

CHAPTER 4b: THE OTTOMAN SULTANS OF BURSA

ORHAN GHAZI (1326-1360)

Orhan, born in 1281 in Sogut as one of Osman's eight sons, played a pivotal role in the early history of the Ottoman Empire. His upbringing was marked by education under the guidance of esteemed scholars like Sheikh Edebali and Faqih Dursun. Orhan was not just physically impressive, being tall and well-built, but also possessed qualities of bravery, modesty, and diligence. His compassion for the less fortunate was evident as he personally distributed soup to the poor and lit oil lamps.

Remarkably, at the tender age of 7 in 1288, Orhan became the Governor of Karaca Hisar. Throughout his early years, he received valuable guidance from experienced officials such as Kose Mihal, Akca Koca, and Konur Alp.



Orhan's ascension to power at the age of 43 came with over three decades of experience. He initiated his rule by consolidating Ottoman power in regions like Bursa, Nicaea, Nicomedia, and Ankara. His reign was characterized by the expansion of the Ottoman Empire both east and west of Anatolia, uniting various Beyliks that had emerged following the collapse of the Seljuqs. Notably, he asserted Ottoman independence by minting his own coins.

A significant aspect of Orhan's legacy lies in his construction of the Ottoman state, which was modeled on Islamic principles. He laid the foundations for comprehensive state institutions, including the Divan—an administrative and judiciary body. Orhan also established a regular standing army and promoted the development of religious institutions and madrassas, fostering education and religious scholarship.

Orhan's leadership was marked by his penchant for seeking counsel from eminent state officials, often drawn from the *ilmiyye* class, comprising *Ulema* and scholars. His rule lasted until his passing in 1362, at the age of 81, completing 38 years in power.

“This Sultan (Orhan Gazi) is the greatest of the kings of the Turkmens and the richest in wealth, lands and military forces... he fights against the nonbelievers continually and keeps them under siege.”

Source: Ibn Batuta, *Tuhfat An Nuzzar fi Gharab Al Ansar wa Ajaib al Asfar*

Orhan's contributions helped transform a small Tribal Beylik into one of the most significant and enduring dynasties in Islamic history, setting the stage for the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

Military Conquests

Byzantines in Bithynia

The early years of Orhan's reign marked a series of significant campaigns against the Byzantine Empire in Bithynia. In 1326, the Ottomans captured Prousa, later known as **Bursa**, and established it as the new Ottoman capital. Bursa underwent extensive renovations, with numerous construction projects initiated. Mercantile establishments, open markets, and covered bazaars were built, transforming the city. Additionally, forts along the northwest Anatolian coast, including Kocaeli, Kartal, and Aydos, were conquered.



In 1329, the **Battle of Pelekanon** took place as Emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos of the Byzantine Empire sought to regain lost provinces. His plan was to lift the siege on Nicomedia (Izmit) and then proceed to liberate Nicaea (Izmir). However, the Ottomans were well-prepared and launched a preemptive attack at Pelekanon, situated between Darica and Eskihisar, intercepting the Byzantine army before they reached Nicomedia. During this battle, Emperor Andronikos III was wounded by an arrow, leading to the scattering of his forces.

In 1333, Andronikos agreed to pay tribute to the Ottomans in exchange for retaining control of some cities. In 1331, the Ottomans achieved the conquest of **Nicaea** (Izmit) and converted the Aya Sofya church into a mosque. The following year, they conquered **Gemlik**. It was in 1335 that Orhan began to be addressed with the title of "Sultan," indicating his status as the Ottoman ruler.

In 1337, the Ottomans captured **Nicomedia** (Izmit), extending their control up to the Bosphorus, leading to a peace treaty with the Romans (Byzantines). The success of these campaigns led to many regional rulers offering their daughters in marriage to Orhan, strengthening diplomatic ties.

Beyliks in Western Anatolia

The expansion continued as the Ottomans took over Beyliks in Western Anatolia. In 1345, the **Karasid Beylik** faced a power struggle following the death of Aclan Bey, leading Dursun Bey to seek assistance from Osman. Dursun Bey offered Bergama, Edremit, and Balıkesir in return. Tragically, both Dursun Bey and his brother Demirhan Bey perished in battle, resulting in all Karasid lands passing to the Ottomans. Orhan's son and heir apparent, Suleyman Pasa, took charge of administration.

Notably, the Karasids possessed a fleet, which proved instrumental in aiding the Ottomans' crossings from Anatolia to Rumelia in Europe. Former Karasid commanders encouraged Orhan to venture into Rumelia, playing a pivotal role in the subsequent Ottoman conquest of the Balkans.

In 1354, the Ottomans achieved the conquest of Ankara, which had been part of the **Eretna Beylik**. Suleyman Pasa led this campaign and proceeded as far south as the **Bey of Candar**, also annexing the principality of Ulug Beyogullari. This expansion extended to the last Byzantine territories south of the Marmara Sea, including Uskudar.



