



حبر أبيض
WHITE INK



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Forging Ottoman lineage: Introductions to the Consecration of a "Missing" Ethnic Identity

The discipline of the academic and methodological discourse puts us in front of a historical problem and a severe difficulty in examining and dating the lineage of the Ottomans, given the paucity of what the Ottomans themselves wrote about their origins and history before they entered Constantinople. There were no significant written records that could be relied upon in this historical issue, even the Byzantine sources did not address this historical issue in their writings. The same observation can be made about the Europeans, who may not have seen the importance of searching for the origin of the Ottomans. This leads us to a real research problem and makes us forced to focus on the historical evidence we have about the true lineage of the Ottomans, if any.

In this regard, a large segment of Arabs and Muslims trace the origins of the Ottomans to the third Rashidun Caliph Othman bin Affan, given that most of them were not familiar with or even interested in the history of the Ottoman Empire. This is in addition to the success of Turkish media propaganda in consolidating this belief, even if unofficially, by using the real history of the Ottomans and trying to find a meeting point with Caliph Othman bin Affan.

If the official Turkish media compelled to recognize the official Ottoman lineage and end it to the founder of the first state, Othman bin Artgrel, yet the unofficial media, the most widespread in the Arab and Islamic world, based on the electronic brigades of the Muslim Brotherhood, continues to arouse the feelings of the common people with this alleged affiliation. They want to give a lost legitimacy to what they called the Ottoman Caliphate. Perhaps the Turks' insistence on trying to link the origin of their lineage to Caliph Othman bin Affan is due to the attempt to legitimize the institution of "caliphate" and to achieve the conditions of "Arabism" and "being from the Quraysh" as basic conditions and legal preconditions for obtaining the position of "caliphate".

In this context, some have made an effort to link the Mongol race, to which the lineage of the Turks ends, and the Rashidun Caliph Othman Ibn Affan. We find one of the websites known to be loyal to Ankara that says: "For your information, the first person to convey the message of Islam to Turkey was Othman bin Affan, and during the reign of Othman, the Turks were introduced to Islam for the first time in history. After that, the Ottomans and their Ottoman Empire appeared, which lasted for about 600 years, then turned into the state of Turkey today. Othman bin Affan is the third of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and one of the ten whom Allah has promised to enter Heaven. (haltaalam.info)

In connection with the same thesis, a group of historical myths spread about the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, some of which claimed that the lineage of the Ottomans reached "Japheth, the son of the Prophet Noah". Others claimed that the spiritual founder of the Ottoman state, Artgrel, was the son of a Muslim sultan called Suleiman Shah, who was among the mujahideen who defended Islam before he was "martyred" in the Euphrates. His son Artgrel led his clan belonging to the Turkish "Kayi" clan, and ruled part of the Anatolian Peninsula under the rule of the Seljuks before establishing the rule of the Othman family after a bitter struggle against the Byzantine Empress, according to the narration of those close to the Turkish thesis.

On the other hand, researchers question this narrative, considering that the character "Suleiman Shah" is a fictional character created by the Ottoman propaganda in an attempt to find Islamic origins to establish it and create a high lineage. While others see that this character is originally due to the Seljuk leader Suleiman, who established the rule of the Seljuks in Anatolia, who were called "Roman Seljuks".

The Ottomans' attempt to impose an ethnic aura around their lineage, pushed them, until the end of the nineteenth century, to disavow their Turkish origins, but rather portrayed the Turkish race as representing the backward Turkish races in their eyes, which were inhabiting Asia such as the Seljuks, Turkmen and Uzbeks. Abdul Aziz Al-Shenawi says in his book "The Ottoman Empire: An Islamic State that was distorted": "The Ottomans adhered to the words "Ottoman" and "Ottomans" as a distinctive title for them, expressing their pride in their ancestry to Osman I on the one hand, and on the other hand, being superior to these respected Asian Turkish races".

In this regard, the researcher pauses in the history of the Ottoman Empire at the attempts of the political Islam movement in Turkey to return their origins to the Ottomans and not to the Turkish race, considering that the latter is part of the state component and not the founding race. This matter can be explained by what the Othman family promoted about the title "Turkish" in Ottoman history. Here, the same author emphasizes that the recognition of the Turkish origin of the Ottoman Empire was only in the beginning of the twentieth century. He says: "They used to call the Turkish word on the ignorant Ottoman peasant or a resident of Anatolian villages with one meaning, Gilf, as a mockery or contempt for him. The Ottomans went further, as attributing the word Turkish to one of the Ottomans residing in the capital or in one of the Ottoman cities was considered an insult to him, despite the fact that their language was called Turkish in all historical eras".

The Ottomans continued to deny their Turkish lineage until the outbreak of the Turkish-Greek war in 1897 AD, when the official speech began to re-change the connotations of the words of Turkey, Turks and Turkish to express - according to Vladimir Minorsky - the concepts of the Turkish homeland and the Turkish people. This change is evidenced by the poem compiled by the Ottoman poet Muhammad Amin Bey on the occasion of this war. He says: "Bn Barr Turcom Hanesem Uludor", meaning "I am Turkish, my religion and my race are one of the greatest religions and races".

Returning to the personality of Artgrel himself, a group of doubts surround his Islamic identity, in contrast to the Ottoman writings that present him as a fighter and one of the first defenders of Islam. Some argue that he may have been a Muslim in origin and the claim that he was the first to introduce Islam to his people is untrue, which is part of the attempt to beautify his image among the followers of the Ottoman thesis. Some even go further, considering that the Artgrel clan were not Muslims, but converted to Islam during the reign of his son Othman, to whom the Ottomans belonged.

It seems that the first nucleus of the Ottomans was not, in origin, a homogeneous structure, as historical sources mention that the clan of Othman bin Artgrel did not exceed 4 thousand members, before this clan expanded on the ruins of the remaining weak neighboring clans. In addition, they attracted Byzantine and Armenian ethnicities that were indignant with the Byzantine style of rule and its high taxes. It seems that the development of the clan into an emirate, then into a sultanate, then into an empire pushed it to search for an honorable birth certificate worthy of its new size and position.

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that the Ottomans were not satisfied with the adaptation of religious texts to serve their political agenda, but rather made efforts to falsify their lineage in a way that contributes to the sanctification of the origins of their state and their ethnic origins. This is the propaganda that the media parties aligned with Ankara contributed to spreading and perpetuating in the minds of Arabs and Muslims as a prelude to achieving the supreme political goal of the new Ottomans. The Ottomans imagine that they have the right to represent the Islamic world and they are the best representative of the Islamic caliphate, which is the dream of political Islam organizations that were spiritually, ideologically and existentially linked to the Ottoman thesis.