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## **Akıncılar, Sultanlar ve Fatihlerin Mirası: Osmanlı Genişlemesine Dair Bizans Yaklaşımları**

### ***Raiders, Sultans, and the Legacy of Conquest: Byzantine Perspectives on the Ottoman Expansion***

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**Öz:** Anadolu ve Rumeli topraklarının Bizans İmparatorluğu'ndan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu hakimiyetine geçişi, kültürel alışveriş, çatışma ve sınırların genişlemesi ile nitelendirilen önemli bir tarihi döneme işaret eder. Bu makale, Bizanslı tarihçiler Chalkokondyles ve Doukas'ın eserlerindeki anlatılara dayanarak, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ortaya çıkışı ve büyümesine ilişkin Bizans perspektiflerini incelemeye çalışmaktadır. Bu tarihçilerin anlatıları incelendiğinde, Bizanslıların Osmanlılara karmaşık bir açıdan baktıkları, askeri güçlerini kabul ederken fetih yöntemlerini de kınadıkları ortaya çıkmaktadır. İncelenen ana temalar arasında Osmanlıların kökenleri, Osmanlı süvari akıncılarının taktikleri ve Osmanlı yöneticilerinin tasvirleri yer almaktadır. Chalkokondyles ve Doukas, Osmanlı savaşçılarının kutsal savaşçılar olduğu fikrinin aksine, onları dinî saiklerden ziyade servet ve köle arzusuyla hareket eden, ekonomik motivasyonlu akıncılar olarak tasvir etmektedir. Buna ek olarak, Bizanslı tarihçiler Osmanlı sultanları hakkında farklı değerlendirmeler sunmakta, Bizans İmparatorluğu'na karşı iyi niyet sergileyenleri överken tehdit oluşturanları eleştirmektedirler. Sonuç olarak, bu analiz Osmanlılar hakkındaki yaygın anlatılara meydan okumakta ve Bizans kaynaklarının tarihin bu dönüştürücü dönemine dair anlayışımızı şekillendirmedeki önemini altını çizmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bizans İmparatorluğu, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Chalkokondyles, Doukas, Akıncılar

**Abstract:** The transition from the Byzantine Empire to the Ottoman Empire marks a pivotal period in history, characterized by cultural exchange, conflict, and territorial expansion. This article attempts to examine Byzantine perspectives on the emergence and growth of the Ottoman Empire, primarily relying on the narrations from the works of Byzantine historians Chalkokondyles and Doukas. By analyzing their accounts, it becomes evident that the Byzantines viewed the Ottomans through a complex lens, acknowledging their military prowess while also condemning their methods of conquest. Key themes explored include the origins of the Ottomans, the tactics of Ottoman cavalry raiders, and the portrayal of Ottoman rulers. Contrary to the notion of Ottoman warriors as holy crusaders, Chalkokondyles and Doukas depict them as economically motivated plunderers, driven by a desire for wealth and slaves rather than religious motivations. Additionally, the Byzantine historians offer varied assessments of Ottoman sultans, praising those who exhibited goodwill towards the Byzantine Empire while criticizing those

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who posed a threat. Ultimately, this analysis challenges prevailing narratives about the Ottomans and underscores the importance of Byzantine sources in shaping our understanding of this transformative era in history.

**Keywords:** Byzantine Empire, Ottoman Empire, Chalkokondyles, Doukas, Raiders

## Introduction

The last centuries of the Byzantine Empire are inextricably intertwined with the foundation of the Ottoman State and its transformation into an empire, which expanded through the former Byzantine territories. After completing their expansion in the north western part of Asia Minor, the Ottomans constantly continued to extend their rule over Balkans both towards the west through *Via Egnatia* and the north via the road between Constantinople and Belgrade in the course of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Inalcık, 2000: Chapter: 2). Moreover, after the fall of Thessaloniki in 1387, they acquired another route which enabled them to spread into the interior of Greece (Inalcık, 2000: Chapter: 2). This expansion of the Ottoman rule to the detriment of the sovereignty of Constantinople not only intensified the political and military relations but also increased the social and cultural interactions between the Byzantine and the Ottoman societies. The Ottomans occupied an important place within the concerns of the Byzantines at the time. In fact, They profoundly captured the interest of contemporary Byzantine historians that the last four of them indeed wrote their histories on the Ottomans. Thus, these historians provided us with substantial information concerning the Ottoman State, society and institutions.

