not only nomads but also urban dwellers.

Saying this, I do not wish to deny catagorically that Muslim missionary activity was present among the local Christian element in the Ottoman sphere of power. I cannot agree, however, that this Islamization was as prevalent as Gibbons alleges, especially in the fourteenth century. And I consider myself competent to describe as mere fantasy his hypothesis that this Islamization created—completely separate from the Turks—a brand new race or people who "formed the nucleus of a great state." His claim that the Ottoman state created the devshirme system only to Islamize the Balkans is, as Giese again has rightly criticized, a personal opinion that does not accord in any way with historical reality.

Giese has shown rather clearly—although not in the most convincing and well-argued manner—the baselessness of the kind of explanation advanced by Gibbons for the founding of the Ottoman state. Furthermore, he has maintained in turn that the organization of the *akhīs* {members of a religious fraternity, see ch. 3}, whose social significance in Anatolia in the fourteenth century was described very well by Ibn Battūṭa, played the greatest role in the founding of the Ottoman state. In his view, “Osman’s father-in-law Shaikh Edebalı, a great many of Osman’s comrades in arms, and even Orhan’s brother ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Pasha were members of this organization. This powerful religious group was of enormous help to the first rulers in founding the Ottoman state. The *yaya*, which was their earliest military organization, imitated the uniform of the *akhīs*. When the janissaries were established in the reign of Murad I, these new soldiers preserved the headgear of the *akhīs*.”²³ Even before Giese, Huart had rightly pointed out that one should not neglect the question of the role of the different {*sūfī*, i.e., mystical} brotherhoods and the *akhī* organization in the founding of the Ottoman state. In an article that I published in 1922, before Giese’s article, on Islam in Anatolia, I described the religious conditions in the Seljuk period, from the time the Turks adopted Islam, and at the time of the founding of the Ottoman state. In the process, I indicated the important role played by the *akhīs*, more than the other brotherhoods, and the influence they and the Bektāshīs had on the organization of the janissaries.²⁴

Although I cannot concur with some of Giese’s other ideas, and have previously expressed my opinion concerning them,²⁵ it must be conceded that, by pointing out Gibbons’ mistakes and emphasizing the role played by the *akhīs*, the German scholar has helped give a new direction to the problem. He says, “It is necessary to abandon the erroneous idea according to which Osman independently laid the bases of the Ottoman state with only a Turkmen tribe of 400 tents.” This, in fact, is where the question stands, merely presented in this fashion. But trying to eliminate the false premises at the heart of any problem is to take a step toward solving that problem.

B. The Conditions Necessary to Study the Problem in a Logical Manner

Everything that has been said suffices to show how backward is the research on the founding of the Ottoman Empire. After dispensing with Gibbons' one-sided explanation based on myth—the prototype for which we found in sources older than the Ottoman chronicles—our information on this great historical event of the late Middle Ages essentially goes no further than it did at the time of Hammer. Frankly speaking, we have not even saved ourselves from the naive stories of the old Ottoman chroniclers. Without doubt, thanks to the results obtained from the research that has been done for a century on the medieval West and Byzantium, we know incomparably better than in Hammer's time the situation in the Balkans and Byzantium and the external factors that facilitated the rapid growth of Ottoman power in the Balkan peninsula. This is clearly of great help to us in understanding the origin of the empire. But it is also an equally obvious fact that, in order to solve this problem, it is necessary to recognize, above all, the internal factors.

Ethnically, to which branch of the Turks did those who founded the Ottoman Empire belong? When did they come to northwestern Anatolia and settle there? What was their social status? Were they nomadic, semi-nomadic, or settled? To what extent were the elements {of the population} which increased in number and social significance Turks? To what extent were they non-Turks? What was the ratio between the elements which came from abroad and the local elements, and what were their mutual relations? How large was the nomadic element compared to those of the villagers and city dwellers? In addition, what was the relationship between Christians and Muslims?

