



# TURKISH MYTH AND MUSLIM SYMBOL

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THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT

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Carole Hillenbrand

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**Carole Hillenbrand**

Edinburgh University Press

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Edinburgh University Press Ltd  
22 George Square, Edinburgh

Typeset in 11/13pt Monotype StempelGaramond by  
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester, and  
printed and bound in Great Britain by  
Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 2572 7 (hardback)  
ISBN 978 0 7486 2573 4 (paperback)

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# Acknowledgements

A number of friends and colleagues have given me help and advice in the writing of this book – Edmund Bosworth, Rhona Cullen, Margaret Graves, Shayea al-Hajeri, Colin Imber, Katy Kalemkerian, Craig Kennedy, Metin Kunt, Gary Leiser, Fiona Macintosh, Alex Mallett, Songul Mecit, Charles Melville, Sandy Morton, Shahla Suleiman, Yasir Suleiman, Şebnem Susam-Sarayeva and Alaaddin Yalçınkaya. I am also very grateful to Jonathan Bloom for his skilful assistance in computer matters. Shortly before his death in December 2006, John Higgitt, despite his serious illness, and with his unfailing generosity of spirit, still found the strength to discuss aspects of this book with me.

Part of this book was written while I was fortunate enough to be at Dartmouth College in 2005 and I should like to thank colleagues there – and especially Marlene Heck, Kevin Reinhart, Gene Garthwaite, Christopher MacEvitt and Susan Ackerman – and the library staff, for their generous help. I should also like to acknowledge my gratitude to the staff of Edinburgh University Library, and especially colleagues in the Special Collections section.

As usual, I have received great support from Edinburgh University Press, and especially from Nicola Ramsey, Ian Davidson, James Dale and Eddie Clark. It is always a pleasure to work with them. My sincere thanks are also due to my copy-editor Judith Oppenheimer for all her careful work, and to Moyra Forrest for compiling an excellent index.

I should also like to mention Professor Speros Vryonis Jr, who has worked on the subject of Manzikert for many years. In 2006 I wrote to him explaining the interest I had long had in writing a historiographical study of the Islamic sources for the battle of Manzikert and telling him that much of the work was almost completed. However, I did not want to duplicate what he had done. He replied in characteristically generous fashion and we both agreed that there was room for

two books on Manzikert, especially from two scholars who come from rather different academic backgrounds.

I was fortunate to have Professor Geoffrey Lewis as my teacher at Oxford and the late John Walsh as my Ph.D. supervisor at Edinburgh; both of them were inspiring in their academic commitment to the study of Turkish and Turkey. I should like to record my gratitude to them.

I am very thankful indeed to Ruth Macrides for her great kindness and generosity of spirit in allowing me to include her translation of Attaleiates' account of the battle of Manzikert in this book.

I have dedicated this book to Professor Victor Ménéage as a token of my deep gratitude to him for the constant encouragement and support he gave me when I was starting out in the field of Turkish studies.

My debt to my husband Robert is, as always, enormous. He has helped through discussion, probing criticism, advice, expert proof-reading, skill in choosing suitable illustrations and countless other ways, both academic and pastoral. I cannot find adequate words to thank him.

# **Comment on transliteration and conventions used in the book**

Transliteration of Arabic and Persian words and phrases has been kept to a minimum and has been confined to italicised words, phrases and book titles in the text. In the bibliography, however, full transliteration has been used.

There are several forms of the name Manzikert used in the medieval sources. For the sake of consistency and because it is the name by which the battle is known in the West, I have opted for the form Manzikert throughout the book. The name 'Byzantium' has been used rather than the Arabic and Persian word 'Rum'.

To Professor Victor Ménage, who first taught me Turkish

PART 1

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# **MEDIEVAL MUSLIM INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT**



# Introduction

*The Battle of Manzikert was the most decisive disaster in Byzantine history.*<sup>1</sup>

### Opening remarks

The first time the medieval Turks came to general notice outside the Middle East was in 1071, when news of an extraordinary military victory began to reach Europe. The second ruler of the Seljuq Turkish Muslim dynasty, Alp Arslan, a nomad from the steppes of Central Asia, is almost exclusively known outside the borders of Turkey as the victor at the famous battle of Manzikert in August 1071. In this battle he defeated the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes, took him prisoner and then released him honourably.

Historians from the time of Gibbon onwards have traditionally seen this battle as the pivotal moment after which Byzantine Asia Minor was gradually to become Muslim Anatolia.<sup>2</sup> Manzikert signalled the slow but inexorable decline both of Byzantium and of Christianity in Anatolia. In addition, modern Crusader historians have seen the battle of Manzikert as one of the factors which began to cause disquiet about the Muslim world in the minds of the Christian rulers in eleventh-century Europe. There was unease and fear at the growing power of the Turks on the eastern flanks of the ancient Christian empire of Byzantium and the infiltration of waves of nomadic Turks across the Anatolian plateau.

Why another study of the battle of Manzikert? It has been already been the subject of many scholarly articles in a battery of languages. Moreover, a lively and popular book by Alfred Friendly, aptly named *The dreadful day: the battle of Manzikert, 1071*,<sup>3</sup> has covered many aspects of the subject, and in particular the details of the actual battle.



Yet it has to be said that the history of the medieval Turks within the Muslim world from the eleventh century onwards as rulers of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Anatolia before the rise of the Ottomans has been somewhat neglected by Western scholars. The same is true of modern Turkish academics, who themselves prefer to focus on the achievements of the Ottomans. Yet Turkish dynasties – first the Seljuqs of Iran and Anatolia, and then the Mamluks of Egypt – dominated the pre-Ottoman Islamic world and established traditions of government which were to be inherited and perfected by the Ottomans. There have been long-standing prejudices, rooted in history, against the Turks until recently, both in Europe<sup>4</sup> and amongst the Arabs and Persians<sup>5</sup>, and attempts to belittle them. But it is an indubitable fact that they dominated and moulded the lands they ruled – the Middle East for a millennium and Eastern Europe for many centuries. Even so, the history of Turkey and many aspects of the identity and role of the Turks, both as Muslims and as Turks, still remain little known in the West and undervalued in the Arabic- and Persian-speaking worlds. Few outside Turkey realise that it was the Turks, not the Arabs, who finally removed the Crusaders from Muslim soil.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, although Alp Arslan's victory is famous, it is rarely contextualised. It is as if he appears, as it were, like a comet, triumphs at Manzikert and then disappears without trace. Modern Islamic scholarship has done little to match the exhaustive analysis of the build-up to Manzikert, of the actual battle, and of its aftermath, which Byzantine scholars have produced.<sup>7</sup>

This book hopes to make a modest contribution to the scholarship on medieval Turkey by focusing on its foundational myth, the battle of Manzikert. The book is a study of Muslim historical writing about Manzikert. It is not about the military dimensions of the battle nor is it a composite account of 'what may actually have happened', based on the full range of available sources – in Greek, Armenian, Syriac, Latin, Arabic and Persian and other languages. These aspects of Manzikert have been dealt with extremely thoroughly and skilfully by scholars of Byzantium, such as Laurent, and more recently Cheynet. Vryonis, in particular, has devoted years to writing in a wide-ranging and comprehensive way about many aspects of this battle.<sup>8</sup> So it is probably true to say that the only way to shed any really new light on the 'event' lies within the discipline of military archaeology, involving as it does the minute scrutiny of terrain and an assessment of topographical factors.

This book, focusing on the battle as it is depicted in the surviving Arabic and Persian sources, which date from the twelfth century onwards, is more about the memory of Manzikert and how that

memory was embellished by subsequent generations of medieval Muslim historians in their own time. The intention is to show how their writings gradually came to use Manzikert as a vehicle for portraying spiritual truths and for demonstrating the inherent superiority of Islam over Christianity. The more talented of these writers made Manzikert a sufficiently grandiose theme on which to lavish the considerable literary potential of classical Arabic and Persian prose. Moreover, as if this were not enough, in more modern times Manzikert has played a different yet seminal role as a symbol of the birth of the Turkish nation in Anatolia. That theme is discussed in the last chapter of this book. This battle, then, has worked and is still working like yeast in the Muslim and especially the Turkish mind. It simply will not stay in the past.

In order to contextualise the battle, including both its antecedents and its aftermath, it will be necessary to describe, if only briefly, the various strands that together make up the complex polity of the Middle East in the eleventh century. This will also involve a recapitulation of the key events that led up to the battle. For the sake of clarity the principal players on the stage will be introduced in turn.

## **The Seljuq background**

The movement that brought the nomadic Turks to Anatolia had begun in Central Asia as a series of vast waves of tribal displacement from further east. The Seljuqs were a family of nomadic Oghuz Turks who had converted to Islam around the end of the tenth century. With their nomadic Turcoman fellow tribesmen they crossed into the easternmost part of the Islamic world – Transoxiana and Khurasan – in the early eleventh century, ousting the Ghaznavid rulers of these lands definitively after the key battle of Dandanqan in 431/1040. Under their first major leader, Tughril, the Seljuqs then conquered large areas of the eastern Islamic world, including parts of Central Asia, Iran, Iraq and Syria, as well as new lands in Anatolia. The Seljuq rulers quickly presented themselves as upholders of Sunni Islam. Their empire remained broadly unified until 511/1118; thereafter, centrifugal forces inherent in the nomadic heritage of the Seljuqs fragmented their polity. The dynasty of the Great Seljuqs survived until almost the end of the twelfth century, but in Anatolia a subsidiary branch of the family – known as the Seljuqs of Rum – ruled until 707/1307.

Nobody knows exactly when nomadic Turks (the Turcomans) from Central Asia first came to Anatolia, the land now known as

Turkey, or how many nomads were involved. What does seem clear, however, is that it was the policy of the first three Great Seljuq rulers – Tughril, Alp Arslan and Malikshah – to direct the Turcomans to the frontiers of their empire and thereby to soften up their enemies as well as sidestepping the problem of how to control these often undisciplined forces. This process brought about the Turkish penetration of Azarbayjan, the Caucasus and Anatolia. The battle of Manzikert in 1071 is viewed retrospectively as a hinge of Turkish history, since it exposed the vulnerability of the eastern Byzantine border; but the importance of this battle should not blind us to the fact that the infiltration of Turkish nomads into Anatolia had begun several decades earlier.<sup>9</sup> And after the battle the nomads kept on coming (pl. 2).

In 454/1063 Tughril's nephew Alp Arslan became sultan of a realm covering Persia and Iraq. In the early years of his reign, he was preoccupied with the securing of his own position as supreme leader of the Seljuqs and with the necessary elimination of the major family rivals who threatened his authority. He was also troubled by the problem of his nomadic followers, the Turcomans, on whose military support he still depended to a large extent. Very early on in his reign, Alp Arslan personally led the Turcomans on a number of campaigns against the Christian kingdoms of the Caucasus – Georgia and Armenia – areas in which he was to show a consistent interest during his short rule. His motivation was probably twofold: firstly, to secure his north-west frontiers more firmly; and secondly, to keep the Turcomans on the move and to channel their energies through their traditional raiding activities.

The time-honoured steppe practice of raiding, needed for the very survival of the Turcomans, is presented by the medieval Muslim sources as *jihād* (holy war), led by a good Sunni Muslim sultan, albeit a Turkish nomad, anxious to display his religious credentials. For Alp Arslan is portrayed in the Muslim sources as an ardent believer, fanatical even, with a high level of personal piety and scrupulous observance of his religious duties. In his *Book of Government*, Alp Arslan's chief minister, Nizam al-Mulk, himself clearly a most formidable man, writes about the sultan in the following terms:

'He was exceedingly imperious and awe-inspiring and, because he was so earnest and fanatical in his beliefs and disapproved of the Shafi'i rite,<sup>10</sup> I lived in constant fear of him'<sup>11</sup> (pl. 4).

However, the most important religious policy of the sultan – a sustained attack on the major external foe of the Seljuqs, the Fatimid Shi'ite Isma'ili caliphate of Cairo, whose territories extended to

Palestine and Syria – was the work of Nizam al-Mulk, who frequently accompanied Alp Arslan on campaign. Indeed, in the very year of the battle of Manzikert, Alp Arslan was attacking, as his prime target, not Byzantium but Syria, laying siege in the early months of 463/1071 first to Edessa, and then to Aleppo. It was at that point, probably in April, that Alp Arslan received news of the arrival of the Byzantine army led by the emperor Romanus himself in eastern Anatolia; and he decided to return east to deal with this new threat.

## The Byzantine background

When Romanus IV Diogenes was elevated to the Byzantine throne in January 1068 he married Eudocia, the widow of the previous Byzantine emperor, Constantine X Ducas, who was acting as regent for her son Michael. Romanus took over a Byzantine empire threatened on all its borders – by the Normans in Italy, the Pechenegs and Ouzes in the Balkans, and the Turks in the east.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, his reign was ‘hamstrung’, to use Vryonis’ words, by internal strife amongst the political and military elites in Constantinople; it was ‘a vicious contest for political power between the bureaucrats and the generals’.<sup>13</sup>

Romanus was a seasoned military campaigner who adopted a different policy vis-à-vis the Turkish threat from that of his predecessors. Romanus preferred to take the offensive outside Byzantine frontiers rather than wait for the enemy within Byzantium. The campaign which culminated in the battle of Manzikert was the last of three conducted by Romanus himself.<sup>14</sup> This last enterprise of his began in the spring of 463/1071 when he left Constantinople in the direction of Sivas with a large army; it contained many foreign mercenaries, including Normans, Franks, Slavs, Armenians, Georgians and Turks (Ghuzz, Pechenegs and Cumans) from southern Russia.

One of the two major Byzantine sources for the battle, Nicephorus Bryennius, states that when the emperor reached Cappadocia, he sought the advice of his best generals as to whether to continue to march eastwards and fight the Turks there or to wait for them within Byzantine territory. One group of advisers, whom Nicephorus Bryennius describes as ‘bolder and flattering’, urged the emperor to fight the sultan straightaway. However, the opposing faction within the Byzantine military – two of his commanders, Joseph Trachaneiotes, who headed a large body of troops, and Nicephorus Bryennius (the grandfather of the author of the same name and the ‘duke of all the west’) – thought that such a plan was very ill-advised and they begged

the emperor to wait, or at least to stay in Erzerum, in a place in which it would be favourable for them to fight. Romanus did not heed their advice and advanced further eastwards, secure in the knowledge that he had already chalked up a success against the Turks at Manbij.<sup>15</sup> So Romanus opted for a more aggressive policy, wishing to recapture and garrison the Armenian fortresses of Manzikert and Akhlat which Alp Arslan had recently taken from Byzantium.

The period from 365/976 until the battle of Manzikert saw significant changes to the eastern frontier of the Byzantine empire; the disappearance of the Armenian and Syrian buffer states in this period placed the Byzantines directly in contact with the Fatimids in the south and the Turks in the east.<sup>16</sup> The major cities of the vast new areas now directly annexed by Byzantium served as fortresses and for the housing of reinforcements and supplies behind the frontier. In the east, Sivas, Erzerum and Manzikert served in this way, and, certainly after the fall of Ani in 456/1064, Manzikert was the main base behind the lines. This frontier, defended by a dense network of fortresses, has been viewed by scholars, such as Cahen and Cheynet, as a stable one. This judgement is based on their opinion, most probably correct, that the Seljuqs did not constitute a major threat to Byzantium, given that the Seljuq sultan was intent on attacking Egypt.

When Romanus reached Manzikert he was joined by one of his commanders, Basilakes, who brought considerable reinforcements from Syria and Armenia.<sup>17</sup> Nicephorus Bryennius portrays Basilakes as intrepid but foolhardy, incapable of giving the emperor any useful advice,<sup>18</sup> and he accuses Romanus Diogenes of hurtling irresponsibly eastwards towards Persia and his enemies, with a larger army than any of the forces of his predecessors. At Manzikert the emperor heard that the sultan was on the move. On receipt of this news, Romanus decided to divide his army into two; one half would stay where they were and the other would proceed to Akhlat with another of his commanders, Joseph Trachaneiotes. On the third day of his journey, Joseph and his men were attacked by marauding Turks. When the news of this was reported to Romanus he summoned Basilakes, who reassured the emperor that these Turks were just raiding parties from the garrison in Akhlat. Nicephorus Bryennius then makes the all-important statement that the emperor was completely unaware that the sultan was very near to the Byzantine camp.

It is not clear exactly when Romanus discovered that the sultan was close to him. Certainly he knew the truth when the envoys came either directly from the sultan or through the intermediary of a representative

of the caliph. Byzantine sources confirm that peace initiatives came from Alp Arslan. Romanus took counsel of his closest advisers and then emphatically refused Alp Arslan's offer, feeling that he could not now turn back after so much expense and effort without having engaged the enemy in battle. So, as both Muslim and Christian sources would have it, he rushed headlong towards his preordained fate.

### **The possible complicity of Fatimid Egypt**

This neglected aspect of Fatimid foreign policy has been explored by Hamdani,<sup>19</sup> who refers to a Fatimid mission to Manbij in 461/1069 after the town had been conquered by the Byzantines the previous year. The Fatimid envoy was probably interested in finding out about Byzantine strategy vis-à-vis their joint enemy, the Seljuqs. The Fatimids would have been pleased to discover that Rayy was the avowed target of Romanus Diogenes, and not Aleppo, which was being ruled by a Fatimid vassal. According to Hamdani, the Fatimids were not strong enough to fight the Seljuqs and would therefore have welcomed the idea of the Seljuqs being diverted by the Byzantines to a battleground in Armenia, far from Fatimid lands. In this scenario the Seljuqs would not be able in the short term to threaten Egypt.

It would certainly have been in the Fatimid interest if the highly successful run of victories achieved by Alp Arslan – he had conquered Ani and Kars in 456/1064 and subdued Georgia in 460/1068 – could be curtailed by the Byzantine march eastwards in 468/1071. Alp Arslan, who was besieging Aleppo at the time and had his sights set on moving on through Syria towards Egypt, was obliged to turn back to the Byzantine eastern frontier and face the emperor's army.<sup>20</sup> But it remains questionable that Romanus went eastwards just because the Fatimids had suggested this to him for reasons of their own.

### **The view from Aleppo**

The subsidiary role of Aleppo in the build-up to the events of the battle of Manzikert should also not be forgotten. The Arab Mirdasid ruler of Aleppo, Mahmud b. Nasr, had enlisted Turcoman troops, and Aleppo was an important centre from which Turcomans raided Byzantine territory in the Antioch area. In the years preceding Manzikert – 459/1066 and 460/1067 – such Turcoman bands seized as plunder forty thousand buffaloes and numerous other cattle from the region of Antioch. During the same period, the local chronicler of Aleppo,

Ibn al-ʿAdim, records that around seventy thousand people of Byzantine origin were sold as slaves in the market at Aleppo.<sup>21</sup> It was in this context that Romanus conducted the first two of his three campaigns towards the Muslim world from 461/1068 onwards; these two campaigns were aimed from Antioch at the Aleppo region.

Mahmud saw the writing on the wall and changed sides. He had declared allegiance to the Fatimid Ismaʿili caliph in Cairo but shifted his loyalties back to Sunni Islam in 462/1070 when he perceived the rising power of Alp Arslan.<sup>22</sup> When the sultan crossed the Euphrates on 14 Rabiʿ II 463/19 January 1071, he summoned Mahmud to come and parley with him, but the latter refused. After a siege of one month, Mahmud and his mother visited Alp Arslan and made peace with him.<sup>23</sup>

### **The story of the battle itself<sup>24</sup>**

Whatever the exact size of the Byzantine army at Manzikert, there seems to be general agreement that the army with which Romanus left Constantinople in the spring of 463/1071 was unusually large and that he was fighting with considerably fewer troops at the battle itself. Even so, he must have had a clear numerical superiority over Alp Arslan, which explains both the fear of the sultan to engage with the enemy and the firm decision of the emperor to fight. Little is known about the equipment of the Seljuq army, except that each soldier had his own horse and a spare mount too, whilst the lavish impedimenta of the Byzantine army are commented on by both Muslim and Byzantine sources.

Precise details of the preliminary skirmishes before the battle of Manzikert are not easy to disentangle on the basis of the Byzantine and Muslim sources, whose accounts are confusing and at times contradictory. It is not at all clear, for example, what the length of the preliminary encounters was nor how many skirmishes were involved. Nor is it known at what time of day the battle began, although the Muslim sources would have us believe that fighting started after the Friday noon prayer.

The emperor, bringing out his own men to fight, lined them up in front of the ditch.<sup>25</sup> The disposition of the Byzantine army was as follows: Alyates commanded the right wing, whilst the left wing was led by Nicephorus Bryennius. The emperor was in the centre. At the rear was Andronicus Ducas, who was known to harbour hostile feelings towards Romanus.<sup>26</sup> The Byzantine forces advanced in pursuit of the Turks, who retreated in accordance with their usual tactics. Hamidullah<sup>27</sup> divides the battle into three phases. In the first phase, the

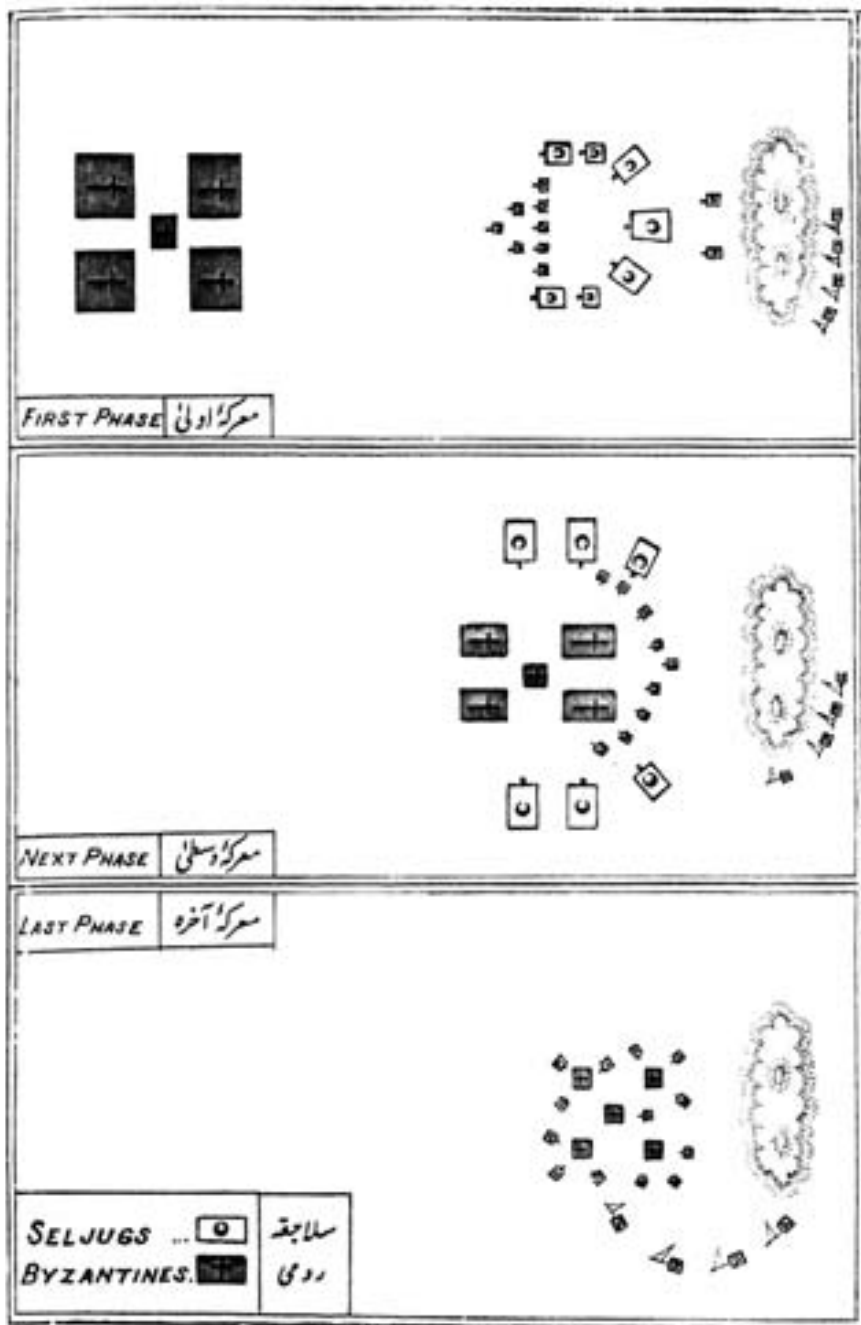


Figure 1.1 The course of the battle of Manzikert as suggested by M. Hamidullah



Muslims in crescent formation (which effectively hid their small numbers) faced the Christians disposed in a densely massed square. In the second phase, the Muslims executed a feigned but carefully planned retreat so that the Christians left their strong position and, rashly advancing, were gradually encircled by the steadily widening arms of the crescent. The third and final phase saw a previously hidden force of Muslim cavalry, divided into small detachments, attacking and separating the Christian army into ever smaller pockets.

It may be inferred that whilst the Byzantine army remained as a single wall of men, the usual Turkish practice of showering arrows from all sides would not have achieved a great deal. As evening drew near, however, Romanus ordered his troops to retreat before darkness fell. The imperial standard was therefore turned round. The implications of this were not understood equally well in all parts of the army and amongst some troops it was feared that this action had been taken because the emperor had been defeated or even killed. Panic ensued.

It seems likely that when the Byzantine standard was reversed, all the troops did not maintain their order of battle consistently. If this is indeed what occurred, gaps would inevitably have appeared between the various sections of the Byzantine army and some contingents would have become especially vulnerable to Turkish attack. The return to camp would in such a situation be open to interpretation as a retreat, even a rout.

The Turks harassed the retreating Byzantine army to such an extent that Romanus finally gave orders that the troops should turn round again and fight. This order was obeyed by the whole army, except for the rearguard, led by Andronicus Ducas who left the battle with troops under his command. The effect of this action on morale in the Byzantine army can easily be imagined. With the departure of the Byzantine rearguard, the Seljuqs were able to molest the remaining Byzantine army from behind as well as on both wings. Romanus in the centre continued to fight courageously but was eventually captured and taken to Alp Arslan. The Turks also plundered the Byzantine camp and went away with quantities of booty.

The above brief account has followed the description given by Attaleiates.<sup>28</sup> Two Arabic sources, al-Bundari<sup>29</sup> and Ibn al-<sup>c</sup>Adim,<sup>30</sup> mention that the Turks used ambushes. This is confirmed by Nicephorus Bryennius. It is probable, however, that this tactic was useful only in the last stages of the fighting. In the overall context of the battle, however, these ambushes were surely not as significant either as the catastrophic consequences which followed the reversal of



**Figure 1.2** Modern Turkish depiction of Romanus with Alp Arslan

the Byzantine standard or the flight of the rearguard which left the main body of the army unprotected from the rear.

Romanus remained the prisoner of Alp Arslan for about a week.<sup>31</sup> The sultan is praised in the Byzantine sources for his restraint and moderation. Some form of treaty was agreed. On his honourable release, Romanus moved westwards only to discover Michael VII Ducas had been proclaimed emperor. As is well known, Romanus was eventually blinded by his enemies and died on 4 August 1072. Nicephorus Bryennius sees the fate of Romanus as the final scene of a classical tragedy:

The emperor Romanus Diogenes, who had undertaken to restore the fortune of the Byzantines, already in decline, because, as I see it, he attempted this restoring without the genius and skill it would have required, was himself defeated and he ruined the empire with him.<sup>32</sup>

### **The place and date of the battle**

It would appear that most of the battle was fought on the steppe stretching for several miles to the south and south-east of Manzikert.

