



THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE TURKS.

The vanity of nations, like that of families, inclines them to lay claim to a high antiquity. From this weakness of the human mind the Turkish people and their historians cannot claim to be entirely free. They endeavor to trace their nationality back to chiefs and conquerors reputed to have existed a thousand years before the birth of Christ, and to warlike tribes who occupied the central country of Asia and battled with and stemmed the western march of the hordes of China. Of this period of their existence, however, if existence they then had as a distinct people, there exists no authentic record. It is long anterior to the time when reliable history commences of that portion of the globe. There is, to be sure, no reasonable doubt that, at that stage of the world's existence, the plateaus of Central Asia were occupied by savage and warlike tribes, nomadic in habits, quarrelsome in disposition, and predatory in their manner of life. But that these tribes were settled and populous enough, or sufficiently homogeneous to constitute a nation from which to trace a genealogy is exceedingly improbable. The more reasonable supposition is that, at that early date, the region referred to was but very scantily peopled, the tribes at constant enmity with each other and migrating from place to place at the mercy of the varying fortunes of war; and that anything approaching to settlement or civilization was the result of a later experience and commenced at a much later date in the world's chronology.

The earliest authentic history of the Turks does not date back further than the seventh century of the Christian