The perception and the depiction of “the other” in the contemporary historical sources are vital in order to have a better comprehension of the interactions between the societies mentioned above. The attitude of the Byzantines towards the Ottomans was partly shaped by how Byzantine historians perceived and described them. Furthermore, The nomenclature used for the Ottomans in Byzantine histories, and the way Byzantine historians described them, offer invaluable insights into the construction of Byzantine identity and its surrounding world (Koray, 2009: 65). Defining the “other” plays a crucial role in shaping the self-identity of a society. Despite the fact that the employment of the archaizing terms instead of the contemporary ones by the Byzantine writers to varying degrees deforms ‘the presentation of reality’ (Koray, 2009: 66), modern historians emphasize the possibility of uncovering the historical reality behind this archaizing style (Koray, 2009: 66). Thus, the image of the Ottomans in the works of the last Byzantine historians has an important place for the understanding of both societies and their profound historical relations. Therefore, this paper does not aim to prove any information that the Byzantine historians provided about the Ottomans. Therefore, this paper does not aim to prove any factual information provided by Byzantine historians about the Ottomans; rather, it aims to understand the Byzantine perspective on the Ottomans by analyzing excerpts from the works of the last two Byzantine historians, Doukas and Chalkokondyles.

It is essential to penetrate into the mindsets of these Byzantine historians in order to analyze their works in relation to the Ottomans, yet due to the scope of this article, I find it more convenient to omit the lives of the historians. Doukas and Chalkokondyles occasionally have varying points of view concerning the Ottomans because because their lives differed significantly. On the one hand, briefly, Chalkokondyles, who spent most of his life in Peloponnesus, was interested in the antiquity. Moreover, his attitude towards the Ottomans is relatively more positive (Kılıç, 2013: 116). On the other hand, Doukas, who dwelt in western coast of Asia Minor and in Lesbos, was employed by Genoese. Additionally, he had a more negative attitude towards the Ottomans (Kılıç, 2013: 116). Therefore, their perspectives occasionally diverge. However, there are numerous points indicating their agreement on the Ottomans, which stem from their Byzantine origins.

## The Works of Chalkokondyles and Doukas

In his *Histories*, Chalkokondyles combines the characteristics of the most influential historians of antiquity. In other words, his *Histories* is ‘a hybrid fusion of Herodotus and Thucydides’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 23). On the one hand, Chalkokondyles ‘fully and deliberately’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 25) employs the Herodotean way for the structure of his text. The Ottomans are replaced with the Persians of Herodotus

in *Histories* of Chalkokondyles. He narrates the expansion of Ottomans by describing their victories and defeats. Moreover, the geographic and ethnographic descriptions occupy an important place in *Histories* (Kaldellis, 2014: 25). On the other hand, Chalkokondyles preferred to use the Thucydidean style and severe approach in his *Histories* (Kaldellis, 2014: 23). Like Thucydides, Chalkokondyles construct his prose in an unadorned, austere and dispassionate way, and he ‘maintains an emotional distance from events.’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 30-33). He considers Islam ‘not as a theological error or religious abomination, but as a valid religious culture’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 101). He is different from the people who adhere to Christian set of ideas, and is ‘unique in the Byzantine and western traditions’ in terms of the representation of Islam and the Turks (Kaldellis, 2014: 101). In fact, Chalkokondyles substantially imitates the ancient tradition in his prose style, which is a topic exceeding the limits of this paper (Kaldellis, 2014: 34-45).

Contrary to Chalkokondyles, Doukas more strictly follows the traditional Byzantine way of writing within which there is an influence of Christianity. He has a perspective of ‘someone who strongly identified himself with Byzantine cultural and political traditions’ (Reinart, 2014: 68), but his ‘Roman’ identity was shaped in Aegean coasts of Asia Minor under the influence of Italian policy (Reinart, 2014: 68). As a man of religious feelings, he explains the defeats with sins of the Byzantines (William, 1926: 65). Doukas who ‘was a fervent believer in dreams, prophecies, and oracles’ (Doukas, 1975: 29) employs the concept of *Tyche* or Fortune in order to explain the course of historical events (Doukas, 1975: 36). His style is dominantly vivid and exciting. He intersperses autobiographical information in his narrative (Miller, 1926: 64). He prefers to use ‘neologisms, spoken linguistic forms brought about by a living language in evolution’ (Doukas, 1975: 40). In the account of Doukas, there are many folk expressions and harangues in addition to the translation of Turkish and Italian words for his readers (Doukas, 1975: 40).

Despite the fact that the histories of both historians include a wide range of information concerning diverse states and societies from inner Asia to Europe, they indeed wrote their histories primarily on the Ottoman State and society. Thus, they could be considered as the historians of the Ottoman State (Kaldellis, 2014: 126). Both diplomatic missions to the Ottoman State and personal relations with the Ottomans enabled these Byzantine historians to become familiar with the subject of their histories. The information concerning the Ottomans that these historians acquired through their experiences and familiarity with the Ottomans is significant in order to penetrate into their minds and to understand the image of Ottomans from the Byzantine point of view.