The plain was ideal country for cavalry and the uplands were perfect for ambushes.<sup>33</sup> The Muslim sources attempt to locate the site of the battle more precisely, placing it at al-Rahwa, which in medieval times was the name of a desert near Akhlat.<sup>34</sup>

There is still doubt as to the actual date of the battle of Manzikert. When the Muslim sources mention a specific day of the week for the battle (and many of them do), they are unanimous that the battle took place on a Friday. If this choice of weekday is to be taken literally,<sup>35</sup> a number of the dates given in Muslim sources have to be ruled out, since such dates are not Fridays. Three Arabic accounts give dates which were in fact Fridays: the Coptic Christian writer, al-Makin, probably taking his cue from Muslim sources, gives Friday 20 Dhu'l-Qa'da 463 (Friday, 19 August 1071) and Ibn al-Jawzi and his grandson give Friday 27 Dhu'l-Qa'da 463 (Friday, 26 August 1071). According to Vryonis, 'an almost contemporary Byzantine source sets clearly the date as August 26', but he does not give the source.<sup>36</sup>

### **Why did the Turks win the battle?**

It is easy to be wise after the event and certainly Romanus is roundly blamed in a variety of ways for the humiliating defeat of the Byzantine army. Cheynet argues most persuasively that what went wrong at the battle of Manzikert can be attributed far more to internal Byzantine tensions than to the failure of Romanus' external policy against the Turkish enemy.<sup>37</sup> As already mentioned,<sup>38</sup> he had a number of difficult frontiers to defend all at the same time. He had inherited from his predecessor an army which contained many mercenaries recruited from outside the Byzantine empire. The principle underlying this policy (rather than selecting local troops) was that it prevented the Byzantine army commanders from building up rival military factions within the empire.<sup>39</sup> So Romanus preferred to recruit men from within Asia Minor and he enjoyed a good relationship with the Armenians.<sup>40</sup> However, under his command, the foreign mercenaries felt that their importance was dwindling, and so there were tensions between the foreign mercenaries and the local Byzantine troops within Romanus' army. In the top echelons of command, some of his generals disagreed with his strategy towards the Turkish 'problem', especially when he embarked on a campaign which culminated in the defeat at Manzikert.<sup>41</sup>

Cheyne analyses the tensions within the Byzantine army as coming from two conflicting views. On the one hand, leaders such as Nicephorus Bryennius and Joseph Trachaneiotas wanted to play a

waiting game within the Byzantine borders under the protection of fortresses and to abandon the frontier areas inhabited by Armenians. The other 'faction', consisting of Armenian leaders, preferred to go beyond the frontiers of the Byzantine empire and to destroy the enemy before they could cross over into Byzantine territory.<sup>42</sup> This was the context in which Romanus finally made his fateful decision to fight at Manzikert.

Cheyne<sup>43</sup> and Kaegi<sup>44</sup> argue that the Turkish horsemen were not always superior because of their mobility and archery skills. And indeed Byzantium might have won the day had it not been for two factors: the defection of some of the Turkish contingents and the desertion of their rearguard. The theme of Turkish defection is completely ignored or suppressed by the Muslim sources. But it is clear from the eastern Christian as well as Byzantine sources that certain Turkish troops abandoned the Byzantine army. Matthew of Edessa states that the Uzes and the Pechenegs – fellow Turks – crossed over to join the sultan's army in the course of the battle,<sup>45</sup> and Aristakes<sup>46</sup> and Michael the Syrian<sup>47</sup> also speak of this defection. The damage caused by this loss of troops was then compounded by the desertion of Andronicus Ducas and the Byzantine rearguard.<sup>48</sup> So, as Vryonis argues, the Seljuq victory at Manzikert can be attributed to long-term divisive elements within the Byzantine empire.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, it is clear that by the time of the battle, the vast majority of the Byzantine army did not actually participate in the battle.<sup>50</sup>

### **How serious was the defeat for the Byzantines?**

Despite the immediate humiliation of defeat and stories of the emperor having to grovel in the dust before an unlettered Turkish nomad, the impact of Manzikert on the Byzantine empire could have been a lot worse than it actually proved to be. Alp Arslan made no attempt to follow up his victory in person. Yet Anatolia at that point lay, surely demoralised, before him. Manzikert had worked out successfully, coming upon him not by his own design but by accident, but it did not immediately engender a series of follow-up campaigns to profit from the ensuing civil strife in Byzantium and the consequent lack of vigilance on the Byzantine eastern borders. Instead, he rushed off to the other end of his empire, to Central Asia, to deal with disaffection there, and he never returned. He was killed there two years later. It is also very significant that his son and heir Malikshah did not try to exploit his father's success in Anatolia, although the time was ripe.

As for the Byzantine side, Cheynet argues that only 10 per cent of Romanus Diogenes' army was lost, the groups most affected being the Armenian infantry and the troops close to the emperor.<sup>51</sup> So, in his view, the Byzantine army was dispersed rather than destroyed; this helps to explain the moderation displayed by Alp Arslan after the battle.<sup>52</sup> Cheynet further argues that the battle of Manzikert was not the military disaster it is claimed to have been.<sup>53</sup> The civil war within Byzantium which followed the battle was more damaging.

Nevertheless, Manzikert was an important event for various reasons: a civil war lasting ten years followed it and the Manzikert campaign was extremely expensive. But it would be wrong to invoke Manzikert as the reason for the eventual fall of Anatolia to the Turks. The Byzantines had suffered worse defeats than Manzikert. Romanus Diogenes has been treated as the scapegoat; the more he could be blamed for the loss of Anatolia, the less his successors were responsible. As for the medieval Muslims, they seized on the battle as a glorious moment to explain the Turkish invasion of Anatolia, whilst in reality the phenomenon had occurred, and continued apace, as a result of a gradual and steady infiltration of the nomadic Turks into the countryside.

### **The longer-term impact of the battle**

It has been said that after Manzikert Byzantium collapsed politically and militarily with surprising speed. However, Vryonis and Cheynet have convincingly cast doubt on this idea. Vryonis points out that it is not appropriate to speak of a sudden catastrophe befalling Byzantium after Manzikert, nor was its collapse complete in 1071. Indeed, the Turkish conquest of Anatolia was a protracted process lasting four centuries and Byzantium lived on, albeit diminished in size.<sup>54</sup>

On the Muslim side, the continuing infiltration of bands of Turcomans after Manzikert into Byzantine Anatolia, movements that were sometimes directly authorised by the Seljuqs further east, or more frequently piecemeal and uncontrolled, resulted in the emergence of small separate Turcoman principalities in the early twelfth century – the first stage of colonisation, Turkification and Islamisation. These polities included the Saltuqids of Erzerum (c. 465/1072–598/1202), the Artuqids of Diyar Bakr, the Shah-i Arman at Akhlat (1100–1207), the Danishmendids of Cappadocia and the Seljuqs of Rum. The political orientation of these dynasties, which flourished in the period of Seljuq weakness after 484/1092, was still

eastwards. Their politics were Seljuq in microcosm; the tendency towards decentralisation inherent in the Turkish system of government continued. Moreover, like the Great Seljuqs, these Turcoman rulers also adopted the Perso-Islamic government model. The Seljuqs of Rum (the Arabic and Persian term for Byzantium), originally an offshoot of the Great Seljuqs of Iran, were the most important of these small principalities vying for power. The duration of this Seljuq dynasty (469/1077–706/1307) was far longer than its counterpart in Iran, which lasted for no more than 150 years or so.

Further waves of nomads were propelled towards Anatolia in the twelfth, and, above all, the thirteenth century, in the wake of the Mongol invasions. Thus the conquerors were themselves displaced, thereby causing a disruptive domino effect on Byzantine possessions in Anatolia. We may confidently assume therefore that by the thirteenth century substantial numbers of Turcomans were well and truly ensconced in central and eastern Anatolia and that they were pressing hard against the receding frontiers of Byzantium.

### **The range of medieval sources used in this book**

As already mentioned, the battle of Manzikert is treated by a variety of Byzantine, Muslim, Armenian, Syriac and other sources.<sup>55</sup> The most precious account of all must surely be that of Attaleiates, who was present at the battle itself as well as being an adviser of Romanus IV Diogenes, the Byzantine emperor. The Byzantine sources on the battle may be broadly divided into those generally in favour of Romanus IV Diogenes and those which are hostile to him. In the first category, the major source is Attaleiates, whose view is closely echoed by Zonaras<sup>56</sup> and Skylitzes.<sup>57</sup> Amongst the Byzantine authors hostile to Romanus IV Diogenes is Psellus,<sup>58</sup> the tutor of Michael VII Ducas. It was Michael Ducas who was to oust Romanus IV Diogenes from the Byzantine throne after the latter's capture by Alp Arslan at the battle of Manzikert. Psellus' account, which is much less detailed than that of Attaleiates, is similar to the later description of the battle by Nicephorus Bryennius, the grandson of one of the most important Byzantine leaders at Manzikert, whose version of the events tends to glorify the exploits of his illustrious ancestor.

Whilst the subsequent chapters of this book will focus exclusively on the major medieval Muslim accounts of the battle of Manzikert, the reader is provided with three appendices; one of these presents a range of other Muslim accounts on the battle from little-known or late

medieval sources. Thus an even more comprehensive array of historiographical evidence is given. The other two appendices contain translations of medieval Christian accounts of Manzikert. Appendix A is Ruth Macrides' most valuable English translation of Attaleiates. The two major scholars who have worked on Manzikert, Cahen and Vryonis, are in disagreement about the value of Attaleiates' account. In contrast with Cahen, who was critical of Attaleiates' testimony and who preferred to rely on other Byzantine narratives of Manzikert, Vryonis has long held the view that Attaleiates is the best source for the battle. As he says: 'Of those authors who have left us an account of the events that took place at the fateful battle, Attaleiates is the only one who was present, participated, and is, therefore, the only eyewitness whose record has survived'.<sup>59</sup> Vryonis concludes that 'Attaleiates remains our most reliable source, and it is his account that deserves the greatest degree of credence'.<sup>60</sup>

It is essential for a true understanding of the battle, therefore, that a translation of Attaleiates' text should be included. It is an indispensable and fascinating counter-balance, both to the versions of the Muslim chroniclers which are the subject of this book, and to the selection of other non-Muslim accounts given in translation in Appendix B, which also contains a translation of the other major Byzantine source for Manzikert, Nicephorus Bryennius, whose testimony on the battle often conflicts with that of Attaleiates.

The body of eastern Christian sources comes from the Syriac and Armenian traditions. Predictably they are written from a religious viewpoint with strong Biblical resonances. For example, the Armenian chronicle of Aristakès of Lastiverd sees a religious pattern to events and urges a return to Christian morality. In his view, the disaster of the Turks has come about through the moral decay caused by the corruption of the cities. It should be remembered as background to the events described in that source that it was the Armenians who bore the brunt of the earliest invasions on the eastern Byzantine borders, culminating in the sack of Ani, the 'city of a thousand and one churches', by Alp Arslan and his army in 456/1064. Writing in the first decades of the twelfth century, Matthew of Edessa also feels that he is living in a period of tumult and moral decline and bemoans the fate of the Armenian people who have endured a horrible punishment at the hands of the Turks and the Byzantines.<sup>61</sup>

Appendix B in this book gives English translations of key eastern Christian sources. The versions of Bar Hebraeus<sup>62</sup> and Matthew of Edessa have been produced directly from their original

languages – Syriac and Armenian respectively – by established scholars in that field.<sup>63</sup> The translation of the Copt al-Makin who wrote in Arabic is that of the present author.<sup>64</sup> The remaining translations – those of the Byzantine Nicephorus Bryennius,<sup>65</sup> the Armenian Aristakès of Lastiverd,<sup>66</sup> and the Syriac Michael the Syrian – have been re-translated from French into English. This approach is not exactly ideal from a scholarly point of view, as when a text is translated across two languages, errors are likely to occur. However, this procedure has been adopted here for the sake of those readers who cannot read French.

### **The Muslim sources in Arabic and Persian about the battle of Manzikert**

A wide selection of Muslim sources in Arabic and Persian have been consulted in the writing of this book. The most important of them have been translated and commented on. Certain other little-known accounts the battle have been translated in Appendix C.

In addition to printed editions of the chosen texts where they exist, and in a few cases relevant manuscripts, two anthologies of historical texts have been consulted. The first of these, collected by the Syrian scholar Suhayl Zakkar,<sup>67</sup> includes amongst texts from other periods of Islamic history a good number of Manzikert narratives in Arabic, but it contains no Persian sources. It is very useful that Zakkar also puts into his book accounts written by several Christian Arab writers, such as al-Makin and Bar Hebraeus. His choice also extends to the accounts of later fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Arabic authors, including Ibn Kathir, Ibn Muyassar and al-Dhahabi. The second collection of texts is that made by the well-known Turkish scholars Sümer and Sevim;<sup>68</sup> they focus specifically on passages which deal with Manzikert. Their book includes four Persian battle narratives but does not have as many Arabic ones as Zakkar.<sup>69</sup>

Three of the passages selected for inclusion and translation in this book have already been translated into English – those of Ibn al-Athir,<sup>70</sup> al-Husayni<sup>71</sup> and Rashid al-Din.<sup>72</sup> A fourth passage – that of al-Turtushi<sup>73</sup> – exists in a Spanish translation. The text of the Persian Mirkhwand<sup>74</sup> exists in a German translation. All the Arabic and Persian excerpts chosen by Sümer and Sevim have been translated into Turkish. It is important to point out, however, that the translations from Arabic and Persian into Turkish provided in their book, whilst generally solid, are unsatisfactory on a number of occasions when at



best they read more like paraphrases than translations. In places where the meaning of the text is obscure, and especially when they deal with the text of al-Bundari,<sup>75</sup> the translators have just glossed over its difficulties by omitting specific words or phrases. In particular, the practice of medieval Arabic chroniclers of writing balanced phrases and, in short, of expressing the same idea twice, or even three times, in slightly different wording, for reasons of literary effect, is frequently ignored in the Turkish translations. Thus an essential aspect of the Manzikert narratives is lost in this stripping away of the richness of the original texts.

The translations are accompanied by a commentary and footnotes which discuss difficult words and phrases, explain geographical or personal names, and deal with other problematic points of detail. The wider literary and ideological horizons opened up by these texts are covered at greater length in Chapter 5.

As is traditionally the case with Arabic and Persian medieval historical narratives, the authors often omit the names of those performing the actions of the verb in their sentences. So where there is a chance of confusion occurring, the relevant proper names have been added to help the reader. The translations have been kept as literal as possible. The translations, regardless of whether the originals were written in Arabic or Persian, are arranged in chronological order.

## Notes

1. S. Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*, I, Cambridge, 1954, 64.
2. A very recent general book on the Turks repeats this view: 'A truly decisive battle, Manzikert broke the Byzantine border defenses, opened Anatolia to Turkic in-migration, and so launched a new phase in the expansion of the frontiers of Islam'; cf. C. V. Findley, *The Turks in world history*, Oxford, 2005, 71.
3. A. Friendly, *The dreadful day: the battle of Manzikert, 1071*, London, 1981.
4. Shakespeare's memorable words in *Othello* will suffice to illustrate this tendency:

. . . in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state, I took by the throat the circumcised  
dog  
And smote him, thus

(Act 5, Scene 5).

5. For example, the antagonism of the early Muslim Arabs to the Turks is found in legends and proverbs, as is mentioned by Goldziher. He cites the following example, which plays on the pun between the verb *taraka* (to leave) and the name *Turk*:

*Leave the Turks alone while they leave you alone (utrūk al-Turk mā tarakūka).*

*If they love you they eat you*

*And if they are angry with you, they kill you.*

- Cf. I. Goldziher, 'Traditions about Turks', *Muslim Studies*, I, ed. S. M. Stern, tr. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, London, 1967, 245.
6. Bernard Lewis makes this point very eloquently, emphasising especially that a particular merit claimed by the Turks in Islam is that of having saved the Islamic world from the Crusaders. Lewis then points out that this crucial achievement of the Turks is mentioned very little in modern Arab discussions of the Crusades; cf. B. Lewis, *History remembered, recovered, invented*, Princeton, 1975, 82.
7. All too frequently reference is still made to Cahen's well-known article written in 1934. Its title, 'La campagne de Mantzikert d'après les sources musulmanes', is deceptive. The article does not do what it claims to do. Indeed, it does not reconstruct the battle from Muslim sources. It prefers, instead, to use Muslim *and* Byzantine sources. It remains at the level of a mere description of events and seriously undervalues the principal Byzantine source, Attaleiates; cf. C. Cahen, 'La campagne de Mantzikert d'après les sources musulmanes', *Byzantion* IX (1934), 613–42.
8. S. Vryonis Jr, *The decline of medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the process of Islamization from the eleventh through the fifteenth century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1971; Vryonis, 'A personal history of the history of the battle of Mantzikert', *E Vyzantine Mikra Asia*, Athens, 1998, 225–44; Vryonis, 'The battles of Manzikert (1071) and Myrioccephalum (1176). Notes on food, water, archery, ethnic identity of foe and ally', in G. Leiser, ed., *Mésogeios Méditerranée* 25–6 (2005), 49–69; Vryonis, 'The Greek and the Arabic sources on the battle of Mantzikert (1071 A.D.)', in *Byzantine studies. Essays on the Slavic world and the eleventh century*, ed. S. Vryonis, Jr, New Rochelle, 1992, 125–40; Vryonis, 'The Greek and the Arabic sources on the eight-day captivity of the emperor Romanus IV in the camp of the sultan Alp Arslan after the battle of Mantzikert', in *Novum Millennium (sic). Studies on Byzantine history and culture dedicated to Paul Speck*, eds C. Sode and S. Takacs, Aldershot, 2000, 439–50. His new book on Manzikert is eagerly awaited.

9. C. Cahen, 'La première pénétration turque en Asie Mineure (seconde moitié du XIe siècle)', *Byzantion* 18 (1948), 5–67.
10. Nizam al-Mulk was a follower of the Shafi'ite legal school whilst Alp Arslan, like so many Turks after him, was a Hanafite.
11. Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyar al-mulūk*, tr. H. Darke as *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, London, 1978, 96.
12. J.-C. Cheynet, 'Mantzikert: un désastre militaire?', *Byzantion* 50 (1980), 412.
13. Vryonis, *Decline*, 74, 76.
14. For the two earlier campaigns, cf. Ch. 2, n. 69.
15. Nicephorus Bryennius, *Historia*, tr. P. Gautier as *Nicéphore Bryennios. Histoire*, Brussels, 1975, 104. Romanus had taken the Syrian city of Manbij in 460/1068.
16. J.-C. Cheynet, 'La conception militaire de la frontière orientale (IX–XIII siècle)', in *Eastern approaches to Byzantium*, ed. A. Eastmond, Aldershot, 2000, 57.
17. Nicephorus Bryennius, 106.
18. *Ibid.*, 488.
19. A. Hamdani, 'A possible Fatimid background to the battle of Manzikert', *Ankara Üniv. D. T. C. Fakültesi Tarih Araştırmalar Dergisi* VI (1972), 1–39; Hamdani, 'Byzantine-Fatimid relations before the battle of Manzikert', *Byzantine Studies* II/2 (1974), 169–79.
20. Hamdani, 'Fatimid background', 26–30.
21. Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-ḥalab fī taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, ed. S. Dahan, Damascus, 1954, ii, 11–13; cf. S. Zakkar, *The emirate of Aleppo 1004–1094*, Beirut, 1971, 173.
22. Zakkar, *ibid.*, 176.
23. *Ibid.*, 177.
24. There are a number of general accounts of varying length and quality, both academic and popular, about the battle of Manzikert. These include C. Oman, *A history of the art of war*, London, 1898, 216–22; J. Laurent, *Byzance et les Turcs seldjucides dans l'Asie occidentale jusqu'en 1081*, Nancy, 1913, 43–4; S. Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*, I, Cambridge, 1954, 62–5; S. Vryonis Jr, *The decline of medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the process of Islamization from the eleventh through the fifteenth century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1971, 96–104; A. Friendly, *The dreadful day: the battle of Manzikert*, 1071, London, 1981, 163–203; M. M. Qureshi, *Landmarks of jihad*, Lahore, 1971, 161–71; S. O'Shea, *Sea of faith*, London, 2006, 102–3, 118–25, 128. Cf. also S. Vryonis, Jr, 'The Greek and the Arabic sources on the battle of Mantzikert (1071 A.D.)', in *Byzantine studies. Essays on the Slavic world and the eleventh century*, ed.

- S. Vryonis, Jr, New Rochelle, 1992, 125–40; Vryonis, ‘The Greek and the Arabic sources on the eight-day captivity of the emperor Romanus IV in the camp of the sultan Alp Arslan after the battle of Mantzikert’, in *Novum Millennium (sic). Studies on Byzantine history and culture dedicated to Paul Speck*, eds C. Sode and S. Takacs, Aldershot, 2000, 439–50; C. Cahen. ‘The Turkish invasions: the Selchükids’, in *A History of the Crusades*, I, ed. M. W. Baldwin, general ed. K. M. Setton, Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1969, 148–9; P. Charanis, ‘The Byzantine empire in the eleventh century’, in Baldwin, *A History of the Crusades*, I, 192–3. Not surprisingly, in view of his prolonged interest in this subject, Vryonis’ scholarly works are the best researched and the most authoritative.
25. Cheynet, ‘Mantzikert’, 491.
  26. This confusion has not been clarified in the secondary literature on the battle.
  27. M. Hamidullah, ‘The map of the battle of Malazgird on basis (*sic*) of historical (*sic*) description of the battle’, *Islamic Culture* 19 (1945), 353; cf. also O’Shea, *Sea of Faith*, 123.
  28. For full details, the reader is directed to the account of Attaleiates in Appendix A.
  29. Cf. Ch. 3, p. 61.
  30. Cf. Ch. 3, p. 76.
  31. For a full treatment of this part of the narrative cf. S. Vryonis, Jr, ‘The Greek and the Arabic sources on the eight-day captivity’. Vryonis remarks that it is only on the subject of the emperor’s captivity that there is ‘a fundamental agreement and similiarity of contents in both the Greek and Arabic sources’; cf. Vryonis, ‘A personal history’, 233.
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. Friendly, 179.
  34. Cf. Chapter 2, n. 53.
  35. Cf. Chapter 5, pp. 121–3, for a discussion of the religious significance of Friday.
  36. Vryonis, ‘A personal history’, 232.
  37. Cheynet, ‘Mantzikert’, 410–38.
  38. *Ibid.*, 412.
  39. *Ibid.*, 413.
  40. *Ibid.*, 416.
  41. *Ibid.*
  42. *Ibid.*, 417.
  43. Cheynet, 427, n. 94.
  44. W. E. Kaegi Jr, ‘The contribution of archery to the Turkish conquest of Anatolia’, *Speculum* 39/1 (1964), 96–108.

45. Tr. Dostourian, 135.
46. Tr. Canard and Berbérian, 126.
47. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacob d'Antioche*, facsimile ed. and French tr. by J.-B. Chabot as *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, Paris, 1899–1924, III, 169.
48. For example, Matthew of Edessa confirms that Joseph Trachaniotis went back to Constantinople; tr. Dostourian, 133.
49. Vryonis, *Decline*, 103.
50. Vryonis, 'A personal history', 232.
51. Cheynet, 'Mantzikert', 431.
52. *Ibid.*
53. The traditional view of Manzikert being a disaster for Byzantium is summed up by Cahen in his statement that after the battle 'the whole strength of the Byzantine resistance crumbled away'; cf. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, London, 1968, 67.
54. Vryonis, *Decline*, 69–70.
55. In addition, Vryonis mentions one Latin source, one 'Romance' source, one 'Slavic' source and one Ottoman; cf. Vryonis, 'A personal history', 228–9.
56. Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonaras epitomae historiarum*, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst in *Corpus scriptorum historiae byzantinae*, Bonn, 1897, 696–703.
57. Skylitzes, *Ioannes Skylitzes continuatus*, ed. E. T. Tsolakes, Thessalonika, 1968.
58. Michael Psellus, *Chronographia*, tr. E. R. A. Sewter as *The chronography of Michael Psellus*, London, 1953, 271–4.
59. Vryonis, *Decline*, 100, n. 109.
60. *Ibid.*, 101, n. 109; cf. also Vryonis, 'A personal history', 230–1.
61. Matthew of Edessa, *Patmut'ıwn*, tr. A. E. Dostourian as *Armenia and the Crusades. Tenth to Twelfth centuries. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, Lanham, New York and London, 1993, 83.
62. Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj, the Hebrew physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, facsimile ed. and tr. by E. A. W. Budge, London, 1932, 220–3.
63. Matthew of Edessa, *Patmut'ıwn*, 1858, 163–70; A. E. Dostourian, tr., 133–5.
64. Al-Makin, Ibn al-ʿAmid, *Historia saracenicæ*, ed. T. Erpenius, Leiden, 1625, 555–6.
65. Nicephorus Bryennius, *Historia*, 104–20.
66. Aristakès of Lastiverd, 124–8.
67. S. Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt min kitābāt al-muʿarrikhīn al-ʿarab*, Damascus and Beirut, 1970.

68. F. Sümer and A. Sevim, *İslâm kaynaklarına göre Malazgirt savaşı*, Ankara, 1971.
69. These anthologies provide useful supplementary versions to existing standard editions of the texts which have been translated and in some cases they clarify obscure readings or gaps in the standard editions.
70. Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kāmil fi'l-ta'riḫ*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, vol. 10, Leiden, 1864, 44–6; tr. D. S. Richards, *The Annals of the Seljuk Turks*, London, 2002, 170–2.
71. Al-Husayni, *Akhhbār al-dawlat al-saljūqiyya*, ed. M. Iqbal, Lahore, 1933; tr. Q. Ayaz as *An unexploited source for the history of the Saljuqs: a translation and critical commentary on the Akhhbār al-Dawlat al-Saljūqiyya*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 1985, 116–26. Cf. also the Russian translation by D. Bunyatov, Moscow, 1980, and the Turkish translation by N. Lugal, Ankara, 1943.
72. Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-tawāriḫ*, Seljuq part, ed. A. Ateş as *Cami' al-tavarih (Metin), II. Cild, 5. Cuz, Selçuklar tarihi*, Ankara, 1960, 31–9; tr. K. A. Luther as *The history of the Seljūq Turks from the Jāmi' al-tawāriḫ. An Ilkhanid adaptation of the Saljūq-nāma of Zābir al-Din Nīshāpurī*, London, 2001, 48–53.
73. Al-Turtushī, *Sirāj al-mulūk*, ed. S. Dayf, Cairo, 1991; tr. M. Alarcón as *Lámpara de los principes*, 2 vols, Madrid, 1930–1, 694–7. The Manzikert passage is to be found on pp. 328–32.
74. Mirkhwand, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā' fi sīrat al-anbiyā' wa'l-mulūk wa'l-khulafā'*, Tehran, 1853–4, unpaginated; Lucknow, 1332 (repr. in Sümer and Sevim, 63–9); *Mirchondi historia Seldschukidorum*, ed. J. A. Vullers, Giessen, 1837, tr. J. A. Vullers as *Mirchond's Geschichte der Seldschuken aus dem Persischen zum ersten Mal übersetzt und mit historischen, geographischen und literarischen Anmerkungen erläutert*, Giessen, 1838, 61–73.
75. Al-Bundari, *Zubdat al-nuṣra wa-nukhbat al-ḥuṣra*; Turkish translation by K. Burslan as *Irak ve Horasan Selçuklulari tarihi*, Istanbul, 1943, 37–41; Sümer and Sevim, 18–22.

# The twelfth-century accounts of the battle of Manzikert

*Alp Arslan was the first of the kings of the Turks to cross the Euphrates.*<sup>1</sup>

## The account of al-Turtushi (d. 520/1126) in *Sirāj al-mulūk*

### *Introduction to the text*

Al-Turtushi was a leading religious and intellectual figure of his time. In 476/1084 he went east, as was frequently the custom with aspiring scholars from al-Andalus, and after performing the pilgrimage, he travelled widely in the Levant before finally settling in Alexandria. In the course of his travels, he met Ibn Tumart, al-Ghazali and other famous Muslim scholars and leaders.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that he had contact with teachers at the famous Nizamiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad where he established himself in 478/1085,<sup>3</sup> and he might even have encountered Alp Arslan's vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, who by then was working for Malikshah, Alp Arslan's son and heir to the Seljuq sultanate. Even if the two men never met each other, al-Turtushi would have had access to stories and information from circles close to the Seljuqs and he would have heard about the battle of Manzikert, possibly even from eye-witnesses quite soon after the battle, when memories were fresh. It is clear that al-Turtushi admired Nizam al-Mulk, eulogising at length in Chapter 48 his remarkable skills in governing, and he talks in particular about his achievements in setting up the network of Nizamiyya *madrasas* throughout the Seljuq realm.<sup>4</sup>

The account of al-Turtushi is apparently the earliest extant narrative about the battle of Manzikert in the Islamic sources. It is therefore of key interest. Yet it has been overlooked by all scholars so far who have worked on the Arabic and Persian accounts of the battle, such as Cahen, Vryonis, Zakkar, and Sevim and Sümer. Perhaps the cause of its



**Figure 2.1** Modern Turkish depiction of Alp Arslan

neglect is that it lies buried in an unusual place – the major work of al-Turtushi, *Sirāj al-mulūk*,<sup>5</sup> completed in Fustat in 512/1122 and dedicated to the Fatimid vizier al-Ma'mun b. al-Bata'ihī. This is a very long *Mirror for Princes*, and not a town chronicle, dynastic or universal history. In this book of sixty-four chapters, addressed to kings and rulers, al-Turtushi includes many moralising anecdotes. Chapter 61, entitled *An account of the management, stratagems and rules of war*, is devoted to a discussion of the stratagems of war and advice on how to conduct it well, and it is in this context that he provides an account of the battle of Manzikert.<sup>6</sup>

### *The translation*

By this strategy,<sup>7</sup> Alp Arslan, the king of the Turks, conquered and subdued the king of Byzantium, killed his men and destroyed his troops. The Byzantines had assembled armies the like of which were seldom gathered for anyone after him. The total of their number was six hundred thousand warriors – self-contained battalions, successive troops and squadrons following one after the other, [so numerous] that



the eye could not perceive them and their number could not be quantified. They had prepared an innumerable amount of animals, weapons and mangonels<sup>8</sup> and pieces of equipment made ready for conquering citadels in war. They had divided up the countries of the Muslims – Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Khurasan and Diyar Bakr – and they did not doubt that the wheel [of fortune]<sup>9</sup> had turned for them and that the stars of good fortune were in their favour.