How much power did the various social classes have and how much did each participate in the founding of the empire? Was the Ottoman Empire a democratic organization or an aristocratic organization? To what kind of transformation was the concept of sovereignty subject in the

fourteenth century? What was the level of material and intellectual civilization? There are thus a great many fundamental questions about ethnography, religious history, legal history, economic history, in short, material and intellectual history, for which we must first acquire adequate documentation.

Moreover, not only do we not understand these internal factors, but we also do not understand a great many external factors, namely, the historical conditions of the Near East in the fourteenth century, a knowledge of which is indispensable in order to comprehend the development of the empire. The roles that the state of the Golden Horde and the Turkish {Mamlūk} Empire in Egypt and Syria played in Anatolia during the period in question are also poorly known. The relationships of the different Anatolian beyliks to each other, to the Ottoman state, and to these foreign states are also insufficiently known. Under these circumstances, faced with all of these unknowns, is it impossible to try to solve the problem of the origins of the Ottoman state? Until now, not one of those who has taken up this problem, and Gibbons is no exception, has subjected the questions that I have posed to serious study. Indeed, not one of them has even thought of subjecting each of these questions to study.

Because of this, it is to be regretted that, with regard to the level of historiography, the work that has been devoted to the medieval Orient has not gone beyond the narrative form which is content with describing political and military events. The results of the studies on the early history of the Ottoman state in particular, even with regard to merely political and military events, are very poor, simplistic, and usually contradictory. Is it necessary, however, to attribute the cause of this, as Gibbons has done, to the fact that we possess inadequate sources? Does this lack of material make it impossible to do serious research on the questions that I have raised? Is the problem of the founding of the Ottoman Empire doomed to remain insolvable like a system of incomplete equations? I do not believe so. In order to prove my point, I will first try to define the nature and value of the

material in our possession. Then I will show how it should be used with the application of the proper method.

1. The Sources

It is true that the Islamic sources for the history of Anatolia in the fourteenth century, the century in which the Ottoman Empire was founded, are few and inadequate. If we disregard certain works of minor importance written in the Ilkhānid period, certain passages of the Egyptian chroniclers and biographers, and the observations of Ibn Baṭṭūta on Anatolia, we can say that works which were produced as historical sources for this century, and which were completely devoted to Anatolia, do not in fact exist. And as for the few sources we do have, which even today exist for the most part in manuscript, Gibbons could only use those which had been translated into Western languages. These translations, moreover, generally consist of misread and misunderstood texts which are relied upon uncritically—Orientalism not having advanced to date as far as research on the ancient periods—and are therefore untrustworthy.

In any case, in addition to the above sources, we can use important works related to this period, like {Rashīd al-Dīn's} *Jāmi' al-tawārikh* (partially unpublished), {Abd Allāh b. 'Alī al-Kāshānī's} *Tarih-i Uljāyṭu*, and then {al-Qalqashandī's} *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* and {Ibn Sa'īd's} *al-Ta'rīf* {see *Selçuklu tarihi, Alparslan ve Malazgirt bibliografyası* (Ankara, 1971), p. 14, nr. 91}; and finally works which were written in the fifteenth century but contain important information on the fourteenth century, like *Tarih-i 'Ainī* {i.e., al-'Ainī's *'Iqd al-jumān*} and {Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's} *Durar al-kāmina*.

As for the sources written in Anatolia in the fourteenth century, although they are extremely limited, they have been used very little up to now. We can consider Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Aqsarāyī's Persian history entitled *Musāmarat al-akhbār* to be the oldest and most important of them. This work, two manuscripts of which are found in Istanbul (Ayasofya Library, MS 3143, Yenicami Library, MS 827), is composed of four parts. The last of them, which mentions in particular the Ilkhānids and the last Seljuk rul-