### **The Origin of the Turks**

The issue of the origin of the Turks, especially the Ottomans, is a disputable topic not only for the Byzantine historians but also modern historians. This issue of origin is one of the essential components of the Byzantine perspective on their neighbor. Although Doukas does not inquire from where Ottomans came, Chalkokondyles provides his readers with two interesting theories about the origin of the Ottomans. The first theory proposed by Chalkokondyles is that ‘the Turks are descendants of the Skythians’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 132). In fact, the passage in which he discusses their origin includes significant information about his opinions and several important hints on the meaning of the ‘Skythians.’ Having stated that a group of people think that the Turks are descendants of the Skythians, he merely suggests that the Turks are a branch of them because both their ‘customs’ and ‘languages’ are very similar. This is an important point that he returns in the following passages, but before this, he provides us with a vital clue about the identity of these ‘Skythians’ from which the Turks derived. Firstly, he narrates the expansion route of these ‘Skythians’ which starts from the Don region and reaches Asia Minor through historical Persian territories. Moreover, their offspring maintained a nomadic way of life, although some eventually settled in parts of Asia." Thus, the ‘Skythians’ whom Chalkokondyles refers to were probably the Mongols, whose rule continued to be known as the Golden Horde in the north of the Black Sea. At the end of the passage, Chalkokondyles again specifies that the Turks in Asia Minor and the ‘Skythians’ in the north of the Black Sea share the same language and customs Chalkokondyles, 2014: 11-13). This digression and the nomenclature of the Turks are clearly related to the Herodotean

influence over Chalkokondyles (Kaldellis, 2014: 132), who also talks about alternative theories about the origin of the Turks.

According to first of these alternative theories which Chalkokondyles mentions, ‘the Turks are the descendants of the Parthians’, who came to Asia Minor and adapted ‘a more nomadic way of life’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 13). Later, they spread into the cities of Asia Minor, and were called as ‘the nomadic Turks’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 13). As a second alternative theory, the Turks are originated from a Persian city, called Tourke. Then, having left the city for Asia Minor, they dispersed there (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 13). The third alternative theory claims that before they came to Asia Minor ‘in the company of Umar, who succeeded as lawgiver’, the Turks had lived in ‘Koile Syria and Arabia.’ After he left them behind there, the Turks embraced ‘a more nomadic way of life’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 13).

These alternative theories indeed do not concern us as much as the theory on which Chalkokondyles agrees. However, they give some clues about the Byzantine perspective on the Turks, in particular on Ottomans. The first common point among these abovementioned theories, including the ‘Skythian’ origin, is that the Turks are not the inhabitants of Asia Minor, which is indeed a historical fact. Thus, probably, the Byzantines considered them as foreigners who invaded the historical Byzantine territories. The second dominant expression is that the Turks turned into a more nomadic way of life after they came to Asia Minor. The claim that the Turks were settled people before they came to Asia Minor is clearly incorrect. However, their activities as nomadic people in Asia Minor were presumably so intense that Chalkokondyles felt himself he should mention the theories that put emphasis on the nomadic way of life of the Turks in the former Byzantine territories. In short, according to these alternative theories that he talks about, the Turks were the nomadic people who immigrated to Asia Minor in the course of history.

In the following part of the digression, shortly before Chalkokondyles explain the reasons for it, he clearly declares his opinion about this origin issue. The influence of Herodotus on Chalkokondyles outweighs in his character, and the alternatives are eliminated (Kaldellis, 2014: 132). Although he is not sure about how much truth these arguments have, he certainly sides with those who ascribe a ‘Skythian’ origin to the Turks on the ground of linguistic and cultural similarities between them. Moreover, he specifies that the contemporary Skythians, who continue to dwell in the eastern parts of Europe in the so called Horde, could clearly understand the Turks who live in Asia. On the other hand, he completes his explanation about this origin issue by specifying that ‘[t]he name Skythian itself obviously designates anyone who follows a nomadic way of life and spends most of his time doing this’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 13). Therefore, a very interesting combination of two different types of assertion lays on Chalkokondyles’ *Histories*.

Chalkokondyles to a certain extent employs a complex taxonomy on the ground of language, way of life, and anthropology of the Turks and the ‘Skythians’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 133). On the one hand, he states that the relation between the Turks and the ‘Skythians’ bases on the similarity of their languages and on their common ‘material culture.’ Thus, these ‘Skythians’ are probably a certain ethnic group, the Mongols (Kaldellis, 2014: 133). On the other hand, he employs ‘Skythian’ as a generic term for all nomadic peoples’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 133). In fact, this archaic term, ‘Skythian’, is frequently used by Herodotus and the traditional Byzantine writers as well. While Herodotus refers to a specific group of people as ‘Skythians’, in the Byzantine tradition, ‘Skythian’ stands for both all nomadic peoples and the opposite of the ‘civilized’ Byzantine way of life (Kaldellis, 2014: 133). Therefore, these two different types of approach are combined in *Histories* of Chalkokondyles. In short, presumably, according to Chalkokondyles, the Turks are nomadic people who contrast the ‘civilized’ Byzantine way of life. In fact, as a result of the immigration of these nomadic Turkish tribes, the Byzantine Asia Minor experienced a nomadization process (Speros, 1975: passim).