Then they turned towards the lands of the Muslims. News of them kept coming and the countries of Islam were disturbed because of that. Alp Arslan the Turk mobilised troops to meet them; he is the one who is called the just prince (*al-malik al-‘ādil*). He assembled his troops in the city of Isfahan and he prepared what he could. Then their day [of battle] came. The two armies kept on coming closer to each other until the vanguards of the Muslims returned to the Muslims and said to Alp Arslan: ‘Tomorrow the two armies will [be able to] see each other.’ So the Muslims passed the night of Friday [i.e. Thursday] whilst the Byzantines were in a number which nobody except He who had created them could enumerate and the Muslims had nothing with them except gnawing hunger.<sup>10</sup> The Muslims remained silent with fear about what had befallen them.

When they got up on the Friday morning they looked at each other. What the Muslims saw of the great number, strength and equipment of the enemy terrified them. Alp Arslan ordered that the Muslims should be counted and they amounted to twelve thousand Turks. There they were like the mark on the leg of the ass [i.e. a tiny speck].<sup>11</sup> So he [Alp Arslan] assembled those possessed of judgement from amongst the men of war, of administration and care for the Muslims and insight into the consequences, and he sought their counsel about how to achieve correctness of judgement. They consulted amongst themselves for a short while. Then their opinion was agreed on meeting [the enemy in battle].

They made peace with each other, swore oaths to each other and showed sincere intentions towards Islam and its people. Then they made preparations for battle and they said to Alp Arslan: ‘We will invoke the name of God Most High<sup>12</sup> and we will attack the people.’ Alp Arslan said: ‘O assembly of the people of Islam! Tarry [a while], for this is Friday and the Muslims are delivering the sermon on the pulpits, and praying for us in the east and the west of the lands. When the sun has set and the [evening] shadows have returned and we know that the Muslims have performed the prayer, and prayed for us and we ourselves have prayed, we will carry out our affair.’

They waited patiently until the sun had set, then they performed the prayer and prayed to God Most High that He would make His religion triumph, that He would reinforce their hearts with patience, that He would enfeeble their enemy and that He would cast fear into their hearts. Alp Arslan had verified [the position of] the tent, banner, horse and outward appearance of the king of Byzantium. Then he said to his men: 'Let each of you not fail to do as I do and strike with his sword and shoot with his arrow where I strike with my sword and shoot with my arrow.' Then all of them launched an attack as one man on the tent of the king of Byzantium. They killed those who were in front of it and they reached him. Those round him were killed and the king of Byzantium was taken captive. They began shouting in the language of Byzantium: 'The king has been killed! The king has been killed!' The Byzantines heard that their king had been killed and they scattered and were totally torn to pieces. The sword was active amongst them for days, and the Muslims took their possessions and their spoils.

The king of Byzantium was brought into the presence of Alp Arslan with a rope round his neck. Alp Arslan said to him: 'What would you have done with me if you had captured me?' He said: 'Do you doubt that I would have killed you?' So Alp Arslan said to him: 'You are too trivial in my view for me to kill you. Take him and sell him to the person who pays most.' So he was led with the rope round his neck and a proclamation was made about him: 'Who will buy the king of Byzantium?' They went on like that going round with him to the tents and the Muslims' houses and the announcement for him was made in *dirhams* and *fulūs* [i.e. small coinage]. Nobody paid anything for him until they sold him to a man for a dog. The person, who was given the charge of brokering that on his [the sultan's] behalf, took the dog and the king and brought them both to Alp Arslan and said: 'I have been round the whole camp and made a proclamation about him and nobody spent anything on him except a single man who paid me a dog for him' (pl. 3).

He [Alp Arslan] said: 'That is just, because the dog is better than he is! Take the dog and give this dog [i.e. Romanus] to him.' Then after that he ordered him to be released. He [Romanus] went to Constantinople. The Byzantines deposed him and blinded him with fire.

See what happens to kings when in wars they know about strategy and the intentional use of artifice.

### *Commentary on the text*

In comparison with the other accounts of the battle which follow, the version of al-Turtushi is highly idiosyncratic. Some of its narrative elements are not to be found elsewhere in the corpus.<sup>13</sup> Other aspects of the account were to be taken up and elaborated by later writers. It is remarkable that there is no mention of the place of the battle. Nor is there any sense of the sequence of fighting. Everything is over quickly because of Alp Arslan's skill in capturing the emperor and the subsequent disarray amongst his demoralised troops. The account of the battle is telescoped; it mentions no preliminary skirmishes between the two armies and it has no distinct phases or evolution. It is over quickly because of Alp Arslan's skill in capturing the emperor.

### **The account of Ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 555/1160)<sup>14</sup> in *Dhayl tar'ikh Dimashq***

#### *Introduction to the text*

Ibn al-Qalanisi was an important figure in Damascus, serving there as mayor on two occasions. He wrote a well-known chronicle which focuses primarily on the history of his own city. The work follows a strictly annalistic format. The sources on which Ibn al-Qalanisi drew for his short account of the battle of Manzikert are unknown but it is likely that he had access to the work of the Baghdadi historian, Ghars al-Ni'ma b. Hilal al-Sabi' [d. after 469/1077].<sup>15</sup>

#### *Translation of the text*

Alp Arslan left there [Aleppo] on 23 Rajab [463/26 April 1071], heading for the lands of Byzantium, seeking their king. Romanus<sup>16</sup> had made his way to Manzikert,<sup>17</sup> he reached it, fell upon it and vanquished it. His troops, according to what was related, amounted to six hundred thousand Byzantines and other additional contingents. The troops of Islam, according to what was mentioned, amounted to four hundred thousand from amongst the Turks and other contingents. Many of the Byzantine troops were killed, to such an extent that a valley there where the two sides had met was filled [with corpses]. The king fell prisoner into the hands of the Muslims. Hands were filled with their baggage and possessions, their equipment and their animals.<sup>18</sup> Messages kept on going back and forth between the sultan Alp Arslan



**Figure 2.2** Modern Turkish depiction of a mounted Alp Arslan leading his troops

and the captured king of Byzantium until it was established that he would be released and that he personally would be well treated, after [his] taking oaths and covenants that he would stop opposing any of the territories of Islam and that he would release prisoners. He was set free and sent to his country and the people of his kingdom. It is said that they seized him and handed him over [to his enemies within Byzantium].<sup>19</sup> They appointed someone else to his position because of things for which they criticised him and accused him.

### *Commentary on the text*

The account mentions Alp Arslan as being in Syria just before the episode of Manzikert, besieging and taking Aleppo in 463/1071 and then appointing its Mirdasid ruler as his governor of the city.<sup>20</sup>

The version of Ibn al-Qalanisi has a second-hand feel to it. It is, however, significant that he includes it at all in his chronicle, which is so focused on his own city of Damascus. He gives a precise year for the events, but the number that he gives for the troops differs from those included in other accounts of the battle, which stress a much wider disparity between Romanus' and Alp Arslan's armies. The size of both armies is grossly inflated and there is mention of additional troops in Romanus' army. Ibn al-Qalanisi emphasises the enormous amount of booty taken by the Seljuq army, he mentions the drawing up of a treaty, and alludes rather cryptically to the final fate of Romanus when he arrived back in Byzantium. The account is rather flat and it lacks any triumphalist tone, although the Seljuq army is already called 'the troops of Islam'. No attempt is made in this narrative to describe a military engagement, nor is there any reference to the battle having taken place on a Friday or to extract from the tale any other moral for the Muslim faithful. It is difficult to assess whether this account is fragmentary because the author lacked more detailed information or because the battle, although worthy of mention, was outside the focus of a local town chronicle. What is clear, however, is that the historiographical potential of the narrative, which will recur in later accounts, is already established here: the superior numbers and mixed nature of the Byzantine army, the victory of Alp Arslan, the capture and release of Romanus and his subsequent fate in Byzantium. It is noteworthy that the date of the battle is not mentioned. The style of the passage is unpretentious. The account, short as it is, focuses rather on the events before and after the encounter. Above all, the notion of the battle as a hinge of history is simply not there.

### **The account of al-ʿAzimi (d. c. 556 /1161), *Taʿriḫ Ḥalab***

#### *Introduction to the text*

Only one of the two known works of al-ʿAzimi, a rather neglected chronicler, is extant – a world history until 538/1143–4 seen from the perspective of Aleppo.<sup>21</sup> The work is fragmentary but contains useful accounts, including occasional references to Anatolia.

*Translation of the text*

Alp Arslan marched from there [Aleppo], aiming to meet Diogenes, the king of Byzantium, because he had ravaged the land. Alp Arslan met him in the environs of Manzikert. The sultan defeated him, took him prisoner and sold him for a *dīnār*. The sultan released him, sent him back to his country and Byzantium blinded him.

*Commentary on the text*

This narrative is laconic, even by the usual standards of the text of al-ʿAzimi. It is included here for the sake of full coverage of the Muslim historiographical tradition about Manzikert. That said, the account is not totally devoid of interest. No doubt because of Alp Arslan's presence at Aleppo during the time immediately preceding his journey to Manzikert, al-ʿAzimi had found reports about the battle; he is one of the few Muslim authors who reproduces correctly the second half of the Byzantine emperor's name – Diogenes – and he knows about the ultimate fate of the emperor after his return home. However, no date is given and no details of the battle are provided.<sup>22</sup>

**The account of Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi (d. after 572/1176–7) in the *Taʾrīkh Mayyāfāriqīn wa-Āmid*<sup>23</sup>**

*Introduction to the text*

Ibn al-Azraq worked as an administrator for Temürtash (ruled 518/1124–548/1154), the second Artuqid ruler of Mayyafariqin. His town chronicle has an annalistic structure, despite his often inaccurate dating. His account of Manzikert is especially interesting since it comes from an area geographically close to the battle. In an earlier passage, Ibn al-Azraq mentions that the Byzantine emperor had come to Manzikert in 463/1071. Unlike most Muslim chroniclers, who place Alp Arslan in Aleppo before the battle, Ibn al-Azraq notes that the sultan was in Iraq at the time and that he then made for Diyar Bakr.<sup>24</sup>

*Translation of the text*

It was reported:

Then the sultan heard that the king of Byzantium had come back.<sup>25</sup> So Alp Arslan went down to Mosul. A large group of the people of

Akhlat<sup>26</sup> and Manzikert went down after him, informing him that the king of Byzantium had come back to the country. So the sultan returned and went up to Arzan<sup>27</sup> and Bitlis.<sup>28</sup> With them was the *qādī* of Manzikert. Alp Arslan came to Akhlat, took possession of it and stayed there some days. Then the king of Byzantium came to the province of Manzikert. So the sultan went out and marched and encamped before the gate of Manzikert. Letters began to go back and forth between the two of them. The king of Byzantium was with an innumerable number of people. Ibn al-Muhallaban<sup>29</sup> went from the sultan's presence to the king of Byzantium. Romanus asked him about the country and its condition and he said: 'Tell me: which is better, Isfahan or Hamadhan?' Ibn al-Muhallaban said: 'Isfahan.' Romanus said to him: 'We have heard that Hamadhan is extremely cold.' Ibn al-Muhallaban said: 'It is so.' The king said: 'As for us, we will winter in Isfahan and the riding animals will be in Hamadhan.' Ibn al-Muhallaban said to him: 'As for the riding animals, it is true that they will winter in Hamadhan. As for you, I do not know.' Then he left him and they met up to fight. The Byzantines set up their lines with three hundred thousand cavalry whilst the sultan had [only] a small troop. The time for fighting became pressing. It was Friday, towards the time when the sultan knew that the preacher would be on the pulpits. The time for his attack approached and he said to the people: 'Charge', so they all attacked and pronounced the *takbīr*.<sup>30</sup> The sultan said: 'This is the time of the prayer on all the pulpits for the armies of the Muslims, and the rest of the people are saying amen to their prayers. So perhaps God will answer [the prayer] of one of them.' Then they charged and said the *takbīr* and God gave them the victory. The king of Byzantium was put to flight and a great number of his followers were killed. They [the victors] plundered their possessions to such an extent that they distributed amongst themselves the gold and silver in *raṭls*.<sup>31</sup> The inhabitants of Akhlat and Manzikert plundered from their [the Byzantines'] possessions enough to keep them rich until now, for they went out, stayed with the army, fought and took most of the plunder. From that year the people of Akhlat were rich and became possessors of wealth. The sultan returned to Azarbayjan, having appointed a governor in Akhlat and Manzikert.

### *Commentary on the text*

This is a relatively early account of the battle of Manzikert. It is fairly short and unvarnished. In some ways it is rather idiosyncratic. It too is inserted without explanation into the middle of a chronicle concerned

with the minutiae of the history of a city, this time Mayyafariqin, now called Silvan, not far from the site of the battle in eastern Turkey. Unlike other narratives, it emphasises plausibly the role played by local people in the battle, their participation in the fighting and their gaining vast wealth from the booty taken from the Byzantines. Their unexpected wealth had become the stuff of local folk legend by the time of Ibn al-Azraq a century or so later.

Already in this account there are signs of literary embellishments. Ibn al-Azraq reports an alleged conversation between Romanus and the envoy of Alp Arslan; in it Romanus makes veiled but arrogant threats to invade Seljuq territory in Iran. In the ensuing repartee Ibn al-Muhallaban has the last defiant word, which the readers of this account would relish with their retrospective knowledge of the outcome of the battle. Already, too, a religious dimension is given to this battle. It is shown to have taken place on a Friday, although no date for it is given, and God answers the prayers of His community by granting them victory. It should be noted that Ibn al-Azraq had access to the circles of religious scholars in Baghdad and he may well have been in contact with both caliphal and sultanal circles.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, no ideological capital is made from the subsequent fate of the Byzantine emperor who has dared to attack the Muslim world. In fact there is no reference at all to what happened when he returned home.

### **The account of Nishapuri (d. c. 582/1186–7) in the *Saljūqnāma*<sup>33</sup>**

#### *Introduction to the text*

Nishapuri was probably employed as a tutor to a Seljuq prince or princes. His short chronicle, a dynastic history, is the foundation for most of the subsequent histories of the Seljuqs written in Persian. It was written during the reign of the Seljuq sultan Tughril, the last ruler of the dynasty in Iran, and completed some time before 581/1186. In spite of its brevity,<sup>34</sup> it is ‘the most important single Persian narrative source for the history of the Seljuqs’.<sup>35</sup> Nishapuri’s version of the battle of Manzikert is the earliest extant in Persian.

#### *Translation of the text*

He [Alp Arslan] went to wage *ghazā*<sup>36</sup> against the king of Byzantium, Romanus. He [Romanus] left Amid with three hundred



thousand horsemen from Byzantium and he made for the lands of Islam. Alp Arslan came to him at Manzikert and he defeated him with twelve thousand men. They [the victorious Seljuq army] recited the verse: 'How often a little company has overcome a numerous company by God's name.'<sup>37</sup> Romanus was taken captive at the hand of a *ghulam*.<sup>38</sup> It has been reported<sup>39</sup> that the sultan Alp Arslan, at the time when he was waging *ghazā* against the king of Byzantium, requested an army inspection in Baghdad in front of him. The commander Sa'd al-Dawla Gawhara'in<sup>40</sup> was in his service and he inspected his troops. There was a *ghulam*, extremely puny, a Byzantine. He came on parade [but] the inspector<sup>41</sup> did not write down his name. Sa'd al-Dawla said: 'Write [it down]. It may be that he will capture the king of Byzantium himself'. It so happened that this *ghulam* recognised the king of Byzantium during the rout [of the Byzantine army] because he had seen him in Byzantium. He seized him and took him prisoner before the sultan. He [Alp Arslan] held him [Romanus] prisoner for a few days. After that he put a ring in both his ears<sup>42</sup> and guaranteed him his life. He established with him [the amount of] a thousand *dīnārs* per day that he should pay as poll tax.<sup>43</sup>

### *Commentary on the text*

This account is of value because it provides a very early version of the battle of Manzikert. It probably originates from Hamadhan in western Persia which was the centre of the Great Seljuq empire in its last phase. The narrative of Nishapuri is the oldest surviving account of the battle of Manzikert in Persian, the court language of the Seljuqs. Despite its unvarnished and staccato tone, the text of Nishapuri contains a number of narrative elements which were to become part of the received version of the battle in medieval Muslim sources – the discrepancy in the size of the two armies; a slave – whose physical appearance clearly did not pass muster – taking the emperor prisoner; and the sultan exacting an enormous payment from the emperor before setting him free. However, Nishapuri, despite the brevity of his narrative, points out that the slave was Byzantine, which is presumably the reason why he could recognise the emperor. Later sources produce a more elaborate version of the story which involves Alp Arslan seeking to verify the identity of the prisoner by consulting an envoy of his who had been sent on a mission to Romanus and could therefore recognise him.

## The account of Ibn al-Jawzi, (d. 597/1200) in *Al-Muntazam fi ta'rikh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*<sup>44</sup>

### *Introduction to the text*

Ibn al-Jawzi was a very famous Hanbalite scholar, preacher and prolific writer who lived in Baghdad. His work, the *Muntazam*, a valuable source for the history of the caliphate, often resembles a biographical dictionary more than a chronicle and it provides obituaries, mostly of scholars, under each year. His account of the battle of Manzikert is an unusually long excursus away from his usual focus on Baghdad. It became the authoritative source for many later chroniclers who wrote about the battle of Manzikert.

### *Translation of the text*

Then the year 463/1071 began.

Amongst the events in it was that the sultan received the news about the king of Byzantium assembling numerous troops and marching towards the Islamic lands. The sultan was with the scattered remnants of the army<sup>45</sup> since they had gone back from Syria to Khurasan in disarray because of the high prices which had depleted<sup>46</sup> their wealth and they had set out to return to their centres. The sultan remained with around four thousand *ghulāms*. He did not think it wise, despite that [small number of troops], that he should return to his lands nor did he assemble [all] his troops, for that would be a calamity for Islam. He preferred to wage holy war (*ghazā*) and stand fast in it [even with only his small force of men].

So he sent the Khatun al-Safariyya<sup>47</sup> and Nizam al-Mulk and the heavy baggage to Hamadhan and he ordered him to collect troops and to send them to him. And he said to him [Nizam al-Mulk] and the leaders of his army: 'I am standing fast in this *ghazā* in the way that those seeking divine reward do;<sup>48</sup> and [in that standing fast] I am becoming one of those who risk their lives in battle.<sup>49</sup> If I am spared, that comes from my belief in God Most High. And if it is the other [outcome, i.e. death], then I enjoin you to hear and obey my son Malikshah and put him in my place and appoint him prince over you, for I have bequeathed this command to him and I have presented it to him.' They responded to him with prayers and hearing and obeying. That was by the doing, organising and judgement of Nizam al-Mulk.

The sultan remained with the above-mentioned section of the army as an isolated detachment.<sup>50</sup> Each *ghulam* had a horse to ride and a horse to go by his side. He [Alp Arslan] marched, making for the king of Byzantium, and he waged war against them. He was victorious over them and he took the cross. They [the Byzantines] fled after they had been totally defeated, by killing and wounding. Their leader was taken to the sultan and he ordered that his nose should be cut off. He sent the cross, which was wood and on it were silver and pieces of turquoise, and a gospel<sup>51</sup> in a silver casket, which he had with him, to Hamadhan. He wrote to Nizam al-Mulk about the victory and ordered that it [the cross] should be taken to the caliphal presence.<sup>52</sup>

The king of Byzantium arrived and they [the two sides] met at a place called al-Rahwa<sup>53</sup> on Wednesday with five days remaining of Dhu'l-Qa'da [25 August 1071]. The army of Byzantium was numerous and the total of those with the sultan approached twenty thousand. As for the king of Byzantium, he had with him thirty-five thousand Franks<sup>54</sup> and thirty-five thousand . . .<sup>55</sup> with two hundred generals and commanders; each of them had between two thousand and five hundred horsemen. He [also] had with him fifteen thousand Ghuzz<sup>56</sup> who were [living] beyond Constantinople; and one hundred thousand sappers and diggers and one hundred thousand siege engineers<sup>57</sup> and four hundred carts<sup>58</sup> on which were weapons, saddles, ballistas and mangonels, amongst which was a mangonel drawn by one thousand, two hundred men.

The sultan sent a message to the king of Byzantium, [saying] that he should return to his country and [saying]: 'I myself will go home, and the peace treaty which the caliph brokered for us will be concluded between us.' The king of Byzantium had [previously] sent his envoy asking the caliph to order the sultan to make peace and [conclude] a treaty. [But now] the answer of the king of Byzantium came back [to Alp Arslan]: 'I have spent a lot of money and assembled many troops to come to the like of this situation. If I am victorious in it, how could I leave it? How preposterous! There will be no treaty except in Rayy and no going home except after I have done in the lands of Islam the like of what has been done in the lands of Byzantium.'

When it was the time of prayer on the Friday,<sup>59</sup> the sultan performed the prayer with the army, he prayed to God Most High, he made invocations, wept and made humble supplications. He said to them [his army]: 'We are with a depleted number of men. I want to throw myself on them [the Byzantines] at this hour when prayers are being said for us and for the Muslims on the pulpits. Either I will

achieve the goal or I will go as a martyr to Paradise. He amongst you who wants to follow me, let him follow me, and he who wants to leave, let him leave my company. Here is not a sultan commanding, nor an army being commanded, for today I am only one of you and a *ghāzī* with you. He who follows me and gives himself to God Most High, he will gain Paradise and booty. He who goes away, the Fire and ignominy are obligatory for him.' They said to him: 'O sultan! We are your servants and whatever you do we will follow you in it and help you in it. So do what you want.'

He threw down his bow and arrows<sup>60</sup> and put on weapons, took the club, tied his mare's tail<sup>61</sup> in a knot with his hand and mounted it. They did likewise. He advanced on the Byzantines and he shouted and they [his men] shouted. He launched an attack on them and the dust rose up and they fought against each other for an hour in which the situation far exceeded a mere rout of the infidels. They spent the day and the night killing in devastating fashion and they plundered and pillaged vast amounts of plunder and pillage. Then the sultan returned to his position and the *khādīm*<sup>62</sup> al-Kahra'<sup>63</sup> came in to see him and he said: 'O sultan! One of my *ghulāms* mentioned that the king of Byzantium is in captivity with him.' This *ghulām* had been presented to Nizam al-Mulk with the whole army and he [Nizam al-Mulk] had looked down on him and rejected him. Overtures had been made about his case but he [Nizam al-Mulk] refused to appoint him and said scornfully: 'Perhaps he will bring us the king of Byzantium as captive.' So God Most High made the imprisonment of the king of Byzantium occur by his hand.

The sultan regarded that [story about the capture of Romanus] as unlikely and he summoned a *ghulām* named Shadhi who had gone several times with envoys to the king of Byzantium and he asked him to see him [the prisoner] and check him out. So he went and saw him, then he came back and said: 'It is he.' So he [Alp Arslan] gave orders for a tent to be set up for him and he brought him to it. He put him in chains and fettered his hand to his neck. [He also gave orders] that one hundred *ghulāms* should be put in charge of him. He put a robe of honour on the man who had captured him and secluded him [Romanus] and he gave him [the *ghulām*] what he suggested [as a reward] and he [the *ghulām*] explained the situation to him. He [the *ghulām*] said: 'I attacked him, not recognising him, and around him were ten young boys from amongst the servants. One of them said to me: "Do not kill him for he is the king", so I took him captive and brought him [to the camp]" (pl. 11).

The sultan ordered him [Romanus] to be brought in and he was brought in front of him. He struck him three or four blows with his hand and he kicked him a similar number of times. He [Alp Arslan] said to him: 'Did I not give permission to the envoys of the caliph that they should seek you out, draw up peace terms with you and respond therein to your request? Did I not now send a message to you and make an offer to you that I would withdraw from you, and you refused and so on. What thing caused you to infringe [the treaty]?'. He [Romanus] said: 'I collected [troops], o sultan, and I had superior numbers and I had the upper hand, but<sup>64</sup> the victory was yours. So do what you want and stop rebuking me.' He [Alp Arslan] said: 'If I had fallen into your hands, what would you have done with me?' He [Romanus] said: 'Something vile.' He [Alp Arslan] said: 'He has spoken truthfully, by God! If he had said otherwise, he would be lying. This is an intelligent, strong man. It is not fitting that he should be killed.' He [Alp Arslan] said [to Romanus]: 'What do you think should be done with you now?' He [Romanus] said: 'One of three things: the first is to kill me, the second is to parade me publicly in your country which I almost attacked and captured, and [as for] the third – there is no benefit in mentioning it, for you will not do it.' He [Alp Arslan] said: 'Mention it.' He [Romanus] said: 'Pardoning me, accepting money, ransoming me, attaching me to your service and sending me back to my kingdom as a *mamlūk* of yours, as a deputy for you in the land of Byzantium.' He [Alp Arslan] said: 'I have decided in respect of you only on that which suits your hopeless position. After thinking about it, bring enough money for your release<sup>65</sup> and I will set you free.' He [Romanus] said: 'The sultan should say what he wants.' He [Alp Arslan] said: 'I want a million *dīnārs*.' He [Romanus] said: 'By God, you will deserve the kingdom of Byzantium, if you spare my life, but I have spent money and, since I have ruled over them [the Byzantines], I have used up from the wealth of Byzantium ten thousand<sup>66</sup> *dīnārs* on renewing the army and on the wars which I have fought with it [the money] until this present battle of mine, and I have made them poor by that. Were it not for that, I would not regard anything you suggest as excessive.' And the conversation went on going to and fro until the matter was established on the basis of one and a half million *dīnārs* and for the treaty on the basis of three hundred and sixty thousand *dīnārs* each year and the release of every prisoner in Byzantium and the bringing of presents and gifts in addition to that, and that there should be brought at any time from the troops of Byzantium that had been sent away that which should be requested as the need demanded. So he



**Figure 2.3** Modern Turkish depiction of Alp Arslan with sword and mace

[Romanus] said to him: ‘If you show favour to me, my being sent back will be speedy before the Byzantines appoint a king other than me; [if not] I will not be able to approach them and I will not be carry through anything of what I have offered.’

The sultan said: ‘I want you to return Anṭākiya,<sup>67</sup> al-Ruhā<sup>68</sup> and Manbij, for they were taken from the Muslims recently,<sup>69</sup> and [I want you] to release the Muslim prisoners.’ He [Romanus] said: ‘If I return to my kingdom, I will send a contingent to each place in it and it will besiege it until I manage to make them surrender. As for my beginning with that, it is not possible for me [now]. As for the prisoners, I will release them all and I will behave kindly with them.’