ers under their protection, and which frequently relies on the observations of the author, is extremely important. This part constitutes two thirds of the work. The *Musāmarat al-akhbār* was written on behalf of the Ilkhānid governor of Anatolia, Demirtash b. Emīr Choban in 723/1223. Among the early Ottoman historians, only Müneccim-başı saw and used this important chronicle. For a while it attracted the attention of Professor W. Barthold,²⁶ but it has still not been properly used.²⁷ Next comes the great work called *al-Walad al-shafīq*—of which a unique manuscript is found in the Fatih Library, nr. 4519—written by Qādī Aḥmad of Niğde in 733/1332. Up to now, it has not been used at all. In this work, which is a kind of encyclopedia of the different Islamic sciences, there is information on Seljuk history as well as very valuable material on the religious and social history of Anatolia in the fourteenth century. The author, who states that he wrote a great history of the Seljuks—unfortunately this work has not come to light—briefly describes their state here among the other Muslim dynasties. But with the exception of the information given on the last rulers, this material cannot be considered particularly important. With respect to social history, however, this text has great value. In addition to these works, we have the great chronicle entitled *Bazm u razm* which ‘Azīz b. Ardashīr Astarābādī wrote on behalf of Qādī Burhān al-Dīn, the Sultan of Sivas.²⁸ This text, which was published by the Türkiyat Enstitüsü in 1928, is the most important source in our possession on Anatolia in the last half of the fourteenth century.²⁹ If we add to these works a short *saljūqnāme* in the Bibliothèque Nationale (coll. Ch. Schefer, nr. 1.533 pers.; E. Blochet, p. 131), which has been studied by Th. Houtsma³⁰—and which for some reason was not known to Gibbons—we will have exhausted the major sources written in Anatolia on fourteenth century Anatolia.

We can supplement these texts with a few late works written in the fifteenth century, namely, Shikārī’s book of rather doubtful value on the history of the Qaramānids³¹ and Enverī’s *Düstürnāme*, which apparently used an old source on the history of the Aydınoğlular and which has re-

cently been published by Mükrimin Halil Yınanç.³² The latter work, which is the most important source on the Aydınids, is not without value for Ottoman history in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Furthermore, we do not lack other Islamic sources to which we can refer for {information about} Anatolia in the fourteenth century: secretarial handbooks, literary and mystical works of various kinds, *waqf* {pious endowment} documents, collections of the legends of saints, and the like.³³ An example of the last type of work, that by Aflākī, was translated and published by Huart under the title *Les saints des derviches tourneurs*. After publishing this work, Huart recognized its importance as an historical source for religious events and subsequently presented some of the information that he had gleaned from it in a short article that he published in *JA*.³⁴ I have previously demonstrated that the information given in this work on the Anatolian beyliks, when compared with every other kind of historical document, has the ring of authenticity.³⁵ I would not claim that all the works on the legends of the saints are of the same importance and trustworthiness as Aflākī's, but it could be said that these kinds of works, no matter what they are, if subjected to careful criticism, are basic sources for research on social history.

In any event, from this rapid review it is quite obvious that, although they are limited, there exist a number of important sources on the history of Anatolia in the fourteenth century. The epigraphic and numismatic research that has been done in the past 25 years, especially in Turkey, has also produced rather important results for this period.³⁶ Nevertheless, Western researchers who have worked on the question of the founding of the Ottoman state, and, unlike Gibbons, knew the Oriental languages, indeed, even the Orientalists, have not made proper use of the sources that I have mentioned. This being the case, the reason why no serious studies have been done on the social history of Anatolia in the fourteenth century is self-evident. It is clearly a mistake to attribute this merely to the lack of material or inadequate sources. In order not to cause any misunder-

standing here, let me clarify one point in particular: until now, not one of those who has specifically tried to study and explain the problem of the founding of the Ottoman state has felt it necessary to do research on it in the context of the general history of Anatolia in the fourteenth century, and consequently they saw no need to do basic research on the sources mentioned above. All their efforts and attention were focused on only one point, that is, to try to solve the problem of the origins of this state by finding sources that were devoted exclusively to it and to the Ottoman dynasty and using those sources alone! An attempt to understand this great problem within such a narrow framework, namely, to find sufficient sources on fourteenth century Ottoman history and try to reach a conclusion based on them, will inevitably lead, as it has to date, to a dead end.