Entering into Rumelia

Ottoman expansion further included **Rumelia**, facilitated by multiple crossings of the Hellespont (Dardanelles) with the assistance of the Karasids. In 1349, at the request of the Byzantine emperor, the Ottoman army was sent to Rumelia to aid local peasants, and in return, they were gifted a small castle on the European side of the Dardanelles. The Ottomans continued to intervene in Byzantine internal struggles, including conflicts with the Serbs and Bulgars. By the time of Orhan's death, the Ottomans had established a firm foothold in Rumelia, paving the way for further expansion.



1340AD



Major Battles

| Year | Name of Battle | Sultan | Against | Impact |
|------|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|---|
| 1331 | Battle of İznik (Nicaea) | Orhan Ghazi | Byzantine forces | The Ottoman victory at İznik solidified their control over the region, contributing to their expansion and consolidation. This victory further weakened the Byzantine Empire in Anatolia. |
| 1329 | Battle of Pelekanon | Orhan Ghazi | Byzantine forces | The Ottoman victory solidified their control over the northwestern Anatolian region. The capture of territories like Pelekanon played a role in the Ottoman Empire's expansion and consolidation. |

Orhan's Family

Orhan's family played a significant role in the early years of the Ottoman Empire. Orhan, the second Bey of the Ottoman Beylik, had several wives, each with their own unique backgrounds and contributions.

Orhan's Wives

One of Orhan's wives was **Nilufer Hatun**, who was the daughter of the tekfur (Byzantine governor) of Yarhisar/Bilecik. She married Orhan following his raid on Bilecik and eventually converted to Islam. Nilufer Hatun became the mother of important figures in Ottoman history, including Suleyman Pasa, Murad I, and Kasem.

Another of Orhan's wives was **Asporca Hatun**, who hailed from a prominent Byzantine family. She, too, embraced Islam after her marriage to Orhan and became the mother of Shahzade Ibrahim, who would go on to serve as the governor of Eskisehir.

Orhan's marriage to **Theodora Hatun**, the daughter of Byzantine Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos and Irene Asanina, was notable for not resulting in her conversion to Islam, and their union did not last long. Theodora Hatun became the mother of Prince Halil.

Eftandise Hatun, the daughter of Mahmud Alp, was another of Orhan's wives.

Orhan's Sons

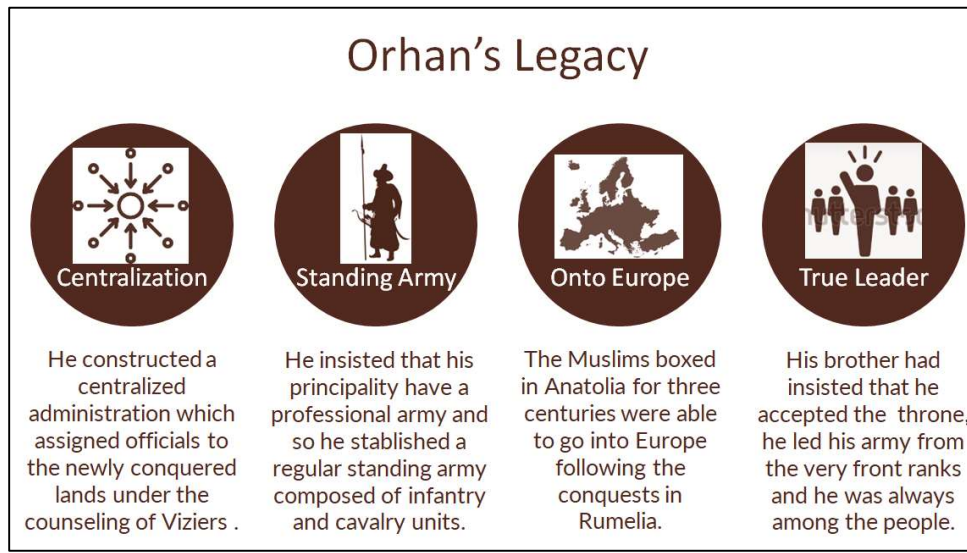
In 1359, Theodora's son Shehzade Halil was kidnapped by Genoese pirates from the shores of the Gulf of Nicomedia. His grandfather, John VI Kantakouzenos, intervened and paid a substantial ransom for his release.

Orhan's eldest son and heir apparent, Shehzade **Suleyman Pasa**, held a prominent position and was deeply loved by his father. Tragically, Suleyman Pasa's life was cut short in 1357 when he suffered a fatal accident while participating in a campaign, falling from his horse. His untimely death left Orhan in a state of profound sorrow and isolation.