The sultan ordered that his chains and collar be undone, then he said: ‘Give him [Romanus] a drinking goblet.’ So it was given and he [Romanus] thought it was for him and so he wanted to drink from it, and he was prevented from doing so, was ordered to serve the sultan and to walk towards him and give it [the goblet] to him. So he nodded a little towards the ground according to the Byzantine custom and came towards him [Alp Arslan]. The sultan took the goblet, pulled<sup>70</sup> his hair, put his face on the ground and said: ‘If you pay homage to kings, do it like this.’ And the reason for his demanding that was that the sultan had said in Rayy: ‘Here I am, going to fight the king of Byzantium, to take him prisoner and to appoint him at my head as a

cupbearer.<sup>71</sup> The king of Byzantium went away to his tent and raised a loan of ten thousand *dīnārs* and with it he settled his affair. He distributed it to his retinue, attendants and agents, and he sold a group of his generals and he gave away others.

The following day he [Alp Arslan] summoned him [Romanus]. He had set up for him his throne and chair which had been taken from him and he sat him on both of them. He removed his *qabā'*<sup>72</sup> and *qalansuwwa'*<sup>73</sup> and dressed him with them [again] and he said to him: 'I have attached you [to my service] and I am satisfied with what you have said. I will go with you to your country and will return you to your kingdom.' He [Alp Arslan?] kissed the ground<sup>74</sup> and said to him [Romanus]: 'Did not the caliph of God Most High send you an envoy to take you to him, with the intention of sorting out your affair, and you ordered that he should uncover his head, tighten his belt,<sup>75</sup> and kiss the ground in front of you?'<sup>76</sup> He [Alp Arslan] had heard that he [Romanus] had done this with Ibn al-Muhallaban,<sup>77</sup> so he [Alp Arslan] said: 'Is not the matter as he [Ibn al-Muhallaban] says?'<sup>78</sup> and he [Alp Arslan] appeared to change towards him,<sup>79</sup> so he [Romanus] said; 'O sultan, how have things come to this point?'<sup>80</sup> He [Romanus] stood up, uncovered his head, made a gesture to the ground and said: 'This is in exchange for what I did with his envoy.' The sultan was happy with that and he ordered that a banner should be raised for him on which was written 'There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Prophet of God.' So he [Alp Arslan] raised it over his [Romanus'] head and sent two chamberlains and one hundred *ghulāms* to go with him to Constantinople and he [Alp Arslan] accompanied him for a *farsakh*.<sup>81</sup> When he [Romanus] bade him [Alp Arslan] farewell, he wanted to dismount, so the sultan prevented him and they embraced each other and then parted company.

This victory in Islam was a wonder without peer, for people had assembled to destroy Islam and its people. The king of Byzantium had made up his mind to go to the sultan even as far as Rayy,<sup>82</sup> and the generals had divided up the Islamic lands into fiefs.<sup>83</sup> He [Romanus] said to the one to whom the fief of Baghdad had been given: 'Do not interfere with that upright *shaykh*, for he is our friend,' meaning the caliph. The generals were saying: 'It is inevitable that we will winter in Rayy and summer in Iraq and that we will take the land of Syria on our return [home].'

When the victory happened and the news reached Baghdad, the drums and horns were played, the people gathered in the audience hall<sup>84</sup> and the victory letters<sup>85</sup> were read out.

When [the people of] Byzantium heard what had happened they barred his [Romanus'] return to their country and they appointed someone else as king. He became an ascetic and put on woollen clothes and he sent to the sultan two hundred thousand *dīnārs* and a gold plate on which were jewels, the value of which was ninety thousand *dīnārs*, and he swore by the Gospel that he could not do more than that. He made for the king of Armenia seeking hospitality from him and he blinded him [Romanus] and sent a message to the sultan informing him about that.

### *Commentary on the text*

Although there is a lack of historical precision in this long account, it is full of interesting details. Whilst Ibn al-Jawzi mentions that Alp Arslan had been in Syria with his army, he does not say what he was doing there. His narrative reiterates that Alp Arslan was with only his elite troops, numbering four thousand men, but his exact position when he heard about Romanus Diogenes' advance towards the Muslim world is not at all clear. Ibn al-Jawzi relates that Alp Arslan sent his wife and chief minister with the heavy baggage to the safety of Hamadhan but whether or not the latter sent the extra troops that he was asked by Alp Arslan to collect is not followed up in the account.

Some other Muslim narratives of Manzikert speak of a preliminary skirmish between the vanguards of the two armies; in it the Byzantine commander is captured and the sultan orders his nose to be cut off. The account of Ibn al-Jawzi appears to be confused in that it seems to suggest that Alp Arslan was directly involved in the preliminary fighting. A precise date for the battle – five days before the end of the month of Dhu'l-Qa'da – is provided, but the exact sequence of the battle and its military aspects are (predictably for a religious scholar in Baghdad) passed over in his hurry to talk triumphantly about the victory. He mentions the day of the week when the battle took place as Wednesday,<sup>86</sup> but he presents Alp Arslan as preparing to advance on the Friday. What happened in the intervening period is not covered. A precise place for the battle – al-Rahwa – is given and the varied ethnic composition of the Byzantine army is mentioned. Once again much emphasis is placed on the impressive military impedimenta of the Byzantine emperor. It is interesting to note that Alp Arslan's elite troops had two horses each – a detail which is picked up in some later accounts. Ibn al-Jawzi is the first Muslim historian of Manzikert who gives a series of circumstantial details about Alp Arslan's preparations



for battle. He discards his bow and arrows, the standard nomad weaponry for long-range encounters, as a signal that he is about to engage in hand-to-hand combat. In the same spirit, he takes up an appropriate weapon for such combat, namely a club (together with other weapons that are not specified). Then he ties his mare's tail in a knot. Normally a horse's tail would be allowed to grow long, and this would enable the animal to disperse the flies that would plague it in a hot climate. But in battle, a cavalier could be disadvantaged by the long tail of his horse, which could be grabbed by enemy soldiers and thus result in a loss of his control over his mount – and perhaps even cause him to be unhorsed. In the same precautionary spirit the sultan, in other accounts, is described as tightening the girths of his horse just before the battle.<sup>87</sup>

Most, if not all, of the details of the treaty drawn up after the battle are probably apocryphal.

Nose-cutting has been known since antiquity as a brutal way of dishonouring a person, notably in times of war. Famous instances include Artaxerxes, who was punished in 329 BC by Alexander the Great according to 'Persian law' by the cutting off of his nose and ears before execution. The practice was still in existence amongst the Ottomans, who cut off the nose and ears of Marco Antonio Bragadino, the Venetian defender of Cyprus, in 1571.<sup>88</sup> Such a widespread practice was intended as a shaming exemplary punishment; the Arabic term *tashbīr* means 'to parade an offender as a public example' (the offender was often mounted on an ass or camel).<sup>89</sup> It is interesting to note that there is a parallel incident of this kind in Attaleiates' account of the battle:

When one of the soldiers was accused of having stolen a Turkish ass, he was brought in full view, bound, before the emperor but a punishment was decreed which surpassed the crime: the penalty was not set in money but in the cutting of the nose. Although the man pleaded a great deal and offered to give up all his property and although he put forward as a mediator the most holy icon of the All-Hymned Lady the Blachernitissa Theotokos which it was the custom for pious emperors to take on campaigns as an invincible weapon, the emperor did not feel pity nor even respect for the asylum granted by the holy icon. But with me and everyone looking on and with the icon itself being held, the wretch screeching loudly and groaning deeply had his nose cut off. It was indeed then that I had forebodings that great would be the nemesis which would befall us from God.<sup>90</sup>

## Notes

1. Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. I. Abbas, vol. 5, 69. It is interesting, indeed almost incredible, to note that Ibn Khallikan, normally so well versed in the Arabic historical works which have preceded his own, does not mention in his biographical notice of Alp Arslan that he won the battle of Manzikert.
2. Cf. S. Dayf's Arabic introduction to his edition of al-Turtushi, 6–7. The account of the battle of Manzikert is to be found on pp. 694–7; cf. al-Turtushi, *Sirāj al-mulūk*, ed. S. Dayf, Cairo, 1991. The work has been translated into Spanish: cf. M. Alarcón, *Lámpara de los principes*, 2 vols, Madrid, 1930–1.
3. For an account of his stay in Baghdad, cf. Fierro's introduction to al-Turtushi, *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa'l-bidā' (El libro de las novedades y las innovaciones)*, tr. and ed. M. Fierro, Madrid, 1993, 34–9. Fierro lists his teachers in Iraq; *ibid.*, 36–9.
4. Al-Turtushi, *Sirāj*, 513–18; tr. Alarcón, II, 111–15.
5. Cf. *EI2*: s.v. al-Ṭurtūshī (A. Ben Abdesselem).
6. For Alarcón's Spanish translation of the account of the battle, cf. *Lámpara de los principes*, 328–32.
7. I.e. the clever identification of the leader of the enemy army and focusing on his capture. For the account of the battle of Manzikert, cf. al-Turtushi, *Sirāj*, 694–6.
8. For a recent thorough treatment of siege weapons, cf. J. France, *Western warfare in the age of the Crusades*, New York, 1999, 124–43.
9. The twelfth-century Byzantine historian, Constantine Manasses, also uses the image of the 'wheel of fortune' as a description of the vagaries of human affairs, seeing events and people as being ruled by an unstable, irregular force; cf. R. Macrides, 'History-writing in the twelfth century', in *The perception of the past in twelfth-century Europe*, ed. P. Magdalino, London, 1992, 124.
10. *akla jā'i* – literally 'the meal of a hungry man'.
11. *ka-al-raqma fī dhirā' al-ḥimār*. This is an echo of the *ḥadīth*: 'You are amongst the nations no more than the mark on the leg of the riding-animal.' *raqma* denotes the black spot on the rump of the ass; cf. Ibn Manzur, *Lisān al-'arab al-muḥīṭ* ed. Y. Khayyat, Beirut, n.d., 1210; E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, I/3, Beirut, 1980, 1139.
12. By saying the *bismillāh* ('In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful').
13. For example, the mustering of Alp Arslan's troops in Isfahan.

14. Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Dhayl tar'ikh Dimashq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz, Leiden, 1908, 99. This chronicle has been partly translated twice but in neither case was the account of Manzikert included; cf. H. A. R. Gibb, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*; London, 1932, and R. Le Tourneau, *Damas de 1075 à 1154*, Damascus, 1952. There is, however, a Turkish translation of the account of Ibn al-Qalanisi; cf. Sümer and Sevim, 1–3. The Arabic text is also included by Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt*, 129. For the work of Ibn al-Qalanisi, cf. also C. Cahen, 'Note d'historiographie syrienne. La première partie de l'histoire d'Ibn al-Qalanisi', in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. G. Makdisi, Cambridge, MA., 1965, 156–68. For a biographical notice of Ibn al-Qalanisi, cf. al-Dhahabi, cited in Arabic by Amedroz in his edition of the text, *Dhayl tar'ikh Dimashq*, 6.
15. In his now lost chronicle entitled '*Uyūn al-tawārīkh*', Ghars al-Ni'ma, a member of the distinguished Sabaean family of bureaucrats in Baghdad, continued his father's work until the year 479/1086, so it may have contained an account of the battle of Manzikert; for Ghars al-Ni'ma, cf. C. Cahen, 'The historiography of the Seljuqid period', in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. B. Lewis and P. M. Holt, London, 1962, 60–1.
16. Armānūs. The form Romanus will be used throughout the book.
17. Manazjird is the oldest Arabic form of the town now known in Turkey as Malazgirt. The form Manazjird is close to one of the Old Armenian names for it – Manazkert; cf. *EI2* s.v. Malāzgirid: The town (S. Faroqui). The translations in this book will use Manzikert, which is the best-known form of the name in the West.
18. *Al-kirā'* – a word meaning horses and donkeys.
19. The Turkish translation, although it corresponds to the version of events given in some later accounts, seems to be wrong here: 'deniliğine göre, Bizanslılar onu yakalayıp gözlerine mil çekmişler – 'it is said that the Byzantines put a collar round his neck and blinded him'. The Arabic is: *ightalūhu wa-sallamūhu*. Attractive as the translation of *ightalūhu* as 'put a collar round him' may be, it is not tenable grammatically. The root *ghalla* with the meaning being 'to put a ring on the neck or hand of someone' (cf. Lane, *Lexicon*, vol. 6, 2277–8) cannot be right here; cf. also Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, II, 487. Similarly *sallamūhu* does not mean 'they blinded him'.
20. For Alp Arslan's dealings with this ruler and his mother, cf. C. Hillenbrand, 'Ibn al-'Adim's biography of the Seljuq sultan, Alp Arslan', *Actas XVI Congreso UEAI*, ed. C. Vázquez de Benito and M. A. Manzano Rodríguez, Salamanca, 1995, 237–42.

21. There are two editions of the text: C. Cahen, 'La chronique abrégée d'al-'Azīmī', *Journal asiatique* 230 (1938), 335–448; I. Za'ur, *Ta'riḫ Ḥalab*, Damascus, 1984. Cf. also C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades* (Paris, 1940), 42–3. Cahen's edition of the text has been used for the translation; cf. al-'Azimi, 'La chronique abrégée', 359.
22. The reference to the emperor being sold 'for a *dīnār*', described by Cahen as 'unclear' ('La chronique abrégée', 425, n. 2), is indeed a rather odd detail. A *dīnār* – a gold coin – does not represent a paltry sum. The use of *fiḥs* or *dirham* would have been more appropriate here to underline the insult intended for Romanus.
23. For an account of the battle, cf. Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi, *Tar'īḫ al-Fāriqī*, ed. B. A. L. Awad, Cairo, 1959, 189–90. Cf. also the same text copied by Amedroz in the footnotes to his edition of Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Dhāyḫ*, 99–100, n. 1. Cf. also Sümer and Sevim, *Islām kaynaklarına*, 4–5. For information about Ibn al-Azraq, cf. C. Hillenbrand, *A Muslim Principality in Crusader Times*, Leiden, 1990, 5–14; H. F. Amedroz, 'The Marwānīd dynasty at Mayyāfāriqīn in the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D.', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1903), 123–54.
24. Ibn al-Azraq, ed. Awad, 187.
25. Presumably a reference to this being the last of the expeditions of Romanus into eastern Anatolia.
26. Khilat is the form preferred by Ibn al-Azraq for the town Akhlāt at the north-western corner of Lake Van; cf. *EI2* s.v. Akhlāt (V. Minorsky).
27. A town in the Jazīra, standing on the tributary of the Tigris called the Arzan-su; cf. Hillenbrand, *Muslim principality*, 35, n.42.
28. A town to the south-west of Lake Van.
29. The vocalisation of this name is uncertain. Presumably he was the *qādī* of Manzikert mentioned above.
30. The phrase: 'God is most great' (*Allāhu akbar*).
31. *raṭl* – a small measure of weight, which varied according to place and time. For the different weights of *raṭl*, cf. W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte*, Leiden, 1955, 27–33.
32. Ibn al-Azraq himself speaks of his stay in Baghdad; cf. Ibn al-Azraq, *Tar'īḫ Mayyāfāriqīn*, ed. C. Hillenbrand as *A Muslim principality in Crusader times*, Leiden, 1999, 98–9.
33. Nishapuri, *The Saljuqnama of Zahir al-Din Nishapuri*, ed. A. H. Morton, Chippenham, 2004, 22. This recent edition is based on the unique manuscript in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society in London (Ms. Persian 22(b) (Morley no.138); cf. *ibid.*, 6.
34. The reign of Alp Arslan covers a mere four pages in Morton's edition; cf. *ibid.*, 21–5.

35. Cf. Morton's introduction in *ibid.*, 54.
36. Raiding in the path of God.
37. Qur'an 2: 249–50.
38. This term varies in meaning but it often denotes a slave servant.
39. Literally: 'they (i.e. a number of sources) have reported'.
40. This Turkish slave commander worked for Alp Arslan and his son Malikshah. In the fratricidal struggle between the sons of Malikshah – Muhammad and Barkyaruq – he supported the latter and was killed on the battlefield in 493/1100; cf. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam*, IX, 115–16; Ibn al-Athir, *Kāmil*, X, 200–1.
41. *'arīd* – the inspecting officer. His task was to examine men, horses and weapons in the *'arīd*, the periodic inspection of the army; cf. *Encycl.Ir.*, II/7, s.v. *'arz, dīvān (-e)* (C. E. Bosworth). If the slave's name had not been written down, he would not have been paid.
42. A sign of servitude since ancient times.
43. *jizya* – payable by the 'People of the Book' – usually Christians and Jews, but also adherents of other religions with established scriptures. In return, they were allowed to worship freely, under certain restrictions, and were promised protection from the Muslim state.
44. There are two editions of this text: ed. F. Krenkow, Hyderabad, 1938–40, and ed. M. A. Ata *et al.*, Beirut, 1992–3. For the account of Manzikert, cf. ed. Krenkow, vol. 8, 260–5. Cf. also Sümer and Sevim, *Islâm kaynaklarına* 9–15; Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt* 119–23. There are occasional variations in the published text of Sümer and Sevim and that of Zakkar, and even omissions and alterations. When these are significant, they will be mentioned in the footnotes. In general, the starting point for the translation has been the Hyderabad edition.
45. *fall* – scattered remnants of an army; *débris d'une armée en déroute* (Kazimirski, II, 626). *fall* is Zakkar's reading of the text; the edition of Sümer and Sevim has *fī qalīl min al-'askar* ('with few troops'). 11. It is not clear where this version has come from.
46. Reading *istanfada* (*Muntazam*, 260; Sümer and Sevim, 11) rather than *istanafadha* (Zakkar, 119).
47. Presumably his wife. *Khatun* is a title used for royal Turkish women.
48. *ṣabr al-muhtaṣibīn*
49. *masīr al-mukhāṭirīn*
50. *jarīda*: detachment separated from the main body of the army and composed only of cavalry; cf. Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, I, 277.
51. Presumably here this means a copy of the whole of the New Testament or at least all four Gospels.

52. Literally: 'to the presence of the caliphate'. This fighting is a reference to a preliminary skirmish between the Turks and the Byzantines which took place before the battle itself.
53. The true form of this name seems uncertain. Al-Rahwa seems better than al-Zahwa since it is attested in Yaqut who says that it is a desert near Akhlat – cf. Yaqut, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, ed. F.Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1866–73, II, 880. Manzikert (in modern Turkish, Malazgirt) stands in the plain of the Murat Su (the lower Euphrates); Sinclair mentions the Rahwa plateau; cf. T. A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: an architectural and archaeological survey*, London, 1987–90, I, 177–8.
54. Western European mercenaries were commonly used in Byzantine armies.
55. The text has a gap here.
56. Called *Ouzoi* in Byzantine sources. The Ghuzz were to be found in southern Russia, the lower Danube area and Byzantium; cf. *EI2* s.v. Ghuzz (C. Cahen).
57. Reading *ruzdārī* for *ruzjārī*. The translation 'siege engineers' is only tentative.
58. This detail is magnified to a thousand carts by Attaleiates; cf. tr. Macrides, Appendix A, p. 229.
59. This was the noon prayer.
60. For a detailed discussion of the importance of archery in the Turkish conquest of Anatolia, cf. W. E. Kaegi Jr, 'The contribution of archery to the Turkish conquest of Anatolia', *Speculum*, 39/1 (January 1964), 96–108. As Kaegi writes, 'the Seljuks preferred the bow to other weapons'. *ibid.*, 96. For the iconography of the bow as a symbol of power (and not only among the Turks), see J. Zick-Nissen, 'The turquoise "jām" of King Jamshīd', in *The Art of the Saljuqs in Iran and Anatolia*, ed. R. Hillenbrand, Costa Mesa, CA., 1994, 183–5, with references to the bow being depicted on Seljuq coins; and S. Redford, 'A grammar of Rūm Seljuk ornament', in *Mésogeios Méditerranée* 25–26 (2005), ed. G. Leiser, 294–5.
61. The horse's tail is a frequent symbol for the Turks; W. Ridgeway, 'The origin of the Turkish crescent', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 38 (Jul.–Dec. 1908), 241–58.
62. Household servant, often a eunuch, but the term had a wide range of meanings depending on place and period.
63. Probably a feeble attempt to produce the name *Gawharaʿin* found in other texts.
64. changing 'and' in the text to 'but'.
65. Literally: 'money adequate for your neck'.

66. The text has ten thousand *dīnārs*. The editor writes that ‘perhaps it is ten million’, *Krenkow*, 263, n. 1. This suggestion is adopted in the editions both of Zakkar and of Sümer and Sevim.
67. Antioch. This city had actually been ruled by the Byzantines since 969; cf. *EI2* s.v. Anṭākiya (M. Streck – H. A. R. Gibb).
68. Edessa. This important centre of Armenian Christianity had been under overall Byzantine rule since 1037; cf. *EI2* s.v. al-Ruhā (E. Honigmann – C. E. Bosworth).
69. Romanus had taken the Syrian city of Manbij as late as 460/1068; cf. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, tr. J. Jones-Williams (London, 1968), 28; Zakkar, *Emirate*, 174–5. Nicephorus Bryennius reports that Romanus was very proud of this conquest, which had given him false hope of being successful against the Turks again; cf. Nicephorus Bryennius, tr. Gautier, 106.
70. Reading *jarra* (to pull); cf. Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt*, 122; the reading *jazza* (to cut) in the Krenkow edition (264) and preferred by Sümer and Sevim (14), makes far less sense.
71. Presumably in retaliation for the humiliating way in which Romanus had treated the caliphal envoy.
72. A sleeved garment for men.
73. A pointed bonnet.
74. The phrase *wa-qabbala al-ard* is omitted by Sümer and Sevim in their Turkish translation (16) but it is there in their Arabic edition (15).
75. The belt was an important item of insignia.
76. These actions are intended to humiliate Romanus publicly.
77. The envoy of the caliph, Ibn al-Muhallaban, had been made to make *proskynesis* (a bow to the ground), an act of homage demanded by Roman emperors since the time of Constantine, or even earlier; Friendly, *The dreadful day*, 184.
78. Sümer and Sevim’s edition gives: ‘*alā mā yuqālu* – according to what is said, 16.
79. Literally: ‘there appeared a change from him towards him’.
80. Literally: ‘in what thing am I placed until I am placed in this?’
81. A measurement of distance, roughly equivalent to a league or around three miles.
82. I.e. right into the heart of Seljuq territory. Rayy, near modern Tehran, was one of the favourite cities of the Seljuqs.
83. *wa- aqṭa ‘al-baṭāriqa al-bilād al-islāmiyya*
84. *bayt al-nawba* – audience hall or guardroom in a palace or a tent in a royal camp used for audiences.
85. The public reading of a *fathnāma* (a victory letter) was an important moment of celebration.

86. The first day of Dhu'l-Hijja was a Tuesday. So the date given – five days remaining of Dhu'l-Qa'da – falls on a Thursday.
87. For the significance of the horse in the whole Turkic world, cf. J.-P. Roux, *Etudes d'iconographie islamique*, Leuven, 1982, 34. For the importance of bows and arrows, cf. *ibid.*, 60–1.
88. Cf. J. W. Frembgen, 'Honour, shame, and bodily mutilation. Cutting off the nose among tribal societies', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16/3 (November 2006), 243, 245 and 254.
89. Cf. R. Peters, *Crime and punishment in Islamic law*, Cambridge, 2006, 34.
90. Tr. Macrides, Appendix A, pp. 229–37.



## The thirteenth-century accounts of the battle of Manzikert

*On days of audience Alp Arslan was extremely awe-inspiring and splendid. From the top button of his hat to the end of his moustaches it was two yards. Ambassadors from the various regions were extremely afraid of him, and awe of him left an impression on them.*<sup>1</sup>

### **The account of al-Husayni (d. after 622/1225) in *Akhbār al-dawla al-saljūqiyya*<sup>2</sup>**

#### *Introduction to the text*

This is a very important source for the history of the Seljuqs. Unfortunately, the authorship of it is not clearly established, nor indeed is its title. In the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, the author is named here as al-Husayni. Research on the text is not helped by the fact that Iqbal's edition of it is often problematic and he gives many dubious readings of this difficult text. The work is a dynastic history of the Seljuqs written in Arabic in the extreme east of the Islamic world in a milieu where it would have been more usual for a historical chronicle to have been composed in Persian. The work has been rather neglected by scholars, despite its clear value as a repository of information gleaned from lost historical chronicles from the eleventh century and thus lacking in the surviving sources.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Translation of the text*

The march of the most mighty sultan 'Adud al-Dawla Abu Shuja' Alp Arslan against the king of Byzantium, Romanus, once again, and his taking him prisoner.

In the year 463<sup>4</sup> the sultan Alp Arslan passed through Syria and left his son as his deputy in the district of Aleppo with a detachment of his troops. He crossed the water of the Euphrates on horseback without boats<sup>5</sup> and came to the environs of Khoy<sup>6</sup> and Salmas.<sup>7</sup> The news reached him<sup>8</sup> that the king of Byzantium had entrusted the empire to a scion of Christian royalty<sup>9</sup> and had equipped himself with an army of more than three hundred thousand horsemen and infantry. Byzantium threw its own lifeblood<sup>10</sup> at the sultan and the earth brought forth its burdens of men and equipment. To this king there flocked [those] from rabblesome elements<sup>11</sup> consisting of Byzantines, Armenians, Persians, Pechenegs,<sup>12</sup> Ghuzz and Franks – people by whom discords extend their forearms and by whose gathering together Christianity elevated its foundations.<sup>13</sup> They swore oaths that they would drive out the caliph, appoint the *catholicos*<sup>14</sup> in his place, destroy mosques and build churches.

So the sultan sent a message to his wife and his vizier Nizam al-Mulk, saying: ‘I am marching with this number I have with me against the enemy. If I am spared, it is a blessing from Almighty God. If I fall as a martyr, it is an act of mercy from Almighty God. My successor is my son Malikshah.’ He had with him fifteen thousand valiant horsemen, each of them having a horse to ride.<sup>15</sup>

The caliph al-Qa’im bi-amr Allah,<sup>16</sup> the Commander of the Faithful, had ordered that a prayer (*du‘ā’*) should be read out from the pulpits and he produced a copy of the prayer and gave it to the preachers. It was the work of Abu Sa‘id b. Mawsilaya:<sup>17</sup>

O God! Raise the banner of Islam and its helper. Refute polytheism by severing its withers and breaking its ropes. Help those fighters in Your paths who have expended themselves in obedience to You, and who have given their utmost in their making of a covenant with You and who have benefited from the help by which their contract [of allegiance to You] is extended, and fill their abodes with victory and safety. Grant the sultan Alp Arslan, the Proof<sup>18</sup> of the Commander of the Faithful, the help by which his banners are illuminated and which facilitates [the attainment of] his desire. Confer on him joyful and prosperous support<sup>19</sup> that will strengthen his hand to glorify Your religion and which ordains for him that his future efforts against the infidels will be coupled with those of the present.<sup>20</sup> Cause his troops to be helped by Your angels and his decisions to be crowned with good fortune and a happy outcome, for he has abandoned tranquillity for the noble path of pleasing You; and by expending his wealth and his life he has pursued the paths of Your

commands which he has obeyed and pursued. For You speak and Your Word is truth:

‘O you who believe! Shall I show you a commerce that will save you from a painful doom? You should believe in God and His messenger, and should strive for the cause of God with your wealth and your lives.’<sup>21</sup>

O God! Just as he has answered and responded to Your call, and has avoided sluggishness in his efforts to protect the *Shari‘a* and has accomplished that, and has encountered Your enemies personally, and has worked day and night for the triumph of Your religion, so single him out for victory and help him in his objectives through the favourable outworkings of your judgement and your decree, by [giving him] a protection which wards off from him every artifice of the enemies, [a protection] which embraces him fully<sup>22</sup> with Your beautiful attributes and which facilitates for him every aim that he attempts and every quest that he tries to attain and to which he devotes himself, so that his auspicious rising may glow with victory and the eye of the polytheists may be unseeing of the ways of righteousness because of their persistence in error.

[O]<sup>23</sup> assemblies of Muslims, pray humbly to Almighty God with pure intention, true resolution, submissive hearts and beliefs delighting in the gardens of sincerity, for He Who is praised and exalted says:

‘My Lord would not concern Himself with you but for your prayer.’<sup>24</sup>

Continue to request Almighty God to honour his side, to break the sword of his enemy,<sup>25</sup> to raise his banner, bestow on him victory to the utmost and extreme limit, make difficulties easy for him and humiliate polytheism in front of him.