Gibbons, who was carried away by this mistaken approach and attempted to study and explain the problem within such a narrow context, says that there is no early Ottoman source on the origin of the Ottomans, that their oldest chroniclers were from the end of the fifteenth century, and that Byzantine and Western historians naturally could not provide reliable information on the first humble appearance of the Ottomans. Gibbons did not know any more about the earliest sources of Ottoman history written in the Ottoman Empire than had been described by Hammer, but he is essentially correct in these observations.

Although considerable research has been done on the early Ottoman chronicles since 1916, and many new texts have been published, the situation is not much different today. The great majority of the new sources presently in our possession were never seen by Gibbons or even Hammer. They include ‘Ashîq Pasha-Zâde’s *Tarih {Tevârih-i âl-i Osman}* published in two separate editions by Ali {Istanbul, 1332} and Giese {Leipzig, 1929}, the anonymous *Tevârih-i âl-i Osman*, Uruj Bey’s *Tarih {Tevârih-i âl-i Osman}* edited by Babin-ger, Lutfî Pasha’s *Tarih {Tevârih-i âl-i Osman}* published in Istanbul, the *Behcet ül-tevârih* by the historian Şükrullah and edited by Th. Seif {in *MOG*, 2 (1923–26)}, and Karamânî Mehmed Pasha’s *Tarih* {see *IA*, s.v. “Mehmed Paşa,

Karamānī” (M. C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ), p. 591} and Enverī’s *Düstürnâme* both published by Mükrimin Halil Yınanç. In addition to these works, the section on Ottoman history that the poet Ahmedī added to the great romance called the *Iskendernâme* written in verse at the end of the fourteenth century, Bihishtī’s *Tarih* {see *EI*², s.v. “Bihishtī” (Ménage)} and Rūhī’s *Tarih* {see *IA*, s.v. “Rūhī” (M. K. Özergin), pp. 764–65}, Ibn Kemal’s {or Kemal Pasha-Zāde’s} *Tarih* {*Tarih-i āl-i Osman*}, various anonymous manuscripts called *Tevārīh-i āl-i Osman*, Konevī’s {i.e., Mehmed Emīn Ibn Hājjī Halil’s} history of the Ottomans and other such sources, which were not known to Hammer, are not unknown to the scholarly world—although they are still unpublished.³⁷ Even if we add to these texts certain anonymous handbooks of chronologies,³⁸ some *kānūnmāmes* {digests of sultanic laws} which have been published in Istanbul and Vienna,³⁹ and a few very rare official documents,⁴⁰ and if we take into account the epigraphic and numismatic research that has been done on the Ottoman period in the last 25 years, we will have a better appreciation of the scarcity and inadequacy of the sources for fourteenth century Ottoman history.

With the exception of a few works from around the beginning of the first half of the fifteenth century, all chronicles were generally produced around the end of the fifteenth century or even later. The chroniclers relied on popular oral traditions or on purposely fabricated tales for the information that they provided on the early stages of the founding of the state, so their work is a kind of extension of early popular epics. It should not be forgotten that they copied each other with few differences among them.⁴¹ In order to make use of them, we must always keep in mind the need to subject them to very strict historical criticism. I have mentioned, in particular, that official documents from the fourteenth century are very rare, because Mükrimin Halil Yınanç has clearly shown that the documents on the early periods in Ferīdūn Bey’s *Münşe’āt*, which have been used up to now as a primary source for these periods—although there have been doubts about their veracity—had

been completely fabricated.⁴² In any case, the description above shows that a historian who knew these new sources, which were unknown to Gibbons, very well and could make full use of them, but who stayed within the same narrow context as Gibbons, would be in no better position to explain and solve the problem of the founding of the Ottoman state, for these new sources do not give us much different or more trustworthy material than what was already known about this early stage.