As it was already mentioned above, unlike Chalkokondyles, Doukas does not speak of the origin of the Turks. However, not only the examination of the origin of the Turks but also the names given to them in the histories of the Byzantine historians provides a vital idea about the Byzantine perspective

on Ottomans. Although Chalkokondyles associates the Turkish origin with the ‘Skythians’, in his Histories, he does not call Ottomans as Skythians. Instead, he refers to them as the ‘Turks’ and ‘Ottomans.’ Moreover, he makes a distinction between ‘the nomadic Skythians of Asia’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 47) and ‘the Turks who have adopted that way of life’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 47) in many occasions in the course of his Histories. This distinction is much clearer in the parts in which he narrates the Timurids. While he mentions Timurids as Skythians and their lands as ‘Skythia’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 105), he continues to use the words ‘Turks’ and ‘Ottomans’ in the narration. In a similar way, Doukas employs the term ‘Skythians’ for only Timurids, and he uses ‘Turks’ for the Ottomans (Doukas, 1975: passim). Therefore, probably, although Ottomans are might be related to the ‘Skythians’, from the Byzantine point of view, they were essentially different from the nomadic people who lives in the north of the Black Sea and in Asia.

Another frequently used term for the Ottomans by both Chalkokondyles and Doukas is the word ‘barbarians.’ However, the meaning that they load to the word is different from each other. On the one hand, the word ‘barbarian’ has very negative connotations for Doukas, who has harsh opinions against the Turks. In the part he describe Orhan as a ‘barbarian’, he describes him and his ‘nation’ as ‘incontinent, intemperate and lustful, insatiate in licentiousness, shameless and savage’ (Doukas, 1975: 73). This negative tone of Doukas concerning the Turks as the ‘barbarians’ is clear in the whole text (Doukas, 1975: 73). On the other hand, Chalkokondyles breaks with Doukas on these negative connotations of the word ‘barbarians.’ Contrary to the traditional Christian image of barbarity, which is ‘a monstrous, inhuman scourge’ sent by ‘God against a sinful civilization’, the ‘barbarians’ of Chalkokondyles just one of the other peoples in the world including ‘good and bad qualities’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 134). The tone of Chalkokondyles does not bring about any negative connotations about the ‘barbarians’, i.e. the Turks. The reason behind this is probably that Chalkokondyles was deeply influenced by Herodotus, who did not consider the Greeks as superior to other peoples (Kaldellis, 2014: 134). Nevertheless, whether they are called as barbarians or the Ottomans, they dominantly appear as the ‘implacable enemies of the Christianity’ and Constantinople in the work of Doukas, and of the Greeks in Chalkokondyles (Chalkokondyles, 2014: passim; Doukas, 1975: passim).

### **The Depictions of the Ottomans as Raiders**

The depiction of the Ottoman institutions in these Byzantine histories is also very significant for understanding the Byzantine perspective on the Ottomans. In the course of 13<sup>th</sup> century, numerous Turkish nomad families and tribes fleeing the Mongol invasion in Asia migrated to westwards, and they were settled in the Byzantine frontier by the Seljuq Sultans (Donalds, 1999: 81-82; Inalcık, 1980, passim). Following the Mongol victory over the Seljuq Sultanate, by joining newly arrived refugees, these Turks or ‘Turkoman nomads’ rebelled against the former authority of the Sultanate and started to make raids on the Byzantine borders in order to fend for themselves (Donalds, 1999: 82). In the course of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the lack of any central authority and the enthusiasm of these people resulted in the foundation of *Beyliks* in Asia Minor. At the turning point of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman State was founded as one of these *Beyliks* in the north-western part of Asia Minor, at a very close point to the Byzantine borders. Despite the fact that the Ottoman State was not distinguished from any other *Beyliks* in Asia Minor until the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after that, it certainly subjugated all his neighbors (Inalcık, 2000: 15) and eventually captured all territories the Byzantine Empire with its mighty capital until the mid of the following century.

The modern historians still could not reach a consensus concerning the motivations behind their actions and the characteristics of these people. Especially, ‘the institution of the light cavalry raiders’ is central to modern discussions (Kaldellis, 2014: 148). Briefly, one side of the debate argues that the light cavalry raiders of the Ottomans were the religiously motivated holy warriors, which is called Ghazi, and their main purpose was ‘to increase the power of Islam’ (Kaldellis, 2014: 148; (Witteck, 2012: passim). The other side promotes the idea that these warriors were materially motivated raiders, which is called *akıncıs*, and their essential desire was to become rich or just to survive by plunder. Even the roads in north of the western Anatolia were all closed by these people, and the trade had to be interrupted (Ian,

2007: passim). In fact, these two different arguments do not necessarily conflict with each other. Presumably, these people were able to combine both the religious and economic motivations in their warfare (Kafadar, 1995: 80-87; Inalcık, 1980: passim). The contemporary Byzantine historians, especially the ones who wrote on the Ottomans, give invaluable information concerning this debate about the motivations and the characteristics of the Ottoman warriors. The histories enable the readers to see how the Byzantines perceived and interpreted the actions of this group. Therefore, they essentially provide certain hints to have a better comprehension about the Ottomans from the Byzantine perspective.