The sultan came close to the king of Byzantium at a place called al-Zuhra between Akhlat and Manzikert on Wednesday 15 Dhu’l-Qa‘da 463.<sup>26</sup> The sultan corresponded with him about making a peace treaty. He replied that the peace treaty would be [only] in al-Rayy. The sultan was alarmed at that. His *imām* and *faqīh*, Abu Nasr Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Bukhari al-Hanafi, said to him: ‘You are fighting for God’s religion. I hope that Almighty God will have written this victory in your name. Meet them on Friday at the hour when the preachers will be on the pulpits praying for victory for the warriors of the faith<sup>27</sup> against the infidels and the prayer will be answered.’ So the sultan waited until the Friday at the time of the sermon of the preachers and he pronounced Almighty God’s word: ‘Victory only cometh by the help of God’.<sup>28</sup> The sultan said: ‘It may be that if amongst the

preachers someone says at the end of his sermon: “O God! Help the armies and detachments of the Muslims”, God will fulfil the aims and desires of the warriors of the faith (*ghuzāt*) because of the blessings of his prayer.’

The vizier Nizam al-Mulk returned to Hamadhan as a safeguard for Iraq, Khurasan and Mazandaran<sup>29</sup> against censuring and corrupt people. The sultan threw himself into dangers and he said: ‘Anyone who wishes to leave, let him leave, for there is here no sultan ordering and forbidding except God.’ He threw down his bow and arrows, took up his sword, and tied the tail of his horse with his own hand. His troops did as he had done.

When the two sides met, the Byzantines dug a trench round the army. The sultan said: ‘By God! May they be routed, for the building of the trench for those [people] in spite of their great number is a sign of cowardice and failure.’<sup>30</sup> The Byzantine emperor erected a marquee<sup>31</sup> of red satin and a canopy like it and tents of silk brocades.<sup>32</sup> He sat on a throne of gold; above him was a golden cross studded with priceless jewels and in front of him was a great throng of monks and priests reciting the Gospel (pl. 10).

The two sides met on Friday at the time when the preacher of the Muslims mounts the pulpit. Voices [reciting] the Qu’ran, sounds of drums from the sultan’s troops and the ringing of bells from the Byzantine side were raised. A dusty wind blew which blinded the eyes of the Muslims, and the sultan’s army almost took flight. Then the sultan got down from his horse, prostrated himself before Almighty God and said: ‘O God! I have placed my trust in You and have come closer to You through this *jihād*. I have rubbed my face in the dust before You and I have smeared it with my life’s blood. My eyes are flowing copiously with tears and the sides of my neck are exuding blood. If You know that what is in my innermost heart is different from what I am saying with my tongue, then destroy me and those of my helpers and servants who are with me. If my secret thoughts are in accordance with my overt utterances, then help me to fight *jihād* against the enemies, give me from Your presence a sustaining power, and make that which is difficult easy for me’ (pl. 17).

The sultan kept on repeating this entreaty and weeping until the directions of the winds were reversed and the eyes of the infidels were blinded. [God’s] decree uprooted the tree of injustice, it amputated the nose<sup>33</sup> of transgression and effaced the traces of the Christians and ‘You [Muhammad] will see mankind as drunken, yet they will not be drunken.’<sup>34</sup> The dust of the battle was dispelled at the time of the

yellowing of the sun,<sup>35</sup> and the hand of captivity and destruction encircled the king of Byzantium.

This is how it happened. A horse belonging to one of the sultan's *ghulam*s strayed and that *ghulam* went in search of it. He then found a horse with a bridle, inlaid with jewels, a saddle of gold and a man sitting by the horse with a golden helmet and a coat of mail shot through with gold in front of him. The *ghulam* was about to kill him when the man said to him: 'I am the emperor<sup>36</sup> of Byzantium. Do not kill me, for the killing of kings is an ill omen.' So the *ghulam* tied his hands and dragged him to the sultan's camp. Not one of the Byzantine prisoners saw him without sticking his [own] forehead in the dust.<sup>37</sup> The messenger [of glad tidings] reached the sultan's presence while the sultan was performing the evening prayer. They brought him [Romanus] in [to see] the sultan and the chamberlains took hold of him by his plait and shirt-opening, dragging him to the ground so that he might kiss it. But he would not kiss the ground in front of the sultan because of his being seduced by the haughtiness of kingship and pomp. The sultan said: 'Leave him. It is enough for him to witness this day.'

Sa'd al-Dawla Gawhara'in had owned a slave (*mamlūk*) whom he had given as a present to the vizier Nizam al-Mulk. He had refused to accept him from him without looking [closely] at him, and he considered him to be puny. Then he [Gawhara'in] tried hard to interest him [Nizam al-Mulk] in him [the slave]. So Nizam al-Mulk said: 'What's the point of my taking him?'<sup>38</sup> Perhaps he will bring us the Byzantine king, the emperor, as a prisoner!' Then it happened just as the vizier had said. The *ghulam* came on the day of the battle into the sultan's presence, bringing the king of Byzantium as a prisoner. He [Alp Arslan] gave orders that he should be bound in fetters and he asked the slave what he wanted [as a present]. He requested Ghazna as a gift, so that was granted to him.

I heard [something] from Khwaja Imam Musharraf al-Shirazi the merchant on the bank of the Jayhun<sup>39</sup> opposite Darghan,<sup>40</sup> while we were going down to Khwarazm. He said: 'I heard from my elders that when the troops of the sultan Alp Arslan and the troops of Byzantium were fighting each other, the king of Byzantium sent a messenger to the sultan who said to him: "I have come to you accompanied by troops that you cannot resist. If you become subservient to me, I will give you from the lands that which will be sufficient for you and you will be safe from any attack and harm from me. If you do not do that, I have with me in the way of troops three hundred thousand cavalry and infantry. I [also] have fourteen thousand carts on which are coffers of money and weapons. Not a single one of the Muslim troops can

resist me and none of their cities and citadels will remain shut in my face.” When the sultan heard this message, the glory of Islam overcame him and the pride of kingship stirred in his breast. He said to the envoy: “Tell your master: ‘It is not you who have sought me out, but it is God, to Whom be praise, Who has brought you to me and has made you and your troops food for the Muslims. You are my prisoner and my slave. Some of your troops will be killed by me; others will be my captives. All your treasures will be in my possession and [will become] my property. So stand firm for the fight and be ready for the battle, for you will see that your troops are necks which will be driven towards their striker and your treasures are possessions which will be brought towards their plunderer’.” The following morning the battle took place between them and everything that the sultan said came to pass, by God’s help and right guidance.’

When the king of Byzantium was brought to the threshold of the sultan, the king of Byzantium said to the interpreter: ‘Ask the sultan to restore me to the seat of my power before the Byzantines can gather around another king who may proclaim open hostility and war against us, who may teach the book of enmity and produce the page of rebellion, whereas I am more submissive to you than your slaves. I will make it incumbent upon myself to pay you every year a million *dīnārs* as poll tax.’ The sultan acceded to his request after the slave merchants had displayed him for sale in the markets. Then the sultan freed him and put ceremonial garments on him and those prisoners who had remained with him. The king returned to his seat of government and he fulfilled what he had vowed [to do]. A letter of congratulation on the conquest and victory came to the sultan Alp Arslan from the Commander of the Faithful, al-Qa’im bi’amr Allah, and in it he addressed him as ‘The son, the most lofty, supported, assisted, victorious lord, the most mighty sultan, the possessor of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, the lord of the kings of nations, the light of religion, the support of the Muslims, the helper of the imam, the refuge of mankind, the support of the victorious state, the crown of the resplendent community, the sultan of the lands of the Muslims, the proof of the Commander of the Faithful, may God continue to make [life] smooth for him and multiply His blessings to him.’

### *Commentary on the text*

This very interesting account contains, as well as broadly familiar elements, details not found in other accounts of the battle. New elements

in the story here include fuller honorific titles for the sultan Alp Arslan. Having crossed the Euphrates without the aid of boats, he is shown in this narrative to be in Azarbayjan, rather than Aleppo, when he hears the news of Romanus' advance. The story of Romanus' capture by the slave is embellished with details about the emperor's finery and he himself speaks directly to the slave, asking him not to kill him. The dialogue between Alp Arslan and Romanus is also different from other medieval Muslim accounts and is more like a summary of a longer conversation. In sum, it is clear that this is a narrative which stands alone in many respects from the other Arabic accounts of the battle of Manzikert because of its individualistic expressions and idiosyncratic images.

### **The account of al-Bundari (d. after 623/1226) in *Zubdat al-nuṣra wa nukhbat al-ʿuṣra*<sup>41</sup>**

#### *Introduction to the text*

Little is known about this Arabic chronicler, who originated in Iran but moved to Syria. He probably worked for an Ayyubid ruler of Syria, al-Muʿazzam ʿIsa, to whom he dedicated this dynastic history of the Seljuqs, begun in 623/1226. The work, which is an accurate summary of the *Nuṣrat al-fatra* of ʿImad al-Dīn al-Isfahani<sup>42</sup>, attempts to prune down and simplify at least some of the verbal conceits of the latter's ornate style. In view of the large number of puns and other word plays remaining in al-Bundari's text, these are noted in parentheses in the translation itself. Their presence does not help the flow of the translation in English but they are an essential component in the literary aims of the author, or rather those of his more illustrious predecessor, ʿImad al-Dīn, so they have been retained here.

#### *Translation of the text*

The account of the going out of the king of Byzantium, his defeat (*kasrihi*), his subjugation (*qasrihi*) and his being taken prisoner (*asrihi*)<sup>43</sup>

The sultan heard about Romanus, the petty king of Byzantium,<sup>44</sup> going out with an innumerable assembly and countless reinforcements. On hearing this news, he marched rapidly to Azarbayjan; on arrival there<sup>45</sup> he heard that the petty king of Byzantium had taken the road to Akhlat. The sultan was with the elite of his army and he did

not think it wise to return to his country to collect his troops and to call to *jihād* from [all] directions the tribes and clans of the faith. So he sent Nizam al-Mulk, his vizier and the Khatun, his wife, to Tabriz<sup>46</sup> with his baggage and he remained with fifteen thousand horsemen from the pick of his men, each one of them having a horse to ride and another to run alongside him. The Byzantines numbered three hundred thousand or more, consisting of Byzantines, Rus,<sup>47</sup> Ghuzz, Qipchaqs,<sup>48</sup> Georgians, Abkhaz,<sup>49</sup> Khazars,<sup>50</sup> Franks and Armenians. The sultan saw that if he allowed a delay to collect troops, time would go by, the affliction of the country (*balā' al-bilād*) would grow greater and the burdens of the faithful (*a' bā' al 'ubbād*)<sup>51</sup> would become heavy. So he rode with his elite followers (*fī nukhbatihī*) and made his way forward with his troops (*fī 'uṣbatihī*).<sup>52</sup> He said: 'I myself am expecting a reward from God. If I am blessed with martyrdom, then my grave consisting of flying dust will be in the throats of green birds.<sup>53</sup> If I am given victory, how fortunate I will be! I will reach the evening (*amsī*) and my today will be better than my yesterday (*amsī*).' Then he put his trust in God and went with this past<sup>54</sup> firm decision (*al- 'azīma al-māḍiyya al-qawiyya*) and copious cutting zeal (*al-ṣarīma al-ṣarīma al-rawiyya*). The petty ruler of Byzantium had sent vanguard commanders of the Rus ahead with twenty thousand horsemen; with them was their hardest commander<sup>55</sup> (*'azīmuhum al-aṣlab*) and their greatest cross (*ṣalībuhum al-a'zam*). They infected the country of Akhlat<sup>56</sup> with calamity, plunder and capturing. The troops of Akhlat went out against them and their leader was Sandak al-Turki. He poured the morning draft of whiteness on the night of dark stagnant water.<sup>57</sup> He waded to glory, wielding the fire of blazing conflagration; he killed many of them and he led their leader away in fetters (*wa-qāda qā'idahum fī l-qayd*)<sup>58</sup>, distressed and captured. The sultan ordered that his nose should be cut off and his death should be postponed. That was Tuesday 4 Dhu'l-Qa'ḍa<sup>59</sup> in the year 463. He dispatched the plundered cross to Nizam al-Mulk so that he would send it quickly to the seat of the caliphate to announce the glad tidings that Islam was safe.

The Byzantine army caught up and laid siege to Akhlat, whilst the inhabitants were trusting in God who did not cease to help His religion. The petty king of Byzantium attacked Manzikert with his Christian helpers (*anṣār naṣrāniyatihī*) and his baptised chiefs (*'umāda' ma' mūdiyyatihī*).<sup>60</sup> Its inhabitants were disturbed (*fa-inza' aja sukkānuhā*) and its supports (*arkānuhā*) shook violently. They knew that they could not withstand the attack he had made on them and that without doubt their blood would be shed by the swords of unbelief.



They came out with safe-conduct and surrendered the town. He [Romanus] accommodated them for that night on its [the town's] pavement under his protection (*inda balātīhi tahta iḥtiyātīhi*). On the Wednesday, he sent them all away into captivity (*sayyarahum bi-asrihim fī asr*),<sup>61</sup> he had them followed by numerous troops and he went out to accompany them himself with a group of his defenders and his stalwarts.<sup>62</sup> That coincided with the arrival of the first contingents of the sultanal army. Fighting broke out and the gerfalcons (*ajādil*) of both armies met in the contest (*mujādala*). The cavalry (*khayl*) rushed, the torrent (*sayl*) flowed, the rearguard (*dhayl*) swept along from earth to sky.<sup>63</sup> Byzantium sustained a defeat which destroyed them, turned them away from their aim and repelled them.<sup>64</sup> They were thrown back to their perch in their camp and, by what had been achieved in the wedding feast of Islam (*'urs*), they were removed to their [own] funeral ceremony. The people of Manzikert began to slip away and the Byzantines killed from amongst them those whose appointed hour had overtaken them, and the rest escaped. The Byzantines knew that they would meet death.

Their petty princeling went back to his tents and he passed the night while drums sounded and trumpets blared.<sup>65</sup> When they got up on the Thursday morning, the sultan Alp Arslan arrived and camped by the river,<sup>66</sup> accompanied by fifteen thousand horsemen from amongst the Turkish fighters who knew nothing but killing and subjugation, whilst the dog of Byzantium was encamped between Akhlat and Manzikert at a place called al-Zuhra. With him were two hundred thousand horsemen, consisting of those with dark (*mudlahimma*) hearts and gloomy (*mukfahirra*) faces. Between the two armies was a [distance of a] *farsakh* and between the place of *tawḥīd*<sup>67</sup> and that of the Trinity was [the space of] *barsakh*.<sup>68</sup>

Alp Arslan sent an envoy and gave him a question (*su'āl*) and a request (*su'l*);<sup>69</sup> his aim was to uncover their secret [plans], to find out their situation and to say to their king: 'If you wish for a truce, we will conclude it. And if you refuse it, we will put our trust in God with resolution and we will persist in it [the resolution].' He [Romanus] thought he [Alp Arslan] had sent him [the envoy] only out of weakness, so he [Romanus] refused, waxed proud, disagreed, acted in a hostile way and replied: 'I will accede to that opinion [*ra'y*] [only when I am] in al-Rayy.'<sup>70</sup> And he moved from the limits to the extremity of error. The sultan became angry, the parleying between them was stopped and [their] connection was cut off. They remained on the Thursday with the two armies making preparations (*yulabbiyān*) and complying (*yu'abbiyān*) with the call of fate. The sun was complaining

of the heat from the sighs of resentments rising up to it (*tuṣā'id*); it was as if its rays were blood which it had spilled into the horizons and they [the rays] were the stabbings of those lances (*ṣi'ād*), vanguards (*al-ṭalā'i'*) on high places (*al-maṭāli'*) and death (*al-manāyā'*<sup>71</sup>) on the mountain passes (*al-thanāyā*). The sultanal resolve was firmly fixed on the encounter and steadily placed on the advance.

His *faqīh* and *imām* Abu Nasr Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Bukhari al-Hanafi<sup>72</sup> said to him: 'You are fighting on behalf of the religion of God who has promised His victory, so meet them [the Byzantines] on Friday afternoon while the people are praying for you on the pulpits.' When they got up on the Friday, the earth was convulsed<sup>73</sup> with violent uproar (*al-dajjāj*) and the sky with clamouring (*al-'ajjāj*). Middle-aged war<sup>74</sup> was impregnated by virile swords (*al-muhannada al-dhukūr*) and free-roaming stallions (*al-musawwama'*<sup>75</sup> *al-fuhūl*) and armed defenders fought to the death and swarmed round vengeance (*al-kumāt al-ḥumāt yaḥmūna ḥimā al-ḥimām wa-yaḥmūna ḥawl al-dhukhūl*<sup>76</sup>). Vanguards met vanguards and cutting swords were struck by cutting swords. Arrow points sang and spears danced. Spears became twisted (*mālat*), horsemen orbited (*jālat*), the cups [of death<sup>77</sup>] circulated (*dārat*) and heads flew (*ṭārat*). Young men did not cease to rush in different directions (*tajūru*) and to roam around (*tajūlu*) and spears to hit the mark (*taṣūbu*) and to attack (*taṣūlu*) until the sunset came (*danā waqt al-zawāl*) and hatred of battle yielded to love of religion (*danā li-miqat al-dīn maqt al-nizāl*). The poles of the pulpits sang [with the sermons of] the preachers and in sincerity of prayer the intentions of the people of Friday came true for the *jihād* warriors.

Alp Arslan dismounted from his horse and he tied its belt to the girths and he made firm its saddle and bridle. Then he mounted his charger (*rakiba jawādahu*), he made his heart firm (*thabbata fu'ādahu*) and he strengthened his spirit (*qawwā qalbahu*<sup>78</sup>). He arranged his centre [of the army] and he divided his associates into four divisions, with each division of them being in an ambush. He moved forward (*rāḥa*), having safe protection from the 'trustworthy spirit' (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*) (i.e. Gabriel<sup>79</sup>). When he found out that the ambush (*al-kamīn*) was firm (*makīn*) and that what was hidden (*al-damīr*) was a guaranteed witness (*damīn*) of what it would see of victory, he met the heat of war (*ḥarr al-ḥarb*) full on (*bi-wahjihi al-ḥurr*<sup>80</sup>) and he found the taste of the thrusting (*ta'm al-ṭā'n*) [of lances] and the striking of blows delightful.<sup>81</sup> The petty princeling of Byzantium attacked with his troops and he snatched [his pre-ordained] fate<sup>82</sup> and he approached

like flowing [water] seeking a resting place and night robbing day.<sup>83</sup> The horsemen of Islam held firm (*thabitat*), then they jumped (*wathabat*) and roamed freely (*jālat*) and they were not afraid (*wajalat*) and they dragged the Byzantines until the ambush was behind them and death stood in front of them. Then those behind them and those possessed of intrepidity (*iqdām*) in front of them (*quddāmihā*) came out and the fire of swords<sup>84</sup> struck those allied to their chiefs.<sup>85</sup> They approached their undoing, and an irreparable loss was inflicted on them. One group did not stand firm for fighting and did not remain steadfast. Another group did stand firm and was killed in captivity. Not one from among those thousands escaped and nobody from among the enemies of Islam was safe. The king was seized (*mulika al-malik*), he was shackled (*quyyida*) and was pushed along (*qīda*) in a battered state (*waqīdh*) and he was taken captive and no helper or protector was found for him.<sup>86</sup> The Muslims were hard on their [the Byzantines'] heels<sup>87</sup> and ones [of the Muslims] killed thousands of them [the Byzantines] (*rakiba al-muslimūn aktāfahum wa-qatala al-aḥād alāfahum*). The earth was purified (*tuhirat*) of their uncleanness (*bi-khubathihim*) and was carpeted (*furishat*) with their corpses (*bi-juthathihim*) and the lowlands became decked (*akamm*) with the severed members of those killed, and the naked deserts became fleshed out (*ajamm*)<sup>88</sup> with broken lances.

There were with the Byzantines three thousand carts transporting loads (*al-aḥmāl*) and carrying (*taḥmilu*) weights (*al-athqāl*), and amongst the mangonels which they carried was a mangonel which was the greatest and heaviest of them. It had eight beams, [whose ropes] were pulled by one thousand two hundred men, and it was carried by a hundred carts and it threw stones<sup>89</sup> the weight of which, on the standard of<sup>90</sup> the great Akhlati *raṭl*, was a *qintār*.<sup>91</sup> It was as if it was a mountain forced to fly<sup>92</sup> in the air. Killing and captivity encompassed them. Their possessions remained outdoors, abandoned and unwanted, displayed but unsold. The values of riding animals, beasts, weapons and commodities fell until twelve helmets were sold for a sixth of a *dīnār*, and three<sup>93</sup> coats of mail for a *dīnār*. Amongst the amazing things that were related about the king being taken prisoner was that Sa'd al-Dawla Gawhara'in had a *mamlūk* whom he gave to Nizam al-Mulk as a present. He [Nizam al-Mulk] sent him back and did not look at him. He [Gawhara'in] tried to arouse his [Nizam al-Mulk's] interest in him [the *mamlūk*], so Nizam al-Mulk said: 'What can be expected from him? Perhaps he will bring us the king of Byzantium as a prisoner!' He mentioned that out of scorn for him,

deeming him to be of little value<sup>94</sup> and looking down on his condition. And it happened that the petty prince of Byzantium fell into the captivity of that slave on the day of the battle and made the saying of Nizam al-Mulk come true. The sultan put a ceremonial garment on him and said: 'Suggest what I can give you by way of a present' and he asked for the gift<sup>95</sup> of Ghazna.

The sultan entered Azarbayjan with pomp and ceremony, while the king was in his fetters (*qaydihī*) and in his snare (*ṣaydihī*)<sup>96</sup>. He was sorry for what he had done and was the prisoner of his own ignorance and 'the evil plot encloseth but the men who make it',<sup>97</sup> for he had gone out intending to conquer the world and to destroy the [true] religion and to overcome sultans (*al-salātīn*) and to give help to devils (*al-shayātīn*). Then he was humbled after greatness and he became contemptible and everything he held dear was exposed to degradation. Then the sultan softened towards him and summoned him to his presence. He said: 'Tell me truthfully about your intention and about what you would have decided [to do] if you had been victorious.' He [Romanus] said: 'I was thinking that I would imprison those of you whom I took captive with the dogs and that I would place them amongst the captives and the booty; if I took you prisoner (*ma'sūran*), I would prepare – and my tyranny would become worse – a [dog's] collar (*sajūran*) for you.' So the sultan said: 'I have discovered the secret of your bad intention, so what shall we do with you now? We will not be satisfied with what you intended to do to us.' So he [Romanus] said: 'Look at the consequence (*'āqiba*) of the evil of my intention and give the punishment (*'uqūba*) which my sin has brought on me.' Alp Arslan's heart softened towards him and so he sent for him (*arsalahu*)<sup>98</sup> and undid his shackles and bonds. He liberated him and freed him hastily (*mu'ajjilan*) and released him respectfully (*mubajjilan*). When the king Romanus went away in friendly fashion, his people accused his name, they obliterated his trace from the kingdom and they said: 'This is one who is falling (*sāqit*) from the ranks of kings' and they alleged that the Messiah was annoyed (*sākhiṭ*) with him.

### *Commentary on the text*

This is a very long account notable for its linguistic virtuosity. Indeed, it is an extraordinary tour de force even in al-Bundari's summary of the original. Zakkar attributes the authorship of it squarely to 'Imad al-Din rather than al-Bundari and that is quite clear from reading the manuscript of the latter's work. The narrative contains more detailed

information about the mixed nature of Romanus' troops; as well as Georgians, Armenians and Franks (western Europeans), it is significant to note that the army contained a variety of Turkish contingents – Rus, Ghuzz, Khazars and Qipchaks. However, al-Bundari does not mention any defection of these troops to Alp Arslan's side during the battle.

### **The account of Ibn al-Athir (d. 630/1233) in *Al-Kāmil fī'l ta'rīkh***

#### *Introduction to the text*

Ibn al-Athir is regarded by many as the doyen of medieval Muslim historians. The *Kāmil* is a universal history arranged annalistically and it is the key Arabic chronicle for the history of the Seljuqs. He writes a continuous narrative, seamlessly including information from other sources which he rarely cites.<sup>99</sup>

#### *Translation of the text*

In this year Romanus the king of Byzantium went out with two hundred thousand [men] consisting of Byzantines, Franks, Arabs,<sup>100</sup> Rus, Pechenegs, Georgians and others from [different] groups of that country. They came with much pomp and in great display. He [Romanus] made for the lands of Islam and arrived in Manzikert, which is one of the districts of Akhlat. The news reached the sultan Alp Arslan while he was in the city of Khoy in Azarbayjan, having returned from Aleppo. He heard about what the king of Byzantium had with him in the way of numerous forces and he [Alp Arslan] could not collect troops because they were far away and the enemy was near at hand. So he sent the heavy goods with his wife and Nizam al-Mulk to Hamadhan. He himself marched with what troops he had with him; they were fifteen thousand horsemen. He pressed on with the march. He said to them: 'Indeed, I am fighting in expectation of divine reward and with endurance. If I am spared, then it is a favour from God Almighty, and if it is martyrdom, then my son Malikshah is my heir,' and off they marched.

When he came near to the enemy, he set up an advance party against<sup>101</sup> him [Romanus]. His advance party happened to meet the commander of the Rus with around ten thousand Byzantines near Akhlat and they engaged in fighting. The Rus were routed and their

commander was taken prisoner and taken to the sultan. He [Alp Arslan] cut off his [the commander's] nose and he was sent with the booty to Nizam al-Mulk and he [Alp Arslan] ordered him [Nizam al-Mulk] to send him to Baghdad. When the two armies came close to each other, the sultan sent a message to the king of Byzantium asking for a truce from him. He [Romanus] said: 'There is no truce except in Rayy,' and the sultan was angry at that. His *imām* and *faqīh*, Abu Nasr Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Bukhari al-Hanafi, said to him: 'You are fighting on behalf of a religion to which God has promised His help and His making it triumphant over other religions. I hope that Almighty God will have written this victory in your name.'<sup>102</sup> So meet them on Friday in the afternoon at the hour when the preachers will be in the pulpits, for they will be praying for victory for the *jihād* warriors, and prayer is linked to a [favourable] answer.'<sup>103</sup>

When it was that hour, he prayed with them. The sultan wept and the people wept at his weeping. He cried out [to God] and they cried out [to God] and he said to them: 'He who wants to leave, then let him leave. Here is not a sultan who is ordering and forbidding.' He threw down the bow and the arrows and took up the sword and the mace and he tied the tail of his horse with his [own] hand. His army did likewise. He put on white clothing, anointed himself and said: 'If I am killed, this is my shroud'.<sup>104</sup>

He advanced towards the Byzantines and they advanced towards him. When he drew close to them, he dismounted, rubbed his face in the dust, wept and said many prayers. Then he mounted and attacked and the troops attacked with him. The Muslims reached their centre and the dust created a barrier between them. The Muslims killed amongst them as they wished and God sent down His victory on them. The Byzantines fled and an innumerable quantity of them were killed, to such an extent that the ground was filled with the corpses of those killed. The king of Byzantium was taken prisoner. One of the slaves of Gawhara'in took him prisoner. He wanted to kill him, not having recognised him, so a servant with the king said to him: 'Do not kill him, for he is the king.'

This slave had been offered to Nizam al-Mulk by Gawhara'in and he [Nizam al-Mulk] handed him back, regarding him as puny. Gawhara'in praised him [the slave], so Nizam al-Mulk said: 'Perhaps he will bring us the king of Byzantium as a prisoner,' and it happened just like that.

When the slave had taken the king prisoner, he brought him to Gawhara'in who went to the sultan and told him that the king had been

taken prisoner. He [Alp Arslan] gave orders for him [Romanus] to be brought in. When he was brought in, the sultan Alp Arslan struck him three whip blows with his [own] hand and said to him: 'Did I not send a message to you about a truce and you refused?' So he [Romanus] said: 'Stop rebuking me and do what you want.' The sultan said: 'What had you resolved to do with me, if you had taken me prisoner?' He [Romanus] said: 'The worst.' He [Alp Arslan] said to him: 'What do you think I will do with you?' He [Romanus] said: 'Either you will kill me, or you will parade me in the lands of Islam, and the other is [a] remote [possibility]; that is pardon, the accepting of money and making me a deputy on your behalf.' He [Alp Arslan] said: 'I had only resolved on that.'