We should not expect to find much more than what was known in 1916 about the earliest periods from the other Islamic sources or Byzantine and Western sources. Critical editions of the Byzantine chronicles of the fourteenth century can correct some of our information on Ottoman history in this period—or perhaps some new documents will be discovered in, for example, the Italian archives which can shed light on certain problems of Near Eastern history in this century—but, whatever the case, we cannot logically expect authentic documents directly concerning the early stage of the founding of the Ottoman state to appear in Egyptian, Byzantine, or Western sources.⁴³

Under these circumstances, what should one do about the inadequate Ottoman sources for the fourteenth century? By doing meticulous research on various categories of documents and certain literary and scientific works written under the Ottomans in this century, it is possible to elucidate to a degree some points that the chronicles have not been able to explain, especially those concerning social history. In my view, however, this would not be sufficient to explain this great problem. We thus come now to the basic point of my thesis. As I have tried to explain above, the fact that the question of the origins of the Ottoman state has presently reached an impasse has resulted from not only the scarcity of material and inadequacy of sources, but above all from the mistaken manner in which the question was posed. This has led to an erroneous and simplistic interpretation of the problem, completely inappropriate to the historical mentality. As long as the complicated question of the origins {of the Ottoman state} remains bound to this traditional er-

ror, which is based on the old Ottoman chronicles and, strangely enough, is still current among all Eastern and Western scholars who have studied Ottoman history, it will be impossible to explain.

2. The Method of Research

After briefly discussing the narrow and simplistic nature of this mistaken and unrealistic point of view, which I have tried to demolish for a long time in the many works that I have published on the literary, religious, and legal history of the Ottomans, I would now like to show how the question of the founding of the Ottoman state should be presented and the kind of mentality and method that should be used to do research on it.

It is an inexcusable error, with regard to history, to attribute the founding of the Ottoman state to a tribe of 400 tents, established on the Seljuk-Byzantine frontier in the northwestern corner of Anatolia in the thirteenth century, without giving any thought to explaining this event within the political and social conditions of Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The geographic area in which the Ottoman state was founded was not like an isolated island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The people who lived there did not constitute an ethnic element distinct from the Turks of Seljuk Anatolia. When first Seljuk and then Ilkhānid rule was strong in Anatolia, they and the other Anatolian Turks formed a political, economic, and cultural unit. There was, no doubt, a difference in the living conditions between this group {i.e., the Ottomans} who lived on the marches, that is, the frontiers, and the Turks who lived in the inner regions. But this difference was not just confined to this group, for other Turkish tribes lived there as well. Their social composition was no different from that of the other Anatolian Turks. Whether nomadic, semi-nomadic, or completely settled, they had, without exception, the same living conditions as the Turkish tribes in Anatolia.

Even if we leave aside all these considerations and imagine, for a moment, that conditions were completely the

opposite, we would still not be able to dispense with the need to study this question within the general framework of the history of Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The early Ottoman historians who eulogized the Ottoman dynasty not only invented wholly fictitious genealogies for the Ottoman sultans, who in fact were not related to the family of any ruler, but also tried to explain, through a series of legends, the founding of the Ottoman state by means of supernatural causes in order to show that it was completely miraculous. It was quite natural for annalists who wished to write an epic about this dynasty to depict Ottoman history as a series of such {supernatural} isolated events. Although modern historiography does not accept miracles or supernatural causes, it has sought {in this case} to continue the same tradition in different form. This is difficult to understand. As I have said on numerous occasions, if Ottoman history is viewed and analyzed in the context of Turkish history in general, that is, as a continuation of the history of the Anatolian Seljuks and the different Anatolian beyliks, only then will it be possible to elucidate a great many problems which have remained obscure up to now. The very poor knowledge that we have even today of the history of the Anatolian Seljuks is no doubt an obstacle to understanding this simple fact. Nevertheless, as long as the question of the founding of the Ottoman state is not presented in such a rational manner, it will never escape the impasse in which it is presently found, and thus, a great many basic problems of Ottoman history will not be possible to resolve. In a previous work, I described and analyzed at great length the many erroneous conclusions that a great many Byzantinists, from Rambaud to N. Iorga and Ch. Diehl, had reached about Byzantine-Ottoman cultural relations because they remained bound to a mistaken approach, like that of Gibbons, to the question of the origins of the Ottoman state.⁴⁴