Neither the words ‘Ghazi’ or ‘Ghaza’ nor the ideology behind these words are ever mentioned in the works of these Byzantine historians. The absence of ‘Ghazis’ or ‘Ghaza’ in the sources is a very interesting issue because the Ghaza Thesis has a profound support in explaining the expansion of the Ottoman State. While Chalkokondyles uses the word *ἰππόδρομοι* (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 160), which is translated as ‘cavalry raiders’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 160), Doukas employs the word *ἀκκην* (Bekker, 2012: 135) for the raids of these warriors, which can be translated in Turkish as *akıncı*.

When Chalkokondyles first talks about these cavalry raiders, he never mentions any religious motivation behind their activities. In first place, the word *ἰππόδρομοι* does not refer anything religious. They were described as a group of people who do expect ‘neither wages nor office from the sultan.’ However, these people, who naturally follow their leaders against any kind of enemy, were always thirsty for plunder and loot. A very significant point is that each of them rides one horse, and brings another one to carry the loot (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 161). This additional horse on which they load the booty is an essential element of any raid for loot instead of a holy war to spread a religion. Then, Chalkokondyles continues his narration by describing how they behave in the raids. According to historians, their general sent them a signal to mount the horses when they enter the enemy territory. Nothing could ward off these mighty riders, who seize captives and anything might be valuable as well. After describing the general features of these raids, Chalkokondyles states that some of these cavalry raiders made a great fortune in a very short time by plunder and loot (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 161-163). This is a very important topic, which will be discussed below along with the additional information that Doukas provides.

In fact, the emphasis on that the purpose of the Turks is to plunder the wealthy lands is a very frequently used expression in the account of Doukas (Doukas, 1975: passim). Like Chalkokondyles, Doukas does not mention any religious motivation except that these raids were against Christians. For example, while he was narrating the arrival of Orhan to Europe, he says ‘[c]rossing for the purpose of plunder they laid waste the entire Chersonese and coastline of Thrace’ (Doukas, 1975: 60). At one point of his account, Doukas interrupts his narration with a digression by which he explains ‘the ancient design of the Turks’ in a similar way with Chalkokondyles (Doukas, 1975: 133). In this passage, Doukas highlights the desire of the Turks for a sort of banditry by saying ‘[t]he nation of the Turks, more than any other, is a lover of rapine and injustice.’ Then, he tells that even their own folk are not safe from these raids of the Turks. In a similar way of Chalkokondyles, Doukas talks about how they are gathered by the call from their leader to attack enemy territories ‘like a flooding river’ and ‘uninvited.’ The very significant point is that he employs the original Turkish word ‘aqin’ for raids (Doukas, 1975: 133), which have no religious connotation. These are important points which weaken the thesis that they were the holy warriors who undertook a holy war against the infidels. When it comes to describe these raiders individually, the distaste of Doukas for the Turks appears more clearly. He claims that ‘the majority [of these warriors who join the battle] without purse and food pouch and without spears and swords.’ Then, he continues as ‘countless others come running, swelling the number of troops, the majority of them carrying nothing but a club in their hands’ (Doukas, 1975: 135). It is unreasonable to go to plunder without any weapon, and even without a pouch, but only with a club. This image of Ottoman raiders is very different from the image of Chalkokondyles’ raiders who bring another horse with them to carry the loot. However, Doukas maintain his narration by saying ‘[t]hey rush against the Christians and seize them like sheep... their single purpose was to take Christians captive. By the hundreds of thousands they invade a province, plunder and pillage everything, and then depart’ (Doukas, 1975: 135). According to this description, their way of fight is identical with the hit and run tactics motivated by the desire of

possessing wealth and slaves rather than by the purpose of settling and promulgating Islam. Both the high mobilization of the Turkish light cavalry groups using bows and their organization ability in the battlefield contrasts the Palaiologan period Byzantine armies (Savvas, 2011: 203-220). This difference in reality is also a vital component of the Byzantine perception on Ottomans.