So he [Alp Arslan] ransomed him [Romanus] for a million and a half *dīnārs* and on [the basis] that he would send him troops of Byzantium whenever he asked for them and that he would release every [Muslim] prisoner in the lands of Byzantium. The matter was settled on that [basis] and he accommodated him in a tent and sent him ten thousand *dīnārs* with which to equip himself. He released for him a group of commanders and the following day he put a robe of honour on him. The king of Byzantium said: 'Where is the direction of the caliph?' He was shown it. He stood up and uncovered his head and bowed down to the ground in submission. The sultan made a treaty with him for fifty years and sent him back to his country. He sent with him a contingent to go with him to his destination,<sup>105</sup> and the sultan accompanied him for a *farsakh*.

As for the Byzantines, when they heard the news of the battle, Michael<sup>106</sup> seized the kingdom and took possession of the lands. When Romanus the king reached the citadel of Duqiyya,<sup>107</sup> the news reached him. He put on woollen garments<sup>108</sup> and adopted the way of asceticism. He sent a message to Michael informing him of what had been established with the sultan and he said: 'If you wish to do what has been established, [do so], and if you want, hold back.' Michael replied to him that he preferred what had been established. So he [Michael] asked him [Romanus] to act as intermediary for him and to petition the sultan about that [matter].

Romanus assembled what wealth he had – which was two hundred thousand *dīnārs* – and he sent it to the sultan, together with a gold dish with jewels on it [to the value of] of ninety thousand *dīnārs*. He swore to him that that was all he could do.<sup>109</sup> Then Romanus conquered the districts and territories of Armenia. The poets wrote panegyrics to the sultan and they mentioned this victory and expatiated [on it].

*Commentary on the text*

In comparison with some of the other narratives so far encountered, this account comes across as authoritative and confident; it does not waste words but it includes the major elements of the story. Its style is unadorned and clear. It is obvious that Ibn al-Athir has drawn heavily on the Manzikert account of Ibn al-Jawzi, whose words he sometimes quotes verbatim. A number of the fanciful folkloric aspects of the tale have been excluded, but an underlying pietistic tone, although relatively subdued, is still evident.

**The account of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi (d. 654/1256), *Miʿrāt al-zamān fī taʾrīkh al-aʿyān***

*Introduction to the text*

This Ayyubid historian, the grandson of the famous Baghdad Hanbalite scholar Ibn al-Jawzi on his mother's side, also lived in the caliphal capital but he moved to Damascus and worked for a number of Ayyubid rulers there. His long universal history is still a largely unexploited source for the history of the Seljuqs and is especially valuable for the eleventh century, as he cites, at length but uncritically, sources such as the lost history of the Baghdad historian, Hilal al-Sabi', and the work of the latter's son Ghars al-Ni'ma, entitled '*Uyūn al-tawārīkh*'. Ghars al-Ni'ma was an important figure in Baghdad government circles and was close to the caliph.<sup>110</sup> Drawing on that source, Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi gives a very full account of the battle of Manzikert.<sup>111</sup>

*Translation of the text*

In it [the year 463] was the great battle between Alp Arslan and the king of Byzantium.<sup>112</sup>

The sultan became displeased with staying in Aleppo, so he turned to go back [to Iran] and crossed the Euphrates. The riding animals and camels perished,<sup>113</sup> his crossing was like [that of] the fugitive and he did not pay attention to those people and riding animals that had perished. The envoy of Byzantium returned rejoicing to his master and that strengthened the resolve of the king of Byzantium to pursue him and to fight him.<sup>114</sup>

The news of the king of Byzantium came to him [Alp Arslan] that he [Romanus] had equipped himself with numerous troops and that he



was aiming at the lands of Islam. The sultan was with a small number of troops because they [his army] had returned in fright from Syria and that flight had destroyed their possessions and their riding animals. So they made for their home bases and the sultan remained with four thousand *ghulāms*. He did not think it wise to return to collect troops, for that would be [an admission of] defeat for him.<sup>115</sup> So he despatched the Khatun al-Safariyya<sup>116</sup> with Nizam al-Mulk and the heavy baggage to Hamadhan and he ordered him to collect troops and to send them to him. He said to the commanders of his troops who remained with him: 'I am standing fast in the way of those who expect a divine reward and I am entering this *ghazā* as one who risks dangers. If God grants me victory, that is my belief in Almighty God, and if it is the other [i.e. death], I swear to you that you should listen to my son Malikshah, obey him and establish him in my place.' So they said: 'We hear and obey.'<sup>117</sup>

A detachment<sup>118</sup> remained with the troops which we have mentioned. Each *ghulām* had a horse to ride and another to go by his side. He [Alp Arslan] set out making for the king of Byzantium. He sent one of the chamberlains who were with him with a group of *ghulāms* as an advance party for him. He [the chamberlain] chanced upon a cross brought by a commander belonging to the Byzantines with ten thousand [men]. He [the Muslim chamberlain] engaged in fighting them, was victorious over them and took the commander captive.<sup>119</sup> He [the chamberlain] took the cross and sent it to the sultan. He [Alp Arslan] rejoiced and said: 'This is a sign of victory.' He [Alp Arslan] sent the cross to Hamadhan and cut off the commander's nose. Then he ordered that he should be taken to the caliph.

The king of Byzantium came to Manzikert and took it on the promise of safe-conduct and he went in the direction of the sultan in a place called al-Rahwa between Akhlat and Manzikert with five days remaining of Dhu'l-Qa'da.<sup>120</sup> The sultan sent a message to him [saying that] he should return to his country and that he should conclude the peace [treaty] which the caliph had brokered. So he [Romanus] said: 'I will not go back until I have done with the lands of Islam the likes of what was done with the lands of Byzantium. I have spent a lot of money, so how can I go back?'

It was Wednesday and the sultan remained until the Friday and at the time of the prayer he assembled his companions and said: 'How long shall we be in the minority and they will be in the majority? I want to throw myself onto them at this hour when all the Muslims are praying for us on the pulpits. If we are given victory over them, [well

and good]. If not, we will go as martyrs to the Garden.<sup>121</sup> Here today is not a sultan; I am only one of you. We have [already] won many victories for the Muslims [but] they were of no avail [in comparison with our task today].<sup>122</sup> They said: ‘O sultan! We are your servants and whatever you do we will follow you.’

He had assembled to himself ten thousand Kurds<sup>123</sup> and his only support after Almighty God was the four thousand who were with him, whilst the king of Byzantium was with one hundred thousand fighters, one hundred thousand sappers, one hundred thousand arbaletists,<sup>124</sup> one hundred thousand workmen, and four hundred carts drawn by eight hundred water buffaloes on which were horseshoes and nails and two thousand carts on which were weapons, mangonels and instruments of combat. There were in his army five thousand commanders<sup>125</sup> and with him was a mangonel pulled by one thousand, two hundred men. The weight of its stone was ten *qintārs*<sup>126</sup> and each of its rings was two hundred *ratls* by the Syrian [measure]. In his treasury<sup>127</sup> was a million *dīnārs*, a hundred thousand silk garments<sup>128</sup> and a similar number of gold saddles, belts and gold jewellery. He had divided up the [Muslim] lands as fiefs<sup>129</sup> to his commanders – Egypt, Syria, Khurasan, Rayy and Iraq. He made an exception of Baghdad and he said: ‘Do not attack that upright *shaykh*, for he is our friend,’ meaning the caliph. It was his decision to winter in Iraq and to spend the summer in western Persia.<sup>130</sup> He had left a deputy in Constantinople to take his place and he had resolved to destroy the lands of Islam.

When it was Friday, the time of prayer, the sultan, having consulted his companions, stood up, threw down the bow and arrow from his hand, tied the tail of his horse with his [own] hand and took up the mace. His companions did likewise. They fell upon the Byzantines, they shouted with one voice at which the mountains trembled,<sup>131</sup> and they pronounced the *takbīr*.<sup>132</sup> They went into the centre of the Byzantines and fought them. The king had not remained on his horse and he did not think that they would advance on him [but] God gave the Muslims victory over them<sup>133</sup>. They fled and the sultan pursued them for the rest of the day of Friday and the night of Saturday,<sup>134</sup> killing and taking prisoners, and only a few of them escaped. They plundered everything they [the Byzantines] had with them and the sultan returned to his place [i.e. camp].

Gawhara’in came into him and said: ‘One of my *ghulāms* has taken the king of Byzantium prisoner. It was this *ghulām* of mine who was offered to Nizam al-Mulk. He scoffed at him and cast him aside. He [Nizam al-Mulk] spoke to him [Gawhara’in] about him [the slave]

and he [Nizam al-Mulk] said mockingly: "Perhaps he will bring us the king of Byzantium as a prisoner." So God Most High brought that to pass by his [the slave's] hand.' At that the sultan withdrew and despatched a slave of his called Shadhi through whom he had sent messages to him [Romanus]. When he [Shadhi] saw him [Romanus] he recognised him, returned and informed the sultan. He [Alp Arslan] ordered that he (Romanus) should be lodged in a tent and looked after in it.

He [Alp Arslan] summoned the *ghulam* and asked him: 'How did you take him prisoner?' He [the *ghulam*] said: 'I saw a horseman with crosses [held] over his head and around him were a group of *Saqāliba*<sup>135</sup> slaves. I launched an attack on him in order to stab him. One of them [the slaves] said to me: "Do not do [that] because this is the king."' The sultan was gracious to him [the slave], put a ceremonial robe of honour on him and made him one of his personal entourage. He [the slave] said: 'I want Ghazna as a present.' So he [Alp Arslan] gave it to him.

Then the sultan summoned the king, whose name was Romanus, and he struck him three times, kicked him with his foot, upbraided him and said: 'Did I not send you the envoys of the caliph (may God prolong his remaining) about the concluding of the treaty, and you refused? Did I not send you messages with Afshin,<sup>136</sup> asking for my enemies and you refused them [to hand them over]?<sup>137</sup> Did you not act treacherously towards me when you had sworn oaths to me? Did I not send you a message yesterday asking you to go back and you said: "I have spent money and I have collected many troops until I came here and achieved what I wanted". So how can I go back until I have done with the lands of the Muslims what they have done with my country? I have [now] seen the effect of rebellion.'<sup>138</sup> He [Alp Arslan] had put two fetters on his [Romanus'] feet and an iron collar round his neck and he [Romanus] said: 'O sultan! I have assembled troops of all sorts and I have spent money in order to take your lands, and the victory was only yours. My country and my position in this condition are in your hands after that. So stop abusing and reproaching me and do what you want.' The sultan said to him: 'If the victory were yours, what would you have done with me?' He [Romanus] said: 'The worst!' So he [Alp Arslan] said: 'Ah! By God, he has spoken the truth! If he had spoken otherwise, he would be lying. This is an intelligent, tough man. It is not permissible that he should be killed.' Then he [Alp Arslan] said to him [Romanus]: 'What do you think now that I should do with you?' He [Romanus] said: 'One of three options. As for the first, it is

killing me. The second is making a public spectacle of me in your country which I spoke about attacking. As for the third, there is no benefit in mentioning it, for you will not do it.' He [Alp Arslan] said 'What is it?' He [Romanus] said: 'Pardoning me, accepting money and the treaty, dealing kindly with me, handing me back to my kingdom as a *mamlūk* of yours and of some of your commanders and being your deputy in Byzantium, for your killing me will not be of any use to you. They will appoint [as king] somebody other than me.' The sultan said: 'I only intended to pardon you, so name your price.'<sup>139</sup> He [Romanus] said: 'The sultan should say what he wants.' So he [Alp Arslan] said 'Ten million *dīnārs*.'<sup>140</sup> He [Romanus] said: 'You would deserve the kingdom of Byzantium if you gave me back my life. But since I was appointed over them I have spent the wealth of Byzantium and used it up in sending troops and [fighting] wars and I have made the people poor.'

The conversation kept on going to and fro until the matter was settled on [the basis of] one and a half million *dīnārs* and, in the treaty, on the basis of three hundred and sixty thousand *dīnārs* each year, and [on condition] that he [Romanus] would send from the troops of Byzantium what need called for, and he [Romanus] mentioned [other] things. He said: 'If you grant me my liberty quickly before Byzantium appoints a king other than me and our intentions<sup>141</sup> fail and I cannot go to them, [then] nothing of what you have stipulated as conditions on me will come to pass.' So the sultan said: 'I want you to hand back Antioch, Edessa, Manbij and Manzikert, for they were taken from the Muslims recently, and [I want you] to release the Muslim prisoners.' He [Romanus] said: 'As for the lands, if I arrive safely in my country I will send troops to them [the people in those cities], I will lay siege to them [the cities] and I will take them [the cities] from them [the Byzantine governors] and I will hand them over to you. As for the people, they will not do as I say. As for the Muslim prisoners, agreed.'<sup>142</sup> When I come I will release them and treat them well.' So the sultan gave orders that his fetters and collar should be undone. Then he said: 'Give him a cup to drink from.' He [Romanus] thought it was for him and he wanted to drink it. He was prevented [from doing so] and was ordered to serve the sultan and hand him the cup. So he bent and kissed the ground, handed the sultan the cup and he drank it. He [Alp Arslan] cut off his [Romanus'] hair and placed his [Romanus'] face on the ground and said: 'If you serve kings, do such and such.' The sultan only did this because of an obligation of his, namely that when the sultan had been in Rayy and decided to raid Byzantium, he said to

Faramarz b. Kakuya:<sup>143</sup> ‘Here I am, going off to fight the king of Byzantium, and I will take him prisoner and I will make him stand as a cupbearer at my head.’ So God brought his saying to pass.

He [Alp Arslan] sold a group of [Byzantine] commanders and he gave others away. The next day the sultan summoned him [Romanus] to his presence; a throne and his seat of honour which had been taken from him had been set up for him, and he sat him on it and he placed on him<sup>144</sup> his outer garment<sup>145</sup> and his hat and he dressed him in them with his own hand, saying: ‘I have treated you well and I am satisfied with your loyalty. I am sending you to your country and returning you to your kingdom.’ So he [Romanus] kissed the ground. When the caliph had sent Ibn al-Muhallaban<sup>146</sup> to him [Romanus], he had ordered him [Ibn al-Muhallaban] to uncover his head, to tighten his belt and to kiss the ground in front of him. So the sultan said to him: ‘Did you not do such and such with Ibn al-Muhallaban, the caliph’s envoy? So stand now, uncover your head, tighten your belt, bend down in the direction of the caliph and kiss the ground,’ so he did so and the sultan said: ‘If you were I, and I were the least of the kings under obedience to him [the caliph], I would have done with you what I have done. I am with a small troop of my army and you have assembled the [whole] religion of Christianity, so how would it have been if the caliph had written to the kings of the earth giving them an order concerning you?’

The sultan raised a flag for him. On it was written: ‘There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Prophet of God’. He [Alp Arslan] sent with him [Romanus] two chamberlains and one hundred *ghulāms* and they brought him to Constantinople. He [Alp Arslan] rode with him and accompanied him for the distance<sup>147</sup> of a *farsakh*. He swore before him and embraced him, they hugged each other and the sultan left him.

Then the Byzantine emperor related<sup>148</sup> the following: ‘The custom is current that a king going out of Constantinople, if he wants to go to war, enters the big church<sup>149</sup> [and] prays there through the intercession of a golden cross, studded with rubies.<sup>150</sup> I entered the church because of this campaign on which I was resolved and I prayed to it. And there was the cross which had fallen from its position in the direction of the Islamic *qibla*. I was amazed at that and I re-arranged it towards the east. The following day I came to it and there it was inclining towards the *qibla*. So I ordered it to be bound in chains. Then I entered on the third day and there it was inclined towards the *qibla*. I saw [this] as an evil omen and I realised that I would be defeated. Then passion and greed overcame me, I went to the lands of Islam and there befell me what befell me.’

Abu Ya'la b. al-Qalanisi<sup>151</sup> said: 'The army of the lord of Byzantium was six hundred thousand, consisting of Byzantines and [troops] from the rest of the areas, and the army of the sultan was four thousand warriors, consisting of Turks and [troops] from the rest of the areas. He who mentioned that there were four thousand *mamlūks* with the sultan was more correct, because of what we have mentioned about the troops having dispersed.'

Then the sultan wrote to the caliph to explain what had happened and he sent the turban<sup>152</sup> of the king of Byzantium and the cross and what had been taken from the Byzantines and that was on 23 Dhu'l-Hijja.<sup>153</sup> The letters were read out in the audience hall<sup>154</sup> and the caliph and the Muslims rejoiced. Baghdad was decorated in an unprecedented fashion and domes were erected.<sup>155</sup> It was a great victory the like of which Islam had not seen before.

The sultan returned to Rayy and Hamadhan.

### *Commentary on the text*

In this source there is a great deal of background information on Alp Arslan's activities in the build-up to the battle itself. There is also coverage after the account of the battle to do with Romanus' subsequent fate when he returned to Byzantium and he is shown as trying to adhere to the terms of the treaty.

Of particular value is the detailed description given by Sibṭ al-Jawzi of the impedimenta of the Byzantine army at Manzikert, mentioning buffalo-drawn carts carrying nails, horse shoes, weapons and other instruments of war. Romanus also had with him saddles, belts, jewellery and large sums of money. This account may at first perhaps seem fanciful, but the details given accord with the requirements laid down by Leo the Wise in his manual of war several centuries earlier,<sup>156</sup> and are corroborated by the western medieval source William of Apulia, who mentions that there were precious textiles, gold and silver vases and money in the Byzantine camp.<sup>157</sup>

Much is made here of the personal generosity of Alp Arslan towards Romanus but at the same time details of the emperor's public humiliation are also mentioned; Alp Arslan cuts Romanus' hair – the symbol of his manly strength. It is noteworthy that the lustre pottery of the Seljuq period demonstrates well enough the contemporary fashion for very long hair. Moreover, in Byzantine paintings a standard feature was for the emperors to have shoulder-length hair.<sup>158</sup> The public ceremonies of drink-giving and obeisance also have symbolic

meaning, underlining the shaming of Romanus the emperor, who is given the role of servant in this spectacle (pl. 7).

### **The account of Ibn al-‘Adim (d. 660/1262) in *Zubdat al-ṭalab fī ta’rīkh Ḥalab*<sup>159</sup>**

#### *Introduction to the text*

This city chronicle gives a clear exposition of events from the viewpoint of Aleppo. The author, who belonged to an elite family in the city, held several important government posts there, including scribe, judge, and chief minister to two Ayyubid rulers.

#### *Translation of the text*

It was reported that he [Alp Arslan] left his son as his deputy with a detachment of his troops in the district of Aleppo while he made for the king of Byzantium. He hastened his step because he had heard that the king of Byzantium had gone out with innumerable forces and that he had reached Qaliqala – which is Arzan al-Rum.<sup>160</sup> So the sultan came to Azarbayjan when he heard that the king of Byzantium had taken the road to Akhlat.<sup>161</sup> The sultan was with the elite of his army and the [main] contingents of his troops were far from him and he did not consider it wise to return to his own country. He sent his vizier Nizam al-Mulk and his wife, the Khatun,<sup>162</sup> to Tabriz with his heavy baggage. He remained with fifteen thousand horsemen from the pick of his troops, each one with his horse and his side-horse, whilst the Byzantines numbered around three hundred thousand or more horsemen and foot-soldiers, from various contingents of Byzantines, Rus, Khazars, Alans, Ghuzz, Qipchak, Georgians, Abkhaz, Franks and Armenians. Amongst them were five thousand arbaletists,<sup>163</sup> and amongst them were thirty thousand commanders, consisting of dukes, counts and patriarchs.<sup>164</sup>

The sultan saw that allowing time to mobilise and to assemble troops would be harmful. So he rode with his elite troops and said: ‘I myself am expecting a reward with God: it will either be happiness in martyrdom or victory. “Verily God will help him who helps Him”’.<sup>165</sup> Then he proceeded to line up his army and to head for the troops of Byzantium. The king of Byzantium had sent in advance a commander with twenty thousand stalwarts in armour from his troops and with him [was] their biggest cross.<sup>166</sup> He came to Akhlat and plundered and

took prisoners. The troops of Akhlat went out against him, together with Sandak<sup>167</sup> al-Turki, who had gone to the city of Aleppo in the year 462,<sup>168</sup> as we have already mentioned. Sandak defeated him [the Byzantine commander] and took him prisoner. That coincided with the arrival of the sultan and he [Alp Arslan] ordered that his nose should be cut off.

Alp Arslan hastened the despatch to Nizam al-Mulk of the cross<sup>169</sup> which was in Sandak's retinue and he ordered Sandak to send it to the 'House of Peace',<sup>170</sup> announcing the good news of victory. The army of Byzantium caught up [with the advance guard] and they encamped at Akhlat, besieging it. The king attacked Manzikert and they handed it over to him on terms of peace, out of fear of the [unbridled] violence<sup>171</sup> which his armies would inflict if they were victorious over them; that was on Tuesday 4 Dhu'l-Qa'da 463.<sup>172</sup>

On the Wednesday Romanus sent out the inhabitants of Manzikert and he himself went out to accompany them, with his contingent and troops. That coincided with the arrival of the sultan's army. Close fighting<sup>173</sup> broke out and the Muslims attacked as one man, and they drove them back the way they had come.<sup>174</sup> The people of Manzikert began to escape from them, so the Byzantines killed some of them and the remainder escaped.

The Byzantines left the route that they had been taking. Their king came back and encamped with his tents between Akhlat and Manzikert, and they spent their night in the greatest and most extreme agitation. When they got up on the Thursday morning, the sultan Alp Arslan arrived with the remainder of his troops and encamped by the river, while the king of Byzantium was at a place called al-Rahwa with two hundred thousand horsemen while the sultan had fifteen thousand. The sultan sent an envoy charging him with a question and an entreaty. His aim was to discover their [military] condition, to find out about their situation and to say to the king of Byzantium: 'If you want a truce, we will conclude it, and if you refuse that, we will entrust the matter to God, may He be praised and glorified.'

The Byzantine thought that he [Alp Arslan] had sent him [the envoy] only out of necessity, so he [Romanus] refused, waxed proud and replied: 'I shall respond to this proposal [*ra'y*] in Rayy.'<sup>175</sup> His answer enraged the sultan and correspondence between the two of them was broken off.

The two sides spent the Thursday setting up the battlelines. Abu Nasr Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Bukhari, the sultan's *faqih* and *imām*, said; 'You are fighting on the basis of the religion of God Who



has promised His victory over [other] religions. So meet them on Friday in the afternoon while the people are praying for you on the pulpits in [all] the regions of the earth.

So when they got up on the Friday, the sultan mounted [his horse] with his contingents and the Byzantines mounted [theirs] and they stood in battle line. When the time of the afternoon [prayer] drew nigh, the sultan got down from his horse, tightened its girth and abased himself in prayers to Almighty God. Then he mounted his horse and divided up his men, with each division setting an ambush. Then he went out to offer battle personally. The king of Byzantium attacked with his contingents. The Muslims simulated flight and they drew the Byzantines on until the ambush was behind them. Then [those in] the ambush came out from behind them and the Muslims [also] renewed their attack from in front of them. So God sent down His victory. The Byzantines were defeated and the king was taken prisoner. The Muslims took possession of their troops and they gained as booty what could not be numbered or counted as regards provisions and equipment. The king was led captive into the sultan's presence and the latter placed him in front of himself; with him [the sultan] was a falcon and a hunting dog.<sup>176</sup>

With the Byzantines were three thousand carts carrying the heavy baggage and the mangonels. Amongst them was a mangonel with eight beams;<sup>177</sup> it was carried by a hundred carts. One thousand two hundred men were pulling [the ropes] on it.<sup>178</sup> The weight of its stone in great *ratls* was a *qinṭār*. And the army carried what they could of their possessions. The value of the baggage and weapons went down to such extent that twelve helmets were sold for a sixth of a *dīnār*.<sup>179</sup> Of the Byzantine army no one survived except the contingent which was besieging Akhlat. When the news of the defeat reached them, they left the town in terror. The Muslims pursued them and they destroyed their flanks and dispersed their ranks<sup>180</sup> (pl. 5).

An amazing coincidence is the following story: Sa'd al-Dawla Gawhara'in had a *mamlūk* whom he offered as a gift to Nizam al-Mulk. Nizam al-Mulk handed him back. So he [Gawhara'in] began to sing his [the slave's] praises to him [Nizam al-Mulk]<sup>181</sup> and Nizam al-Mulk said, mocking him: 'What can possibly come from this *mamlūk*? Will he bring us the king of Byzantium as a prisoner?' Then he [Nizam al-Mulk]<sup>182</sup> forgot about this until he was involved in this incident<sup>183</sup> and the king of Byzantium did fall into the hands of that *ghulām*.<sup>184</sup> The sultan put a ceremonial robe on him [the slave], went to extremes to honour him and he appointed him [Nizam al-Mulk] to

decide on what he [the *ghulām*] had requested and had suggested [as a reward]. He [the *ghulām*] asked for Ghazna as a reward and his name was written down for that.<sup>185</sup>

Then the sultan marched to Azarbayjan, with the king in chains, and the sultan summoned him to his presence and he asked him about the reason for his going out [of Constantinople] and for his exposing himself and his troops to that affair. He [Romanus] mentioned to him [Alp Arslan] that he had only wanted Aleppo and that [in] everything that had happened to him Mahmud was the reason and the motive for it.<sup>186</sup> Then he said: ‘Tell me truthfully about what you had decided to do if you had been victorious over me?’ And he [Romanus] said: ‘I would have put you with dogs with a leaden collar [round your neck]’. The sultan said: ‘What would you prefer to be done with you?’ He said: ‘Look at the consequence of the wrongness of my intention and choose for yourself.’ So the heart of the sultan softened towards him, he was gracious to him, set him free and treated him kindly. He put ceremonial robes on him after he had exacted conditions from him that he would not interfere in anything to do with the lands of Islam and that he would release all the Muslim prisoners. He sent him back to his own country and he despatched with him a contingent of the army to accompany him.

When Diogenes<sup>187</sup> [i.e. Romanus] arrived in Constantinople, they deposed him from the kingship, and what he wanted was not accomplished for him. It was said that he was blinded and that he died after a while. It has not been related that a king of Byzantium had ever been taken prisoner in Islam before that.

### *Commentary on the text*

Ibn al-‘Adim is the first account so far encountered which makes any attempt – and it is only a short one – to explain the military tactics used during the battle. Indeed, he makes a reference to the fabled Turkish tactic of simulated flight and then attack. He also lays emphasis on the disparate ethnic nature of the mercenary troops which made up Romanus’ army at Manzikert. These included a range of contingents of ethnically Turkish origin – Rus, Khazars, Ghuzz and Qipchak. Ibn al-‘Adim does not, however, elaborate on the possibility of defection by these troops to Alp Arslan’s side during the battle. This narrative also contains a few details not mentioned hitherto in the other accounts, such as the fact that the sultan had camped by the river and the description of the enormous mangonel.

This is also the first account to attempt an explanation for the Byzantine campaign – namely the actions of the Mirdasid ruler of Aleppo, Mahmud – even though that explanation is mentioned only in passing. It is not surprising that, as the city chronicler of Aleppo, Ibn al-‘Adim should have a different perspective from writers from other parts of the Muslim world. In his version of the dialogue between the victorious Alp Arslan and the captured and humiliated Romanus, the latter blames his interventions into Islamic territory on Mahmud. Presumably this is a reference to Mahmud’s marauding Turcoman troops raiding the Byzantine border areas round Antioch, activities which prompted Romanus’ first two campaigns eastwards. Romanus could scarcely have been pleased either to hear that Mahmud had moved over to the Sunni allegiance and the side of the rising power in the east, the Seljuq Turks. So, in the story of Ibn al-‘Adim, Romanus, his life in danger, and cornered by Alp Arslan, blames Mahmud.

## Notes

1. Rashid al-Din, Luther, 47.
2. Ed. M. Iqbal, Lahore, 1933; reprinted Beirut, 1984; Sümer and Sevim, *İslâm kaynaklarına*, 6–10; Zakkar, *Muhtārāt*, 130–3. It is disappointing that Zakkar, even though he is an experienced editor, omits the long, difficult passages of this text and opts instead for the bare bones of the narrative only. Cf. also Q. Ayaz, *An unexploited source for the history of the Saljuqs: a translation and critical commentary, unpublished Ph.D. thesis*, Edinburgh, 1985. For a translation of the section on Manzikert, cf. *ibid.*, 116–26. Cf. also the Russian translation by D. Bunyatov, Moscow, 1980, and the Turkish translation by N. Lugal, Ankara, 1943. Aspects of *Akbbār* are discussed by Cahen: cf. C. Cahen, ‘Historiography of the Seljuqid period’, in Lewis and Holt, eds, *Historians of the Middle East*, 69–72; *EI2* Supplement, s.v. al-Ḥusaynī (C. E. Bosworth). Ayaz discusses the authorship of this work in detail, *An unexploited source*, 3–15.
3. The author probably draws amongst other sources on the lost *Maliknāma*, believed to have been written for Alp Arslan, as well as on the extant work of ‘Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Nuṣrat al-fatra*, Paris Ms. (Arabic) 2145, ff. 32a–39a.
4. 1071.
5. Literally: ‘by the hooves of horses without boats and ships’. There is probably word play involving *sunbuk*, which means both ‘hoof’ and ‘boat’. Probably the second word used for ‘boats’ (*zawāriq*) denotes a river vessel such as the modern *quffa* used in Iraq.