Now, after this fundamental fact is accepted as the starting point and the question is posed in this fashion, the road to be followed in order to explain and solve it will automatically become clear, namely, to subject the sources in

our possession to internal and external criticism according to today's historical methodology; to refuse to attribute anything positive to the legends and genealogies that were fabricated for specific purposes by the annalists and to stop using them; to disregard doubtful events of political and military history and minor feats of arms which had no lasting results and devote attention only to basic questions; to not just remain bound to chronicles but give more, or at least as much, importance to other kinds of documents that could be of use in solving historical problems; and to do research on the stratification of the various elements which constituted Anatolian Turkish society in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, their positions with respect to each other, their strengths and weaknesses, the causes of antipathy or solidarity among them, in other words, to do research on the changes in the inner life of this society rather than show the continuous transformations on its surface. In short, we must create an historical synthesis by trying to determine the morphology of this society and the evolution of its religious, legal, economic, and artistic institutions more than its political and military events. Only such a synthesis—obtained by using every kind of available material—can give us the explanation of the problem of the founding of the Ottoman state that is the closest to historical reality.

Let me answer a question here that might immediately come to mind. Is the material in our possession of sufficient quantity and quality to make such a comprehensive synthesis possible? Without doubt, no! Let us remember, however, that, compared to those who have tried to explain the founding of the Ottoman state up to now with the legendary data provided by late Ottoman chronicles, we possess very rich material with which to attempt this synthesis. If we were to try, for example, to write an *annale* like an ordinary historiographer, which recorded year by year the events of the Ottoman state based on the sources presently in our possession, we could say that this would be materially impossible because we have no means at all of checking the trustworthiness of the information, all highly suspect, that the Ottoman chronicles give on this matter. And there is

nothing to be found in the Byzantine and Arab sources, official documents, or inscriptions in this regard. Under these circumstances, we must cast aside without hesitation such doubtful material. After such a process of elimination, to be done according to the full requirements of historical criticism, the number of events whose authenticity appears to be relatively well established will be very small.⁴⁵ But the historian, unlike the annalist, does not need to know every event and every possible bit of information to satisfy his curiosity. There are thousands of minor, insignificant, and recurring events recorded in the *Annales* and other historical documents a lack of knowledge of which would be no obstacle whatsoever to understanding the historical development of a society. Here we have the essential difference between a narrative history and a synthetic history. By saying this I do not deny the great importance of *érudition* in historical work. I only wish to call attention to the fact that a historical synthesis is completely different from an accumulation of material which has not been criticized—material the value of which is undetermined and in which the significant has not been separated from the insignificant. The goal of the historian is to explain the reasons for the progress of any society at a given time and place, and to bring it to life in the manner closest to reality by means of various manifestations of social life. His role is no different from that of a paleontologist who reconstructs from a few bones in his possession the basic skeleton of an animal whose species has been extinct for thousands of years. My purpose in repeating this point, which is an axiom, an obvious assumption, among modern historians, is to show that great use can be made of even the limited material in our possession to elucidate the problem of the origins of the Ottoman state; because those who have been occupied with this question until now, for the reasons that I have given above, have not been able to take advantage of the most important parts of this material.

In the two lectures which constitute the critical and methodological introduction, I will try to analyze and explain at least the general outline of the problem of the

founding of the Ottoman state by making use of every kind of source that I have mentioned. The bold attempt at a synthesis that I want to make in a field in which virtually no work has yet been done certainly will not claim to give the final and absolute answer to this great problem. Even syntheses based on the most solid analytical work do not pretend to claim finality. One should expect no more than this from the present initial attempt at a synthesis, for which analytical research is still needed in a great many respects. The primary objective that I have kept in mind in these lectures is the following: to present in concrete fashion the need to apply to historical studies on the Turkish and Islamic Middle Ages the new methods which have been followed in historical studies on the Western Middle Ages since the nineteenth century. With very rare exceptions, this additional and important part of the history of mankind has still not escaped from the traditions of the medieval annalists despite all the efforts of nineteenth-century European Orientalists.