In the accounts of both Chalkokondyles and Doukas, the issue of slavery requires a profound elaboration. These slaves were the backbone of the Ottoman administrative and military system, and the Byzantine historians were aware of this fact. Both of them mention this system of the Ottomans in their histories. Chalkokondyles, who was interestingly very familiar with the Porte, describes the order of the Porte in detail. The enslaved children were taken by the sultan, and were assigned to Turkish families in Asia to learn the language before they were enrolled at the janissary troops and the Porte (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 377-379; Doukas, 1975: 135). Moreover, Doukas highlights that according to 'Turkish law', 'one fifth of the captive Christians were assigned to the ruler' as 'the new troops' after they were circumcised and converted to the 'impious faith' (Doukas, 1975: 135). Therefore, the Byzantine historians most probably related this situation to the characteristic of secular administrative and military organization of Ottomans rather than their religious purposes.

In addition to this idea, from the Byzantine point of view, these light cavalry raiders of the Turks, and in particular Ottomans, were fundamentally slave-drivers, who become wealthy by doing so. According to Chalkokondyles, the opportunity of easy plunder against weak opponents in the places where there is no resistance is the main impetus for these raiders (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 165). They loot the property of their enemies, and they enslaved numerous people, the cities and regions. Both historians frequently emphasize that the Turks pillage the provinces, slaughter the people, and especially take captives on their raids (Chalkokondyles, 2014: passim; Dukas, 1975: passim). For example, Doukas reports that more than sixty thousand people were taken captive by Murad II after having razed Hexamilion (Doukas, 1975: 186). Moreover, Chalkokondyles frequently says that the Ottomans took 'as many captives as they could' from the Greek territories, and conveyed them to Asia (Chalkokondyles, 2014: passim).

The slavery, which was a vital component of the Ottoman expansion, generates huge profits by the sale of slaves in both domestic and foreign markets. Turkish raiders became very wealthy through slavery in a short time. In the account of Chalkokondyles, there are many references to the enrichment of the Turks through plunder and enslavement. In particular, Evrenos, who was a *Bey* under Murad II in western Thrace and Macedonia, led numerous expeditions into the Balkans. He enriched the Turks who followed him in plunders by enslavement of the enemy lands, and they became 'very wealthy in a short time' (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 361). Moreover, Zağanos generates huge profit both for himself and his companions by exporting slaves from Peloponnese to Thessaly (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 343). Chalkokondyles also narrates how the Turks who lives close to Illyria transport the slaves that they possessed by plundering the region to their territories. Isa, who was the governor of Skopje, plundered the region more than anyone, and conveyed plenty of slaves (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 427). In short, the Byzantine historians considered these light cavalry raiders as economically motivated bandits rather than religiously stimulated holy warriors. In other words, 'there is no room for religion in this interpretation' (Kaldellis, 2014: 152).

After analyzing the origin of the Turks and the nature of the Ottoman cavalry raiders with their motivations from the Byzantine point of view, the question of how Chalkokondyles and Doukas describe the men to whom these raiders serve appears. The Ottoman sultans, who were essentially their highest masters, have an important place in the accounts of the historians. The description of the sultans by Chalkokondyles and Doukas is mostly similar, but in several occasions differ from each other. Therefore, their depiction with their virtues and vices by the Byzantine historians is a necessary component of the Byzantine perspective on Ottomans.

## The Sultans

The image of Osman from the Byzantine perspective occupies an important place in the topic of the image of Ottomans because he is accepted as the founder of the Ottoman State. Chalkokondyles usually does not talk about Osman in a polemical way. In the *Histories*, his abilities are praised, and he is presented as a liberal leader and successful politician. According to Chalkokondyles, Osman indulgently use the local resources, and gains local people's trust. The people generally ask to conciliate disputes between them from Osman, who eventually 'forge a mutual military alliance' with the other chiefs. In time, he and his men subjugated a large area, 'performing great deeds and amassing much money' so that he became a ruler of a huge territory. Chalkokondyles does not avoid praising the 'great and glorious deeds' that were accomplished by Osman who 'arranged matters as excellently as possible for his people and set up its government in the most suitable way.' Moreover, he was applauded as the founder of 'superb administration... which they call the king's Porte.' For his people, Osman 'was extremely courageous in all circumstances', and it was believed that he had supernatural powers. Chalkokondyles complete Osman's description by stating that Osman 'passed his name on to his descendant', and they are called 'the sons of Osman' (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 21-23). When it comes to the account of Doukas, the historian does not give a large place to Osman, who first appears as a Turkish leader of '[a]ll Bithynia and part of the land of the Paphlagonia' (Doukas, 1975: 59). Moreover, while he narrates the prophecy concerning the end of the Ottoman reign, he refers to Osman as a 'tyrant' and a 'brigand' (Doukas, 1975: 244). Except these, he does not mention Osman himself, but in many occasions, he emphasized that 'the new sovereign' have to be a descendent of Osman (Doukas, 1975: 134, 136, 145, 160, 191). Therefore, both historians were obviously aware of the importance of the linkage to Osman himself for the legitimization of Ottoman rulers. In short, Osman was considered as a successful founder in the administrative and military affairs of the Ottoman State.