6. Khawi (Khoy) – a town to the north-east of Salmas; cf. G. Le Strange, *The lands of the eastern caliphate*, repr. London, 1966, 166.
7. A town to the north-west of Lake Urmīyya in Azarbayjan; cf. *ibid.*
8. Literally: ‘struck his hearing’.
9. Literally: ‘to a man from amongst the sons of Christian kings’.
10. Literally: ‘pieces of its own liver’.
11. *awbāsh* – low people of different tribes; cf. Kazimirski, II, 476.
12. A Turkish tribal confederation in medieval central and western Eurasia; cf. *EI2* s.v. Pečenegs (P. B. Golden). For their skills as mounted archers, cf. Kaegi, ‘The contribution of archery’, 103.
13. Rhyming prose between *sawāʿidabā* (forearms) and *qawāʿidabā* (foundations)
14. *jathālīq* – Christian priest; cf. Steingass, 348.
15. A number of sources add that these crack troops also had a second horse by their side.
16. Abbasid caliph from 422/1031 to 467/1075.
17. A *munshī* in the service of the Abbasid caliphs. The job of *munshī* was to work in medieval Muslim chancelleries and to excel in the art of writing letters in lofty epistolary style. Abu Saʿid died in 497/1104, having converted from Christianity to Islam in 484/1091. For references to him, cf. Ayaz, *An unexploited source*, 219, n. 286.
18. *burhān* – proof. A title stressing the sultan’s alleged public role as the supporter of the institution of the Sunni caliphate.
19. The imagery here is very heavy-handed. Literally: ‘support whose front teeth (or smiles) are laughing and whose markets and fairs are prospering’.
20. Literally: ‘which decrees for him that his tomorrow is coupled with his today from the infidels’.
21. Qurʾan, 61:10.
22. Literally: ‘with the strongest backing’.
23. The exclamatory particle is not in the Arabic but the imperative verb is.
24. Qurʾan, 25:77.
25. Puns.
26. 14 August 1071. This date actually corresponds to a Sunday. The nearest Wednesday is 18 Dhuʾl-Qaʿda/17 August 1071. Has the day of the week been shifted to fit the timescale of battle on a Friday?
27. *mujāhidīn*
28. Qurʾan, 8:10.
29. A Caspian province of Iran, between Jurjan to the east and Gilan to the west.
30. Attaleiates mentions the digging of a trench by Romanus around his camp; tr. Macrides, Appendix A, p. 229.

31. *fustāt*
32. *akhhbiyā*<sup>3</sup>
33. Here the shaming punishment meted out to the Byzantine commander as mentioned in other sources is used as a powerful metaphor.
34. Qur'an, 22:2.
35. *isfrār al-shams*. Is this also an indirect allusion to the Byzantines, who were generally known in Muslim sources as Banu'l Aşfar (the yellow tribe – yellow being the colour of cowardice)?
36. *qayşar*
37. Out of humiliation.
38. Literally: 'what could be expected from him?'
39. The river Oxus.
40. A large town of Khwarazm on the western bank of the Oxus; cf. Le Strange, *Lands of the eastern caliphate*, 451.
41. Ed. M. T. Houtsma, *Recueil de textes relatifs à l'histoire des Seljoucides*, vol. 2, Leiden, 1889, 38–44. The text is also to be found in Sümer and Sevim, *İslâm kaynaklarına*, 16–20, and Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt*, 124–8. There are two Turkish translations of the Manzikert passage: Sümer and Sevim, 18–22 and K. Burslan, *Irak ve Horasan Selçukları*, Istanbul, 1943, 37–41. Burslan's translation is more faithful to the original Arabic text than that of Sümer and Sevim.
42. Paris Ms. (Arabic) 2145. The passage about Manzikert is to be found on folios 32a–39a. 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani translated the memoirs of the Seljuq vizier Anushirwan b. Khalid (d. 532/1138) entitled *Nafsat al-maşdūr fi şudūr zamān al-futūr wa-futūr zamān al-şudūr*, into Arabic; cf. A. Seljuq, 'Some notes on the early historiography of the Saljuqid period in Iran', *Iqbal Review*, XII/iii (October 1971), 91. These memoirs of Anushirwan form the nucleus of the work of 'Imad al-Din, who may well also have had access to chancery documents. The *Nuşra* was completed in 579/1183.
43. Rhyming words – *kasr*, *qasr*, and *asr*. Zakkar omits this grandiose opening heading, *Mukhtārāt*, 124.
44. *mutamallik* – a pejorative diminutive form of *malik* (king).
45. Literally: 'when he heard'; cf. *Nuşrat*, f. 32b.
46. According to Hamdallah Mustawfi writing in the fourteenth century, the distance from Manzikert to Tabriz was fifty-three leagues; Hamdallah Mustawfi, *The geographical part of the Nuzhat al-qulüb composed by Hamd-allāh Mustawfi of Qazwīn in 740 (1340)*, Leiden and London, 1919, 175.
47. The medieval Arabic term used for the peoples living in the areas now known as Russia, Ukraine and Belarus; cf. *EI2* s.v. Rūs (P. M. Golden).

48. The text has *Qifjāqī*.
49. Generally this term is used for Georgians in the medieval Muslim sources. Some writers make a distinction between the Abkhaz and the Georgians (al-Kurj). Minorsky defines the territory of the Abkhaz as western Georgia; cf. V. F. Minorsky, review of H. Hasan, *Falak-i Shīrwānī* I and II, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* V (1928–30), 907.
50. A nomadic people in the steppes of southern Russia; cf. *EI2* s.v. Khazar (W. Barthold – P. B. Golden); cf. also P. B. Golden, ‘The peoples of the south Russian steppes’, *Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge, 1990, 263–70.
51. Rhyming prose; cf. *Nuṣrat*, f. 33a.
52. More rhyming prose. *‘uṣba* means a group of between ten and forty men.
53. This is a difficult sentence to translate. What is clear is that the Arabic text is alluding here to the *ḥadīth* which says that the spirits of the martyrs in Paradise are in the gullets of green birds. Green is one of the colours of Paradise in the Qur’an, which mentions ‘the green blade’ (6:99), it speaks of the clothes of the martyrs being green silken robes (18:32; 76:21) and that they will recline on green cushions (55:76).  
The narrative is echoing the following *ḥadīth* from the *Book of jihād* of Abu Da’ud:
- ‘The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When your brethren were smitten at the battle of Uhud, God put their spirits in the crops of green birds which go down to the rivers of Paradise, eat its fruit and nestle in lamps of gold in the shade of the Throne’, *Book 14, no. 2514*.
54. Yet more puns; here, they are to do with time.
55. *‘azīm*– ‘great one’. The word is used as a noun in the account of the battle of al-Qadisiyya given by al-Baladhuri; cf. al-Baladhuri, *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*, tr. P. K. Hitti as *The origins of the Islamic state*, repr. Beirut, 1966, 412. Hitti translates it as ‘magnate’.
56. There is even a play on words with the name Khilat (Akhlāt) – *wakhalatū bilād Khilāt*.
57. An antithesis between day and night, between pure and stagnant water. This could be a reference to the dawn.
58. Another example of alliteration.
59. This date is confused – 4 Dhu’l-Qa’da 463/2 August 1071 was a Wednesday. The Turkish translation of Sümer and Sevim perpetuates this mistake, *Islâm kaynaklarına*, 19.
60. Literally: ‘the helpers of his Christians and the chiefs of his baptised ones’.
61. Zakkar has *bi-amrihim* and thus misses the alliteration, *Mukhtārāt*, 125.

62. Reading *humsibi* (Houtsma, 40: and Zakkar, 125, rather than *kbhumsibi* (Sümer and Sevim, 17), *hums* – ‘those firm in belief’; ‘those steadfast in battle’.
63. All images of flowing water to denote the continuous flood of moving troops.
64. Literally: ‘A defeat . . . was realised’.
65. Literally: ‘were blown’.
66. Presumably the Murat river, the headwater of the Euphrates.
67. Belief in the One God, i.e. Islam.
68. The interval of time between a person’s death and the Day of Resurrection.
69. Reading *su’l* instead of *sul* given in the edited texts (Houtsma, 40; Sümer and Sevim, 17).
70. In other words, only after Romanus has penetrated deep into Seljuq territory and taken the important city of Rayy. This is already a familiar theme in preceding texts but the author cannot resist the word play.
71. The fates.
72. This religious figure served as an envoy for Alp Arslan; *Bughya*, Sevim, 21.
73. Unusually *irtajjat* is repeated. Was this because the author deliberately wanted repetition or because he could not find a suitable verb with which to couple it? In any case, this may well be an echo of Qur’an 56:4, which refers to the Day of Judgement – ‘When the earth is shaken with a shock’.
74. *‘awān* – middle-aged (of an animal); figuratively – a war which has already begun as a result of some act of hostility: cf. Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, II, 414.
75. *sawwama* – to allow horses to roam freely (a better meaning here than ‘to brand’, which is another possibility).
76. This is an extremely complex set of phonetic and semantic links. The images include *hamma* (to heat, boil), *hamā* (to defend) and *hāma* (to swarm around) but they also evoke a whole chain of further images too complex to put into English.
77. Probably an allusion to *ku’ūs al-manāyā* (the cups of death) – Lane, *Lexicon* I, 2582: both Turkish translations interpret the word in this way as *ölüm kâseleri* – ‘death cups’; Burslan, 40; Sümer and Sevim, 21.
78. Both *fu’ād* and *qalb* mean ‘heart’.
79. Qur’an, 16:102 and 26:193: Gabriel is the ‘trustworthy spirit’, the guarantor of the coherence of Islam: cf. *EI2*: s.v. *Djabra’īl* (J. Pedersen).
80. *hurr al-wajh* (‘the front of the face’: Lane, I, 538–9).
81. There is perhaps an echo here of the *hadīth* which mentions ‘the thrust of a weapon, which is more desirable to him (the martyr) than sweet,

cold water in a hot summer day'; cf. al-Muttaqī, *Kanz*, cited by Lewis, *Islam*, I, 212.

82. Literally: 'he seized the seeing and hearing of fate'.

The words *dahr* (fate), *baṣar* (seeing) and *sam'* (hearing) occur all three together in the Qur'an 45:23–24. The Qur'an 17:36–37 alludes to the folly of foolhardy, overbearing pride and these verses contain the words *sam'* and *baṣar*.

83. Images of his own ineluctable fate.

84. *bayḍ* ('whiteness') can also mean 'bright swords'.

85. This translation is based on Houtsma's (42) and Zakkar's (126) readings of *hulafā'*. Sümer and Sevim have *khulafā'* (19). It is conceivable that the author is making a pun here between *halafa* and *khalaḥa*.

86. Reading *waqīdh* (Houtsma, 42) rather than *waqīd* preferred by the other editors. Burslan's Turkish translation implies a reading of *waqīdh*: 'he was bound hand and foot and was driven along in a state near death' (40).

87. *rakiba aktāfahu*: être sur les talons (Dozy, R. P. A., *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1881), I, 551).

88. *ajamm* – covered with flesh (bones).

89. This difficult passage about the mangonel uses exactly same the words as those of 'Imad al-Din; cf. *Nuṣrat*, 38b. As is frequently the case, the summary of *Nuṣrat* made by al-Bundari barely simplifies or clarifies the elaborate style of the original text.

On a traction trebuchet, at one end of the beam, there were ropes attached which large teams of men pulled in unison to discharge the missile. According to Hill, the usual number of men allocated to this task was between forty and two hundred and fifty; cf. *EI2* s.v. *mandjanīk* (D. R. Hill). Cf. also France, *Western warfare*, 118–19.

90. Literally: 'by'.

91. Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, p. 7.

92. Vocalised by Houtsma as *muṭār*.

93. Reading *thalātha* (Zakkar, 12) rather than *thulth* (Houtsma, 43; Sümer and Sevim, 19).

94. Reading *istisghāran* (Houtsma, 43; Zakkar, 12) rather than *istisfāran* (Sümer and Sevim, 19).

95. *bishāra*: a gift on receipt of joyful news.

96. I.e. captured like an animal in a snare.

97. Qur'an, 35:43.

98. Pun between Arslan and the verb *arsala*.

99. For Manzikert, cf. Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kāmil fi'l ta'rīkh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, vol. 10, Leiden, 1864, 44–6. The account of Manzikert has been translated by Richards; cf. D. S. Richards, *The Annals of the Seljuk Turks*,



London, 2002, 170–2. The Manzikert narrative is also given in Sümer and Sevim, 21–4, and Zakkar, 141–3.

For a discussion of Ibn al-Athir as a historian, cf. Richards, *Annals*, 1–8; Richards, ‘Ibn al-Athir and the later parts of the *Kamil*; a study of aims and methods,’ in D. O. Morgan, ed., *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, London, 1982, 76–108.

100. Richards has changed this word written in the text as *al-għarb* (the west) to read *al-Għuzz*; cf. *Annals*, 170. Sümer and Sevim have the same reading; cf. *Islâm kaynaklarına*, 24, n. 14. This is not a very convincing emendation, since scribes made mistakes of omitting dots (in this case *gharb* could be read as ‘*arab* – ‘Bedouin Arabs’). Scribes rarely leave out whole letters; in this case the letter ‘b’. Bedouin troops were also used as mercenaries, after all.
101. Literally: ‘for him’.
102. According to Muslim belief, all human actions have been written by God on the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*).
103. Here the wording is identical to that of the earlier account of Ibn al-Jawzi.
104. The actions of one who believes that he will soon face death and martyrdom.
105. *maʿman* – literally ‘safe place’.
106. Michael VII Ducas, who ruled from 1071 to 1078.
107. This place name does not refer to Cappadocia, as Richards suggests; cf. *Annals*, 172, n. 40. Duqiyya is another name for Eudoxias, later known as Tokat; cf. G. Dédéyan, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés*, vol. 2, Lisbon, 2003, 1483.
108. Literally: ‘he put on wool’.
109. Literally: ‘he could do no other than that’.
110. Cf. Zakkar’s analysis of the dependence of the text of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi on the work of Ghars al-Ni‘ma, *Mukhtārāt*, 110.
111. For the text of the battle of Manzikert, cf. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi, *Miʿrāt al-zamān fī taʾrīkh al-aʿyān*, ed. A. Sevim, Ankara, 1968, 143, 146–52; ed. Q. H. Yuzbak, unpublished Ph.D., Université de Saint Joseph, Beirut, 1984, 278, 281–5; Sümer and Sevim, *Islâm kaynaklarına*, 25, 28–34; Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt*, 105–16. The text is also found in the footnotes of Amedroz’ edition of Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Dhayl taʾrīkh taʾrīkh Dimashq*, 100–4. For a partial translation of this Manzikert narrative, cf. Vryonis, ‘The Greek and Arabic sources’, 444–6. For a discussion of the work of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi, cf. M. Ahmad and M. Hilmy, ‘Some notes on Arabic historiography during the Zengid and Ayyubid periods’, in Lewis and Holt, eds, *Historians of the Middle East*, 91–2; C. Cahen, ‘Editing Arabic

- chronicles: a few suggestions', in *Les peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale* (Damascus, 1977), 11–36; C. Cahen, 'The historiography of the Seljuqid period', in Lewis and Holt, eds, *Historians of the Middle East*, 60–1. For a short discussion of the dependence of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī on the lost history of Ghars al-Ni'ma, cf. Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt*, 110.
112. After this announcement, the text digresses into other matters for a while, such as the activities of Alp Arslan at Aleppo, before returning to the Manzikert story.
113. This detail is also mentioned by the Syriac Christian writer Matthew of Edessa, *Patmut'awn*, tr. A. E. Dostourian as *Armenia and the Crusades. Tenth to Twelfth Centuries. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, Lanham, New York and London, 1993, 133.
114. Reading *ḥarbibi* (Zakkar, 105) rather than *ḥizbibi* (Sümer and Sevim, 28). The text then moves away from the account of the prelude to Manzikert but returns to it shortly afterwards.
115. Reading *hazīmatuhu* (Yuzbak, 281).
116. The name given by Sümer and Sevim is al-Shakiriyya, 29.
117. Qur'an, 5:7: 'We hear and obey'.
118. *jarīda* – detachment of the army separated from the main body of the army; cf. Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, I, 277.
119. Yuzbak adds: 'and he was from the Rus', 281.
120. 25 August 1071.
121. I.e. Paradise.
122. Literally: 'with which they could dispense' (*mā kānū 'anhu ghinā'*). What is probably meant here is that this present encounter is far more momentous for the Muslims and that the Seljuq army should not rest on the laurels of their previous victories.
123. The reference here to ten thousand Kurds is left unexplained. These troops are not mentioned in other Muslim accounts.
124. *jarḳbī*: cf. n. 163.
125. Reading 'five thousand' (Yuzbak, 282), rather than 'thirty-five thousand' (Sevim, 148.)
126. *qinṭār* – basically the equivalent of one hundred *ratls*; cf. Hinz, *Islamische Masse*, 24–7.
127. It was common for rulers to take a portable treasury with them in military campaign.
128. *ḥawb ibrīm*
129. The Muslim word *iqṭā'* is used, although the system of land tenure was different in the two empires.
130. *al-'ajam*
131. Possibly a Qur'anic echo; cf. my discussion of al-Bundari's text earlier.

132. The phrase: 'God is most great'.
133. I.e. 'Man proposes, God disposes'.
134. I.e. the Friday night.
135. The term used for Slavs and other fair-haired inhabitants of northern Europe; cf. *EI2* s.v. Al-Saḳāliba (P. M. Golden).
136. This is presumably a reference to the Turcoman chief Afshin who took the Byzantine city of Amorion ('Ammuriyya; now called Asar) during the first of Romanus' eastern campaigns in 459/1066. The city was located near the modern village of Emirdağ; cf. *EI2* s.v. al-'Ammūriyya (M. Canard). As a result of Afshin's actions, Romanus withdrew from the Aleppo area in that campaign; cf. Zakkar, *Emirate*, 175.
137. This may be a reference to the possibility that some of Alp Arslan's rival Turcoman leaders had taken refuge with Romanus at the Byzantine court, as was the custom in the thirteenth century too.
138. I.e. I am defeated, captured and humiliated.
139. Literally: 'sell yourself'.
140. Yuzbak has 'ten thousand', 273.
141. Literally: 'what is intended'.
142. Literally: 'they will hear and obey'.
143. A Kakuyid ruler of Isfahan, 433/1041–443/1051. The dynasty became vassals to the Seljuqs and Faramarz was obliged to hand Isfahan over to the first Seljuq sultan, Tughril in 443/1051; cf. *EI2* s.v.: Kākūyids (C. E. Bosworth).
144. In ceremonial fashion.
145. *qabā'*
146. The caliph's envoy: cf. Ch. 2, p. 34.
147. Literally: 'amount'.
148. Clearly the source of the following anecdote is not being divulged here; its provenance, given its high religious propagandistic charge, may well be Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi himself. Alternatively its theme – that of the cross acknowledging the *qibla* – may well be one current in popular folk stories in Syria, especially in the crusading period.
149. Haghia Sophia.
150. Omitting the otiose *qāla* here.
151. This account is not that given in the text of the chronicle of Ibn al-Qalanisi that has been handed down.
152. *'imāma*
153. 21 September 1071.
154. *bayt al-nawba*
155. Probably ceremonial tents (*qubab*). The Turkish translation calls them 'triumphal arches' (*zafer takları*): cf. Sümer and Sevim, 39.

156. *Apud* C. Oman, *A history of the art of war*, London, 1898, 217.
157. Cf. Mathieu, 'Les "Gesta Roberti Wiscardi"', 91.
158. Cf. A. Grabar, *Byzantine painting*, Geneva, 1953; A. Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin*, Paris, 1936.
159. The text has been edited twice. For the account of Manzikert, cf. *Zubdat al-halab fī ta'riḫ Ḥalab*, ed. S. Dahan, vol. 2, Damascus, 23–30; ed. S. Zakkar, vol. 1, Damascus, 1997, 264–8. The account of the battle is also given in Zakkar's anthology of historical texts, *Mukhtārāt*, 138–40; and in Sümer and Sevim, 45–8.
160. I.e. Erzurum.
161. This set of directions does not make much sense geographically.
162. *Khatun* is the usual word for a royal Turkish woman. Here she has no personal name.
163. According to Zakkar, a *jarkh* is a weapon on which there is a heavy bow which shoots arrows or *naft*; cf. *Zubda*, 265, n. 1; cf. also the same information in Sümer and Sevim, Turkish translation, 50, n. 6.
164. Here Ibn al-ʿAdim tries to render Byzantine titles in Arabic.
165. Qur'an, 22:40.
166. *ṣalībuhum al-ʿaẓam*
167. This version of the name has been adopted as it is the one used by Sümer and Sevim in their Turkish translation of this passage, *Islām kaynaklarına*, 52.
168. AD 1070.
169. Reading *ṣalīb* rather than *ṣulb* (crosses).
170. I.e. Baghdad.
171. *maʿarra* – crime, combat unleashed by an army without the commander having given any signal to do so; Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, II, 206.
172. 4 August 1071 – a Wednesday.
173. Literally: 'eye fell on eye'.
174. Arabic idiom, meaning 'on their heels'.
175. Word play between *al-raʿy* and *al-Rayy*.
176. An indication of the Seljuq sultans' favourite pastime of hunting.
177. *ashām*
178. Cf. the narrative of al-Bundari.
179. Cf. the account of Ibn al-Azraq.
180. Literally: 'not one of them was close to another of them'.
181. Literally: 'make him want him'.
182. Presumably the subject of this sentence is still Nizam al-Mulk since Alp Arslan was not necessarily involved in the previous story.
183. I.e. the capture of the emperor.
184. Literally: 'the falling of the king of Byzantium under the command of that *ghulām* happened'.

185. Literally: 'it was written for him about that'.
186. Mahmud b. Nasr b. Salih b. Mirdas, the Mirdasid ruler of Aleppo, had been made the vassal of Alp Arslan that same year, just before the sultan turned his attention to the Byzantine threat in eastern Anatolia; cf. *Bughya*, Sevim, 17.
187. Another genuine attempt to write a Greek name in Arabic.

## The fourteenth- and fifteenth-century accounts of the battle of Manzikert

*The successor of Constantine, in a plebeian habit, was led into the Turkish divan, and commanded to kiss the ground before the lord of Asia. He reluctantly obeyed; and Alp Arslan, starting from his throne, is said to have planted his foot on the neck of the Roman emperor. But the fact is doubtful; and if in this moment of insolence, the sultan complied with a national custom, the rest of his conduct has extorted the praise of his bigoted foes, and may afford a lesson to the most civilised ages.<sup>1</sup>*

### **The account of Rashid al-Din (d. 717/1318) in *Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh***

#### *Introduction to the text*

Rashid al-Din, the most famous Persian historian of the Ilkhanid period, served at the Mongol court and attained high office under Ghazan in 697/1298. His *Universal History* (*Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh*) is his most celebrated work. This text forms part of the complex network of sources in the Persian historiographical tradition about the Seljuqs.<sup>2</sup> The text of Rashid al-Din bears a close resemblance to that of a contemporary of his, Qashani, who wrote a history called *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, but the two narratives are not identical. The version of Rashid al-Din is clearer and is helped by a good edition, whereas the text of Qashani is slightly more verbose and repetitive and is rendered difficult to read at times by a number of editorial mistakes. For the translation provided here, the version of Rashid al-Din has been followed, but from time to time short additions from Qashani's text have been inserted into the footnotes.<sup>3</sup> The *Universal History* was also produced in Arabic but its account of Manzikert is very brief and obviously comes from a very different historiographical tradition.<sup>4</sup>

*Translation of the text*

In his [Alp Arslan's] reign, Qaysar Romanus went out with three hundred thousand horsemen.<sup>5</sup> When the sultan heard about this situation, he set out at once for Azarbayjan.<sup>6</sup> He did not have an army with him. He left Terken Khatun<sup>7</sup> and Nizam al-Mulk in Tabriz. He himself made for Akhlat with fifteen thousand horsemen, and Nizam al-Mulk followed him. The two sides<sup>8</sup> happened to meet by chance at Manzikert between Akhlat and Erzurum. As the sultan's army was small, he sent a message to Romanus and asked for a truce, on the basis that he would give something each year. Romanus said: 'I will make peace in the kingdom of Rayy', [so] the sultan became angry.<sup>9</sup>

One day he [Alp Arslan] went hunting with one hundred horsemen. Enemies seized him with one hundred mounted attendants and put him in fetters. They did not know that he was the sultan. Somebody told Nizam al-Mulk who said 'Take care. Do not tell anyone about this conversation.' He [Nizam al-Mulk] ordered that they should not let anyone into the sultan's audience tent and he spread false rumours<sup>10</sup> that the sultan was ill; he came and went with doctors<sup>11</sup> and he governed on behalf of the sultan.<sup>12</sup> While this was happening, envoys came, asking for peace. Nizam al-Mulk said: 'The sultan is ill but he has agreed to make peace.' While he was dismissing the envoys he said: 'As you are requesting peace, why then have you seized a group of our servants on the hunting ground and taken them captive?'<sup>13</sup> Send them back.'<sup>14</sup> They returned and explained the situation and Romanus gave orders that they should send them back immediately. Nizam al-Mulk and the commanders received them and kissed the ground. When the Byzantines saw this, they were amazed and astonished and they regretted that they had lost this opportunity.

When the sultan had arrived in Tabriz, he had commanded the court administrative officials to open up the door of the treasury, and, as much as they could, to raise paid troops. While they were inspecting the [cavalry] troops and the infantry in the presence of the sultan, a *ghulam* who had not been counted in [the register] passed by. The chief inspector of the army shouted at him, rejected him and said: 'Whatever can come from you?' The sultan said: 'Do not say [that]. Perhaps the emperor of Byzantium will be taken captive by him.' Then the sultan, together with the commanders Artuq,<sup>15</sup> Saltuq,<sup>16</sup> Mengüçük,<sup>17</sup> Danişmend, Çavlı and Çavuldur,<sup>18</sup> was equipped ready for battle with fifteen thousand cavalry and five thousand veteran infantry.



**Figure 4.1** Seljuq carved stucco slab depicting a mounted hunter, thirteenth century (Istanbul, Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi)

On Wednesday the sultan mounted a small hill with the above-mentioned commanders and inspected Romanus' camp with his own eyes. He was frightened by that army and he said: 'How can we fight and repel this cruel company, with the size of army we have?'<sup>19</sup> Malik Muhammad Danişmend placed his head on the ground and said: 'A thought about faith in God in respect of Islam has occurred to this slave. If permission is granted, it will be revealed.' The sultan gave



permission and Malik Danişmend said: ‘Today is Wednesday. To attain good fortune, let us turn back today, and tomorrow we will mend our weapons, make our garments suitable for prayer and place round our necks shrouds which we have washed in the water of Zamzam.’<sup>20</sup> On Friday morning, after ‘Come to salvation’,<sup>21</sup> let us go with the assembly helped [by God]<sup>22</sup> to the field of battle. At that time, while the preachers on the pulpits of Islam are praying: ‘O God, grant victory to the armies and squadrons of the Muslims’, let us say the *takbīr*<sup>23</sup> together as one body in complete sincerity and let us strike the wicked infidels. If we find the joy of martyrdom, ‘Blest the reward and fair the resting place’.<sup>24</sup> If we triumph and are given victory [by God], ‘That is the supreme triumph’.<sup>25</sup> Zeal for religion, which is one of the signs of good fortune, began to foment within all the commanders. Bearing in mind the idea of Muhammad Danişmend, they went back [to the camp].