Following the death of Suleyman, the mantle of leadership passed to **Murad**, who assumed command of Rumelia. Orhan's own passing in 1360, attributed to the mental anguish he endured over Suleyman's death, marked a pivotal moment in Ottoman history. Murad ascended the throne as the third Ottoman Sultan, shaping the empire's destiny in the years to come.

Shehzade Ibrahim and Shehzade Halil, made an attempt to seize the throne with support from the Karamanids and Eretnids, two Turkic beyliks in Anatolia. This move led to tensions and conflicts within the empire and in 1362, Murad had both of his brothers executed.

Legacy of Orhan



Orhan, the ruler of the Ottoman Empire, benefited greatly from the support and guidance of his older brother, **Alauddin Pasa**. Recognizing Alauddin's sincere support, Orhan established the position of Grand Wazir within the imperial structure and appointed Alauddin Pasa to this crucial role. With the assistance of Alauddin Pasa and other trusted advisors, Orhan undertook significant reforms that played a pivotal role in shaping the Ottoman state.

One of Orhan's most notable achievements was the **establishment of the Divan**, the highest administrative, judiciary, and political body of the state. This council included key figures such as the Grand Wazir, Grand Mufti, and Qadi Askar, who held various responsibilities within the empire. The Qadi Askar, in particular, served as a multifaceted figure, fulfilling roles as a military, religious, and administrative judge.

Orhan's reforms extended to the economic sphere as well. In 1327, he introduced **a new monetary system** and began minting independent coins known as akce. These coins bore inscriptions such as the Kalima, references to the four caliphs, the year 727 AH, the Kayi emblem, and details about the minting authority.

The Ottoman military also underwent significant restructuring under Orhan's leadership. He created an **elite military unit**, composed of 1000 Turkish youths known as yayas and 1000 cavalry called musallam. However, when abuses and acts of disobedience began to arise among the yayas and musallams, the Qadi Askar recommended the formation of a regular army to be recruited from Christian prisoners of war, highlighting the pragmatic approach to maintaining order.

Orhan's reforms were not limited to the military and government; he also instituted an **official Ottoman dress code**. Additionally, he commissioned the **construction of mosques**, an almshouse, and a madrasah in Iznik, contributing to the cultural and educational development of the empire.

Another significant linguistic and cultural development during Orhan's reign was the **acceptance of Turkish as the first official language**. This shift reflected the growing influence and importance of the Turkish population within the Ottoman state, further solidifying the foundation of the empire that would continue to flourish in the centuries to come.

Timeline of Orhan's Reign

- 1326: Orhan takes over after the death of Osman
- 1326: Capture of Prousa (Bursa) and establishment as the Ottoman capital with extensive renovations and construction projects.
- 1329: The Battle of Pelekanon against Byzantine Emperor Andronikos III, leading to his injury and army scattering.
- 1331: Conquest of Nicaea (Iznik) and conversion of Aya Sofya church into a mosque.
- 1333: Byzantine tribute agreement with the Ottomans.
- 1335: Osman begins to be called Sultan.
- 1337: Conquest of Nicomedia (Izmit) and the signing of a peace treaty with the Romans (Byzantines).
- 1345: Annexation of the Karasids after a power struggle.
- 1354: Conquest of Ankara, extending Ottoman influence to the Bey of Candar and Ulug Beyogullari principality.
- 1352: Battle of Demotika and Ottoman intervention in Byzantine struggles.
- 1354: Capture of Gallipoli and settlement of Turkomans.
- 1354: Campaign into Byzantine Thrace.
- 1356: Ottoman troops under Suleyman Pasa defeat John V Palaiologos' forces.
- 1357: Suleyman Pasa dies in an accident, Orhan is miserable and isolates himself, Murad takes command of Rumelia
- 1359: Ottoman prince Shehzade Halil is kidnapped by Genoese pirates and later ransomed.
- 1360: Orhan dies, and his son Murad I ascends to the throne.
- 1362: Execution of Shehzade Halil.

What was Happening Elsewhere (1326-1360)

- 1328: Scotland is independent.
- 1325: Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1325-1351) of the Tughlaq dynasty ruled the Delhi Sultanate.
- 1335: End of the Ilkhanate.
- 1337-1453: The Hundred Years' War between England and France
- 1341-1347: Byzantine Civil War between John VI Kantakouzenos and John V Palaiologos
- 1347-1351: The Black Death
- 1348: Jews expelled from Germany, and go to Poland
- 1352-1357 Second Byzantine Civil War between John V Palaiologos and Matthew Kantakouzenos
- 1356: The Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV issues the Golden Bull of 1356, a constitutional document that establishes the electoral college and the process for electing the Holy Roman Emperor.

- 1360: The Treaty of Brétigny is signed, temporarily ending the first phase of the Hundred Years' War between England and France. The treaty cedes significant territories in France to England.
- 1360: Timur starts building his Empire