There is an imbalance concerning the place of Orhan in the accounts of Chalkokondyles and Doukas. In the *Histories*, Chalkokondyles claims that Orhan came to power by exploiting the fight between his brothers. Having waged numerous wars against the Greeks, Orhan gets married to Kantakouzenos' daughter, and then he dies (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 31-39). Unlike Chalkokondyles, Doukas devotes a huge part of his text to Orhan, who is presented as a subordinate barbarian son-in-law of the Byzantine Emperor. The negative feelings of the historian for Orhan, to whom he incorrectly refers as the grandson of Osman, is clear in many points in the text, but at one point, he describes Orhan as 'a bull which had been parched by the burning heat of summer' and as a man of 'barbarian incontinence' (Doukas, 1975: 73). Moreover, Doukas believes that the sins of the Byzantines brought upon them this 'herb' (Doukas, 1975: 71).

When it comes to Murad I, the accounts of Chalkokondyles and Doukas exhibit a difference to a certain extent. Chalkokondyles offers a mixed picture of Murad I (Kaldellis, 2014: 160). As a general characteristic of the Ottoman sultans, Murad I essentially plunder the enemy territories and makes his friends wealthy (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 53). He subjects his authority 'in the most equitable and liberal way' to the rulers of the Bulgarians, the Serbs, and the Greeks, whom he subjugated by performing great deeds (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 61). Then, Chalkokondyles stresses his greatness like '[he] travel everywhere with the greatest speed, filling every place with fear and apprehension' (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 79). However, his quickness is not always praised, and Chalkokondyles criticizes it by emphasizing that Murad was 'rabid for battle and insatiable when it came to spilling blood everywhere' (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 89). Moreover, according to Chalkokondyles, Murad was not harsh for those who accept his superiority, but he does not show any mercy to the rebellions. He ordered the 'father to kill their own sons' who followed the rebellion of his son Sawji (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 61). In addition, Chalkokondyles describes him as a ruler who 'surpassed previous kings in terms of the slaughter he caused', but was very polite to 'those who [were] under his power' (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 89). Unlike Chalkokondyles, Doukas again gives a very small place to Murad I whom he calls as 'the tyrant.' He calls the Serbian soldier who assassinated Murad I as 'the brave youth.'

The great respect mixed with enmity of the historians towards Bayazid is an understandable attitude because of the danger that he posed against the Byzantine Empire. Chalkokondyles describes



him as ‘a man who, wherever he went, had shown great daring and remarkable boldness. He displayed great daring in his accomplishments in Asia and Europe’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 267). Having captured numerous cities in both sides of the straits, sieged the Byzantine capital for eight years, and defeated the crusades in Nikopolis, the admiration for him is understandable. However, all in all, the thing which caused his death was that ‘he was impetuous, so that he listened to no one else, and advanced confidently against the enemy’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 267). For Doukas, Bayazid being ‘terrifying and mighty above all others’ acceded to the Ottoman throne. He was the cruelest enemy of Christians. He spends ‘his nights contriving intrigues and machinations against the rational flock of Christ’ (Doukas, 1975: 62). He was a very capable commander who subjugated ‘[t]he whole earth’ (Doukas, 1975: 63). His wealth was fascinating: ‘Bayazid enjoyed the many fruits of good fortune... lacked nothing that... given by God to the world... Boys and girls, selected for their unblemished bodes and beauty of countenance, were there.’ However, Doukas talks about it with disgust: ‘[he], living idly and wantonly, never ceased from lascivious sexual acts, indulging in licentious behavior with boys and girls’ (Doukas, 1975: 88). In the end, the Fortune left him, and the ‘beast’ was died as a result of his arrogance (Doukas, 1975: 100). In short, from the Byzantine point of view, Bayazid was the most dangerous and greatest enemy of the empire just before Mehmed II. He nearly would able to capture the Byzantine capital, and to end the empire.

During the interregnum period, the sons of Bayazid looked for help from the Byzantine emperor, and they received it from time to time. Therefore, the Byzantines generally did not consider these *şehzades* as permanent enemies, but tried to benefit from their rivalry. When it comes to Mehmed I, Chalkokondyles considers him as a friend of the Greeks. Although some conflict between Ottomans and other neighbor states happened time to time, ‘[his] friendship with the Greeks lasted to the end’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014: 303). Like Chalkokondyles, Doukas considers him as a friend of the Byzantines. In fact, he frequently emphasizes a father and son relation between the Byzantine emperor and the Ottoman sultan. The historian puts these words to his mouth: ‘[w]ith God’s help and the cooperation of my father and emperor [of the Romans], I have girded on my paternal power. Henceforth, I will be as obedient to him as a son to his father’ (Doukas, 1975: 111). Moreover, Doukas praises his character and martial abilities by saying ‘the rulers of the surrounding islands [of Smyrna]’ came to greet him because of ‘[his] goodness and gentle nature and superior military strength’ (Doukas, 1975: 116). The most important point in order to understand the Byzantine perception on Mehmed is the narration of his death by Doukas. According to historian, unlike his forebears, ‘some of whom were poisoned while others were strangled or slain by the sword’, Mehmed ‘died peacefully... within [his own] palace [in Adrianople].’ Doukas relate this to ‘his genuine friendship with the emperors and his sympathy for the subject of Christ’ (Doukas, 1975: 127).

Murad II occupies an important position in the accounts of Chalkokondyles and Doukas because it is still possible to make an objective interpretation to a certain extend about him, who was the last Ottoman sultan before the most cursed one, Mehmed II. Chalkokondyles’ obituary of Murad II is [one of] the most positive (Kaldellis, 2014: 161) part of his text concerning the Ottoman sultans. The historian commemorate him by saying ‘[h]e had been a just man and favored by fortune. He had fought in defense and did not initiate acts of aggression, but he would immediately march against the one who did.’ Moreover, Chalkokondyles describes him as a man who prefers the peace over war: ‘If no one challenged him to war, he was not eager to campaign; yet he did not shrink from it when it came to that’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014:161). This is obviously a profile of an ideal ruler who appreciates the peace rather than the war, but if he had to fight, he would be a competent warrior in the warfare: ‘[H]e would set out in winter and in the worst conditions, and he took no account of toil or danger’ (Chalkokondyles, 2014:161). In a similar way, although he employs the word ‘tyrant’ for Murad II too as his usual way to call the Ottoman sultans, Doukas indeed considered him as a man who was ‘virtuous in character and gentle’ (Doukas, 1975: 173). Furthermore, according to historian, Murad II was ‘ingenuous and [had] no evil in his heart’ (Doukas, 1975: 177) Doukas obituary of Murad II is also a very positive one. He reports that ‘Murad’s death was not the result of manifold diseases nor was it painful’ because ‘God... judged the man according to the good deeds he performed for the benefit of the common folk, and [his]

sympathy for both his nation and the Christians.’ Doukas clearly considered him as a man who keeps his oaths, favors peace rather than ‘complete destruction of the fallen nation.’ In other words, according to Doukas, Murad passed away peacefully because he ‘despised warfare and loved peace’ (Doukas, 1975: 188-189). In brief, the Byzantine historians interpreted him in accordance with his ‘chivalry’ and his positive attitude towards the Byzantines.

Having scrutinized the first six Ottoman rulers from Chalkokondyles and Doukas’ perspective, it is clear that regarding the Ottoman sultans, Chalkokondyles and Doukas employ a changing mode of language. On the one hand, the Byzantine historians praise briefly the abilities of the sultans in organization, administration and warfare. On the other hand, the Ottoman regime based on fear, the plunders and the slavery is the topic the topics which they criticize. However, while the most important criterion for Doukas in order to locate the rulers among the bests is their opinions and behaviors towards the Byzantine Empire, for Chalkokondyles, it is their skills in administration and warfare. Nevertheless, it is essentially impossible to draw concrete lines to make any categorization for the criteria of the historians in their consideration of the Ottoman sultans.

### **Conclusion**

As a conclusion, both in the accounts of Chalkokondyles and Doukas, Ottomans have a structural and central role. Firstly, the origin of Ottomans and their nomenclature was analyzed in the Byzantine histories. Chalkokondyles accepted that they are a group of nomadic people who are the descendants of the Skythians, and migrated to Asia Minor in the course of history. Doukas did not reject this argument at all. Both historians consider them as barbarians, but with different connotations. Although Chalkokondyles referred them as barbarians in a totally neutral way, Doukas called them barbarians in order to point out their relatively negative features in terms of classical Byzantine understanding. Secondly, the characteristics of the Ottoman light cavalry raiders were subject of inquiry. Both historians, opposing the Ghaza Thesis, considered them as economically motivated warriors, who plundered the Byzantine territories, and enslaved Christians. Lastly, the attitudes of the Byzantine historians towards first six Ottoman sultans were held under the focus. In general, these historians evaluated them according to their approaches to Byzantines and Christians. Therefore, they obviously praised the sultans who were hospitable to the empire, but they harshly cursed the sultans who were aggressive to the empire. As a result of these comparisons and analysis, since even the differences between the accounts of these Byzantine historians might be a reason to oppose the commonly accepted view that the Ottomans were civilized holy warriors who never harmed any living being, it is presumably the time for the Ottoman historians to vastly utilize the Byzantine sources, which are essentially the Ottoman histories.

### **Disclosure Statements**

1. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.
2. Contribution rate statement of researchers: Sole author 100%.
3. Ethical approval was not required for this research as it was based on documents and archival materials, and did not involve data collection from humans or animals.
4. This study is a research article.

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