At daybreak on Friday, at the time when the morning cock crowed ‘Come to salvation’ and the backgammon players of the heavens gathered up the stones of the fixed stars and the planets on the blue carpet and the quicksilver-coloured playing cloth of the scarlet celestial globe,<sup>26</sup> the sultan and the commanders, after carrying out their obligations and religious duties and reading prescribed parts of the Qur’an,<sup>27</sup> embarked on fighting the enemy. Those unfortunates defecting [from the will of God], ‘like thickly-scattered moths’,<sup>28</sup> and locusts spread abroad,<sup>29</sup> came to meet them. They positioned themselves for the fight opposite the sultan. When the appointed time had been confirmed, the army of Islam cried out the *takbīr* with one voice and, with Divine support,<sup>30</sup> strong of heart, they attacked the centre of the enemy. They rendered their battle line, that was stronger than an iron mountain, like ‘carded wool’.<sup>31</sup> With the hand of calamity, they scattered the dust of loss onto the head of the unbelievers. They sent most of the wicked infidels<sup>32</sup> to the abode of perdition. ‘So of the people who did wrong, the last remnant was cut off. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.’<sup>33</sup> So much valuable plunder, such as money, goods, captives, animals and attendants, fell into the hands of the Muslims that the scribe of the sky<sup>34</sup> would be in a state of confusion from writing it all down.

It turned out that that Byzantine<sup>35</sup> *ghulām* [was the one] whom the chief inspector had rejected [but] Fate and predestination were agreed on accepting him. Qaysar Romanus had run away and hidden under a cart. He [the *ghulām*] found him [and] recognised him. He [the *ghulām*] began to cry and lament so as to show signs of obeisance

[to his sovereign]. Caesar said: 'It is time to search for a solution for this and to escape from the snare of calamity.' The *ghulām* said: 'If I find a way to take you in safety to the abode of royalty, what will be your recompense for these good deeds?' The king pronounced the praises of the religion of the Messiah, peace be upon him, saying: 'Each great city on which you put the finger of choice and petition, I will grant [you]. I will fill your skirt of trusteeship, like the pocket of good fortune, with all kinds of favours and I will permit [you] to share<sup>36</sup> and participate in governing.' The *ghulām* kissed the ground and said: 'The king should remain patient until the bride of the world<sup>37</sup> puts on the veil of collyrium and the intense blackness becomes ornamented with shining stars, until I prepare two horses which race like the wind and the swift-paced violent [storm]. We will betake ourselves until morning to the borders of the realms of Byzantium.'

[Instead], the *ghulām* rushed to the tent of the ruler, kissed the ground and explained Caesar's situation. Alp Arslan ordered a group of victorious troops to go with the *ghulām* and fetch Caesar. When they brought him to make obeisance to the sultan, because the soul of the sultan was pure and his essence was noble, he received the king of Byzantium, treated him humanely, sat him with himself on the throne and asked for pardon.<sup>38</sup> He ordered abundant favours in order to calm his [Romanus'] mind. Thereafter, they spread out the table and arranged the assembly of enjoyment and the banquet of victory. Gold-capped, silver-legged<sup>39</sup> cup-bearers passed round goblets of celebration and distributed cups. Melodious, sweet-voiced musicians began [to tune] instruments and to play lutes. They started trilling like nightingales and they placed the [musical] modes of Iraq and Isfahan in the tone of *nawā*<sup>40</sup> onto the voice of Barbad.<sup>41</sup> They listened to the organ, while drinking red wine.<sup>42</sup> When the joy-inducing wine made brains warm, the secluded virgin<sup>43</sup> of stupefaction removed the veil of modesty from the face of conversation. The sultan asked the emperor: 'If victory such as mine had been yours, what would you have wished to do with me?' As the potency of the 'mother of abominations'<sup>44</sup> had had an effect on the king's brain and the hand of reason had let go of the bridle of good manners, he said: 'Within the hour I would have given orders that you should be executed.' The sultan said: 'Surely the secret of your heart has pronounced judgement on your head.<sup>45</sup> What do you think I should do with you now?' He [Romanus] said: 'Either kill me or make a public display of me in the lands of Islam.' The sultan said: 'But, out of thanks to God Most High for giving me victory over

you and generously granting me conquest and triumph, I will do with you what suits me.’

When the party came to an end and the intoxicated people went to bed, the sultan personally gave orders to some of the guards that they should stick close to Romanus as a precaution and he said: ‘Serve him with elegant speech, polite manners and good attendance.’ In this way he [Alp Arslan] ordered that Romanus should be present at his assembly for several days and with skill he was [thus] removing the dust of that searing pain<sup>46</sup> from the face of his situation. One day Caesar, at a time of intoxication, out of fatigue and on account of lassitude,<sup>47</sup> said to the sultan: ‘If you are a ruler, forgive. If you are a butcher, kill. If you are a merchant, sell.’ The sultan placed two rings on his ears, vouchsafed him safe-conduct for his life and gave orders that he should depart for his lands with a joyful heart. Caesar agreed that he would send one thousand *dīnārs* to the private treasury each day, that he would send this poll tax<sup>48</sup> twice every year, that in time of need he would send ten thousand veteran horsemen as reinforcements, and that he would set free every Muslim prisoner in the Byzantine empire. The sultan gave him complete honour and a horse with golden shoes and a saddle ornamented with green gems.<sup>49</sup> He gave similar orders in respect of all his [Romanus’] helpers and companions and he magnanimously rode with him for a while, as is the custom with leave-taking.

This victory for Islam happened in Rabi‘ I 463.<sup>50</sup> The sultan returned from Manzikert in the vicinity of Erzurum<sup>51</sup> towards Akhlat and Azarbayjan. He gave orders that the above-mentioned commanders should stay put, as a precautionary measure against the king of Byzantium. When the king of Byzantium arrived in his country, the Satan of disappointment built a nest in his heart and the demon of evil suggestion<sup>52</sup> [did likewise] in his brain, and he embarked on the path of tyranny and rebellion.<sup>53</sup> He delayed and omitted to send the money for the treasury. When they [his officials] revealed this situation to the sultan, he gave orders to the commanders that they should venture deep into the lands of Byzantium, that each territory or city they succeeded in seizing and acquiring,<sup>54</sup> each one should have it, together with his relatives and sons, and that nobody apart from him should gain access or control over it.

Amir Saltuq immediately took Erzurum and its adjoining dependencies. Amir Artuq took Mardin, Amid, Manzikert, Malatya, Kharput and those places which are even until today attached and linked to them.<sup>55</sup> Danişmend took Kayseri, Zamandu,<sup>56</sup> Siwas,

Davalu,<sup>57</sup> Tokat, Niksar and Amasya. Çavlı took Mar'ash and Sarus. Amir Mengücek Ghazi took the districts of Erzinjan, Kamakh,<sup>58</sup> Kughuniyya<sup>59</sup> and other districts in their entirety.

### *Commentary on the text*

This account contains new narrative elements, such as the no doubt apocryphal story of Alp Arslan's being taken captive and then released before the battle. Since even the Byzantine sources confirm that Romanus was indeed taken prisoner by Alp Arslan, it is plausible that the new theme – this capture of Alp Arslan – is an attempt to make the narrative symmetrical. But it may have a further aim in that it exalts the intelligence and perspicacity of Nizam al-Mulk, contrasting it with the heedless folly of Alp Arslan, whose obsession with hunting leads him into unnecessary danger and imperils the long-term security of the Muslims. A story told by Ibn al-ʿAdim, the chronicler of Aleppo, seems to point the same moral. Alp Arslan becomes inebriated. Nizam al-Mulk then comes in and, very foolishly, in view of his master's condition, remonstrates with him. Alp Arslan hits him with a washbasin, leaving a mark on his face. The sultan is then roundly scolded by his forceful wife. The following morning, when asked by the sultan about the mark on his face caused by the blow with the washbasin, Nizam al-Mulk wisely replies that he hit his head on a tent pole.<sup>60</sup> Put simply, this story not only shows the great ruler of a mighty empire being put in his place by his wife. There is a further contrast between the later wiliness of the Persian and the folly and incompetence of the Turk. Such anti-Turkish stories were rife and helped the Arabs and Persians to salvage some of their pride, despite being under the yoke of Turkish rule. This does not, of course, mean that the Persian historiographical tradition rejects the image of Alp Arslan shown in the Arabic sources, and especially those of the thirteenth century, as a model *mujāhid* and pious sultan. But the Persian historians also show some of Alp Arslan's human weaknesses and enjoy doing so.

Another new narrative theme in this account is the way in which the Byzantine slave who captures Romanus behaves duplicitously towards him, offering to take him back to Byzantium during the night and then betraying him to Alp Arslan. Romanus is overwhelmed by the effects of alcohol at the banquet – another new twist to the plot, and one that puts him into an unfavourable light. The date of the battle is different, even down to the month mentioned in other accounts.

**The account of Aqsara'i (d. between 722/1323 and 733/1333) in *Musāmarat al-akhbār va musāyarat al-akhyār*<sup>61</sup>**

*Introduction to the text*

Aqsara'i was a *munshī* and high-ranking administrator in Mongol Anatolia. As his name indicates, he came from the town of Aksaray.<sup>62</sup> He wrote his history, *Musāmarat al-akhbār va musāyarat al-akhyār*, in 723/1323, hoping to gain favour with his patron, the Mongol governor of Anatolia, Temürtash son of Chupan.<sup>63</sup> His account of the battle of Manzikert is situated in the third section of his work, which covers the history of the Seljuqs until 643/1246.<sup>64</sup>

*Translation of the text*

At last he [Alp Arslan] attacked the region of Byzantium with twelve thousand cavalry. Romanus, the emperor of Byzantium, with fifty thousand armoured cavalry, went in pursuit of him, and they met in the desert of Manzikert. In that situation Alp Arslan consulted the astrologers. Those knowledgeable about the stars<sup>65</sup> spoke about the conjunctions and influences of the stars and by [their own] choice and the horoscope<sup>66</sup> of the time and the elevations of the hours, they advised delaying [the battle]. In the midst of that, he [Alp Arslan] consulted the advice of religious scholars and *shaykhs* and he put his trust in their bibliomancy.<sup>67</sup> The religious scholars said: 'Today is Friday and the preachers in east and west are busy on the pulpits praying for the army of Islam. Such a day and time as this, which is the opportune moment for the Muslims, must be seized.'

Because of his innate sound religious faith,<sup>68</sup> Alp Arslan did not heed the words of the astrologers and, following the advice of the people of knowledge and piety, he immediately attacked the army of the infidels. Victory turned its face to him, he triumphed, the army of the Byzantines was shattered and they went away in defeat. The king of Byzantium, Romanus, was taken at the hand of a *ghulam* who was the most puny and base of the *ghulāms*. In Baghdad the story goes as follows:<sup>69</sup> in Baghdad, at the time of the inspection the inspector did not write down his [the *ghulam*'s] name. The reason for that was that he was extremely small and puny. The sultan looked at him, ordered that they should write down his name and said: 'It is possible that he will capture the king of Byzantium.' The requirement of the celestial

command was such that, just as it was uttered on the tongue of the sultan, he [Romanus] was captured at the hand of that *ghulām*. On the basis that every day he would give to that *ghulām* a thousand *dīnārs* for each day he gave him protection. They [the Byzantines] put that money into fortified places in the hope that he would be freed. In short, on that day when defeat fell upon the army of Byzantium, they brought into the royal tent the king of Byzantium in fetters [made] of two branches of wood round the neck.<sup>70</sup> Abu'l-Fadl Kirmani who was the sultan's *imām* stood up and struck a blow<sup>71</sup> on his [Romanus'] neck. The sultan found that movement offensive. He said: 'On this very day this man was ruler of Byzantium with fifty thousand chosen men, how is it proper [to treat him] with this kind of contempt?' Abu'l-Fadl said: 'Out of contempt for the infidels.' The sultan replied; 'No! It has also been said: "Be merciful to the ruler of a people of submission".' Compassion of this kind in respect of the infidel enemy came likewise from the extreme goodness of his faith.<sup>72</sup> In a word, he [Alp Arslan] sent his sons to the land of Byzantium and he returned [home] (pl. 12).

### *Commentary on the text*

This narrative contains a number of interesting new features. It highlights the conflicting advice of the court astrologers who counsel the sultan to delay the battle, whilst the religious lawyers in his entourage encourage him to attack because it is Friday. The advice of the latter group prevails, of course, and God's will is fulfilled.

An idiosyncratic twist to the tale is that, unusually, it is not Alp Arslan who strikes Romanus Diogenes when he is brought as a prisoner to the royal tent; instead, a religious adviser of his, Abu'l-Fadl Kirmani, hits the emperor and he is rebuked for it.

## **The account of Hamdallah Mustawfi (d. after 740/1339) in *Ta'rikh-i guzīda*<sup>73</sup>**

### *Introduction to the text*

The Persian chronicler Hamdallah Mustawfi worked for the Mongol rulers of Iran, serving as a high-ranking financial official in his home town of Qazwin. He was inspired to write history by the work of Rashid al-Din. His historical work, *Ta'rikh-i guzīda*, concise and straightforward in style, was completed in 730/1330. He also

composed a geographical treatise, *Nuzhat al-qulūb*, with an account of Byzantium (Rum) which is ‘unique, and of unknown origin’.<sup>74</sup>

### *Translation of the text*

The emperor of Byzantium, Romanus, decided to wage war on Iran. The greater part of his army was destroyed by the heat. The emperor returned, equipped troops again and came to fight. The sultan Alp Arslan set out together with twelve thousand men. The two armies met at Manzikert and they fought. The emperor was taken prisoner by a Byzantine *ghulam* called Il Kafsut [?].<sup>75</sup> What is amazing is that at the moment of the inspection, the inspector did not write down his [the *ghulam*’s] name, because of the extreme puniness of his stature; but the sultan said to him [the inspector]: ‘Write [it down]. It is possible that he will take the emperor himself prisoner.’ And that prediction came true. The emperor undertook to pay a tribute, the sultan granted him his life and he came back to his seat of power.<sup>76</sup>

### *Commentary on the text*

This very brief account contains a number of the stock elements of the Manzikert story but it includes a reference to a failed previous campaign against Iran by the Byzantine emperor and an attempt to produce the name of the slave who captured Romanus. Hamdallah Mustawfi exploits none of the narrative potential of the battle.

## **The account of Mirkhwand (d. 903/1498) in *Rawḍat al-ṣafā’ fi sīrat al-anbiyā’ wa’l-mulūk wa’l-khulafā’*<sup>77</sup>**

### *Introduction to the text*

The Timurid historian of Herat, Mirkhwand, wrote a Persian universal history entitled *Rawḍat al-ṣafā’ fi sīrat al-anbiyā’ wa’l-mulūk wa’l-khulafā’*. The work was known early in western Europe and, despite its relatively late date, it was used as a major source for the history of medieval Iran until the nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup>

### *Translation of the text*

When the sultan Alp Arslan, in the course of his campaign to Arab ‘Iraq, had arrived at the fortress of Khoy, he received the news that the

Byzantine emperor had gathered a great army of Franks, Russians, Armenians, Syrians and Greeks, and that he had assembled three hundred thousand battle-ready troops whose names had been registered in the muster rolls. Moreover, countless patriarchs<sup>79</sup> and bishops had enlisted under his standard. The emperor and his retinue planned to conquer Baghdad and to install a *catholicos* in place of the caliph. Then they would without delay march on Samarqand<sup>80</sup> and not only burn the sacred books of the Muslims and wreck their pulpits, but also leave not one of them alive.

On hearing this news Alp Arslan prepared for war with the aim of bringing the Christians completely under his yoke. Accordingly he said to his vizier, Nizam al-Mulk: 'Take all the baggage to a safe place, for I have determined to attack the enemies of Islam.' Nizam al-Mulk replied: 'Since the Sultan has until now constantly showered his insignificant slave with his favours, far be it from me to separate myself from his noble retinue. Indeed, in no way will I give up serving him or forsake his victorious standard in order to seek safety elsewhere.' Thereupon the sultan responded: 'Even if you are absent from us in body, nevertheless you are with us in spirit. May your high wisdom be with us, may your good fortune follow us, may your prayer help us and may your praise make us happy. But it is now time for you to obey our will.' Once the vizier had heard the sultan speak in this way, he expressed his submissiveness<sup>81</sup> and subjected himself to the order of the sultan.

As for the sultan, he left Tabriz,<sup>82</sup> with the army of ten thousand men that he had with him, to confront the emperor, and he sent a detachment ahead to reconnoitre. A Greek soldier who fell into their hands was brought at once to the sultan and killed without further ado on the latter's orders. The sultan gave orders that this should be done to every enemy soldier that they captured. In the meantime the news came that the emperor had pitched camp at Manzikert, an important Muslim frontier fortress, and that three hundred thousand brave cavaliers had gathered under his standard. Although the sultan had a much smaller army, he put his faith in God and prepared for war. When he came close to Manzikert, he learned that the emperor had given orders for a very high tent of scarlet satin to be erected in the middle of the camp. In this tent he sat upon a golden throne; forty rows of patriarchs stood ready to do him service, and four bishops attended him,<sup>83</sup> holding in their hands vessels of holy water. And they ascribed to Jesus – peace be upon our Prophet, and upon him – the titles of the Godhead, and busied themselves with decorating Mary with human titles. Other



clerics read continually in front of his tent from the Gospels and the Psalms, while a certain quantity of monks celebrated the sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>84</sup>

The imperial troops included ten thousand men armed with axes and similar tools, so as to dig out trees and storm castles and fortresses. An equally great army carried naphtha pots to devastate cities and countryside alike. The whole army totalled a million.<sup>85</sup> The sultan was not in the least cast down by this description of the imposing might of the enemy, and instead immediately spoke words of encouragement to the commanders of his army, accustomed as they were to victory, and to everyone around him. He calmed them down by reminding them that, when it was the will of God, a small army had often defeated a great one. Then he ordered that battle should be postponed for three days and that they should attack the enemy only on Friday, when all Muslims would unanimously join in the prayer 'O God, help the army of the faithful', and confidently await the victory that God would some day grant them. The soldiers applauded these words of the sultan and in the meantime armoured themselves for battle.

Finally, when the three days had elapsed, the two armies faced each other in battle order. On the Greek side, preceding the army, one could see a hundred people carrying crucifixes in their hands. Next to each crucifix there stood an army commander, with a band of bold men awaiting his orders. There arrived opposite each of these sections a small number of the learned class and of experienced men, and they lit the fire of battle.<sup>86</sup> During this encounter the sultan sent the commander Savtegin as an ambassador to the emperor with the following message: 'However numerous your army is, consider well that you face an enemy who has left behind him all too visible traces of his campaigns for you to doubt his mettle. If you repent of your presumptuousness, and if you are ready to pay an appropriate tribute, and to present proposals of peace instead of enmity, I will ask the sultan to allow you to retain control of all your lands and not to harm either you or your whole entourage. But if you do not accept my counsel, then you are preparing your own downfall and all your possessions and riches will be lost.'

When the ambassador had delivered this message to the emperor, the latter flew into such a rage that he snatched a crucifix from the hand of a monk standing by his throne and, laying his hand upon it, swore by the Holy Spirit and by the Godhead and by the Incarnation that on this very day he would set up his own throne in the residence of the sultan. Then he dismissed the ambassador with the greatest contempt

and said to his soldiers: 'Now there is no other counsel than that all of you attack the enemy together and there dash this small heap to the ground.' Thereupon he grasped his spear, swung onto his horse and invited the bold Greeks and Armenians to fight.

As soon as the sultan Alp Arslan learned that the emperor was set on achieving supreme power and that he was resolved to remain stiff-necked, he turned to his bold warriors and said: 'Cowardice in the battle will bring death to us all; those of the faithful who come after us will end up in ignominious captivity, and for their whole lives they will have to groan under the heavy yoke of slavery. Now we have no other choice than to await the outcome with fortitude and to place ourselves under God's will, no matter whether he decrees good or bad for us.' The soldiers replied: 'We pledge our lives that we will summon up all our strength for this battle.'

Full of confidence, the sultan led his army against the enemy; martial music resounded from both sides and the dust of the battlefield billowed up like clouds in the sky. The sultan himself took up his station at the rear with some of his bold warriors and waited until the faithful in the mosques and places of prayer besought [God] with uplifted hands for a favourable outcome for the Islamic army. And then, quite suddenly, as the king of the starry host had entered into the circle of half of the day, a wind that had traces of hellfire in it began to blow against the Muslims.<sup>87</sup> So they ran to the river, but were hounded back by the enemy troops and all but died of thirst.

When the sultan learned of this, he dismounted, took the diadem from his head, loosened the girdle from his loins and, with his face bowed to the ground, prayed: 'Most exalted Lord and God! Punish not your sinful slave according to his misdeeds, and do not turn away your gracious and merciful gaze from this your feeble servant, whom you have placed over your pious ones; and let this scorching wind, which has been directed against those who are faithful to you, henceforth rage against the enemy.' After many and lengthy pleas the leaders of the army, and the sultan himself, burst out crying and then, suddenly, signs that their prayers had been heard made themselves felt, for that strong wind began to blow against the enemies of Islam.

Then the sultan swung himself onto his fleet steed, full of faith and confidence, and with a detachment of brave men, who had never fled the field of battle, whether from arrows and swords or from tigers and lions, fell upon the enemy.<sup>88</sup> Now the flames of war flared up, and when the enemy saw the closely ordered and unconquerable mass [of men] before them they asked what the highest price was for the capital

of life and for the cash of the soul.<sup>89</sup> But the sultan laid about him explosively to right and left, bringing down the foe now with the sword, now with arrows and javelins. While this was happening, Abtegin, a slave of the sultan, sprang from his horse, kissed the earth and begged the sultan to show consideration for his subjects and not to expose to the hazards of war his precious and irreplaceable life, and to rest a little from the stress of battle. But the sultan replied: 'The soldiers are to rest again only after they have gained the victory; we will know well enough when it is time to recover from the toil and exertions of battle.' After the sultan had uttered these words, he spurred Abtegin on to battle and himself continued to attack the enemy, until finally victory definitively swung in his favour and the Greek host took to flight in the greatest disorder. Countless Greeks now fell under the blows of the Muslims and by sunset there was not a single Christian left on the battlefield.

At this juncture the sultan ordered Gawhara'in, who was the strong support of the empire, to pursue the emperor, while he seated himself on his throne. While Gawhara'in set out after the emperor, one of his slaves crept up on the emperor, and when he had struck him an unexpected blow he made himself scarce, but then quickly returned with the intention of striking him again. But the emperor, terrified of losing his life, shouted at him 'Be careful of raising your hand against me, for I am the emperor of the Greeks.' The slave recognised at once, thanks to the helmet, the silken clothes and the belt, that this was indeed the emperor, for no similar outfit had been seen on any previous king. So he took him prisoner and led him to Gawhara'in, who at once took him to where the sultan was encamped.

When the whole court had assembled in the royal tent, the sultan gave orders for the emperor to be brought to the foot of his throne. Gawhara'in at once obeyed this command, and when the emperor appeared before the sultan in the deepest abasement, he was forced to lay the face of humiliation into the dust of impotence and baseness.<sup>90</sup> As soon as the sultan saw the emperor, he reproached him bitterly and spoke to him severely. But the latter excused himself and begged for forgiveness, saying: 'I have a plea to make. Let the sultan do one of three things with me: forgive my sin and let me go free, or kill me, or – if he wants to do neither of these – cast me into prison. If the sultan orders me to be killed, the Greeks will put someone else on the throne, and will disturb the lands of Islam once again; but if he forgives my mistake and wrongdoing, I will remain submissive and obedient to him for the rest of my life.' When the sultan had heard this speech, he said

to the emperor: 'In that case I will forgive you, so long as the Greeks pay me tribute and are submissive.' He then gave orders for a throne to be set up next to his own and to set the emperor on it with every sign of honour.

Now that in this way enmity had given place to heartfelt friendship and love, the emperor gave his daughter to Malik Arslan, the son of the sultan, to be his wife. In the course of the marriage ceremony, pearls and precious stones were scattered around, and then, in obedience to his [the sultan's] order, a festive banquet was prepared. In the course of it the sultan showed special graciousness to the emperor, in that he heaped all sorts of marks of his royal favour on him and his patriarchs, and gave each of them a costly robe of honour.

When the festive banquet had run its course, the sultan gave the emperor permission to travel back home with the grandees of his realm. He then gave orders to the secretaries of his chancellery to send letters with the news of his victory to all regions, while he himself sent to Baghdad all sorts of costly presents from among the treasures taken as booty from the Greeks. After this brilliant victory the sultan divided his great empire among his sons, while distributing to his soldiers the entire booty that they had taken from the Greek camp.

Other historians recount this event as follows. At the time that Sultan Alp Arslan was ranging himself opposite the Greek emperor and parleys of peace had begun on both sides, the sultan went hunting with some of his retinue and was captured by the Greeks. But one of them was able to escape and to inform Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk about everything that had happened. This wise vizier sent him off at once to the evening prayer<sup>91</sup> and ordered a detachment of Turkish cavalry, on whose loyalty he could depend, to hurry to the camp and to dismount at the tent of the sultan, while he himself cried loudly: 'The sultan has arrived at his tent.' The next day he appeared with certain others at the tent of the emperor in order to conclude terms of peace. When peace had actually been concluded, the emperor said to the vizier: 'Yesterday a number of your troops were captured by our men,' whereupon the Khwaja replied: 'These are surely some people we do not know, or else we would have received news of this in our camp.' Then, when the sultan and the other captives were led before the imperial throne, the Khwaja reprimanded both the sultan and the others roughly. He took delivery of them from the emperor and after this virtuoso performance departed from the camp. When they had gone part of the way back, the Khwaja dismounted, kissed the sultan's stirrup and excused himself by saying that he had spoken so bitterly

to him in the presence of the emperor only because the situation demanded it.

Soon after, the Greeks who went to the sultan's camp to confirm the peace treaty learned the whole story, and they thereupon realised how bad their situation was, and very unwillingly reflected on the truth of the proverb 'as long as a good deed lasts, it is unknown; it is only when it stops that it is recognised'.

*For a time the cup of Jam<sup>92</sup> was in your hand –  
But if you did not know it, what's to be done?*

When the sultan got back to the camp, he prepared his army for combat and set it opposite the imperial army in battle order. The emperor too took all appropriate measures for war, but was himself captured by a Greek slave after long and strenuous combat. The following strange incident is recounted about this slave: when the army was mustered and the names of the soldiers were registered in the muster rolls, the man in charge did not at all wish to enter the name of this slave, because he carried himself badly. But then the sultan ordered the *amīr* Sa'd al-Dawla – or, as others say, the man charged with mustering – that he should indeed register his name, for it could happen that this very man would take the emperor prisoner. And this premonition actually came to pass. The author of the *Ta'rikh-i guzīda*, on the other hand, is of the opinion that the person captured by the Greeks while he was hunting, but restored to liberty by the cunning of the vizier Nizam al-Mulk, was Malikshah, the successor of Alp Arslan. We will return to this matter when we come to the history of this sultan.

After the defeat of the Greek emperor, the sultan sent everything he had seized from the younger imperial princes in the way of treasures – costly pearls and other jewels – to the fortress of Rayy, and ordered its governor, the *amīr* Ahmad, to look after them and to put himself under the authority of his own successor, Sultan Malikshah.

### *Commentary on the text*

This narrative contains yet more new elements in the story of Manzikert. Despite the fact that its author lives in distant Herat, there is a stronger anti-Christian tone to this piece. The religious importance of the Byzantine emperor is highlighted by frequent references to crucifixes and to the serried ranks of Christian clerics who have accompanied Romanus on campaign. Whereas earlier versions of the story

stress the point that Romanus does not wish to endanger the caliph, who is 'his friend', Mirkhwand, who is writing after the fall of the Abbasid Sunni caliphate in Baghdad at the hand of the Mongols, can now show retrospectively Romanus aiming to remove the caliph and replace him with a *catholicos*. The episode of the marriage of Romanus' daughter to Alp Arslan's son is the stuff of folklore, although such marriages were a common way of cementing agreements between a victorious ruler and a newly-conquered vassal. It is hard to believe that Romanus would have taken his daughter on campaign.

This version of the Manzikert story is very far removed from the stark simplicity of the first extant narratives of the twelfth century. Indeed, beneath its flowery, even overblown style, it tells a story full of fanciful details and inventions. It is nonetheless very valuable as an example of the evolution of the Manzikert legend in the memory and imagination of late medieval Muslims. In that sense, it forms a fitting climax to this chapter, and indeed to the whole series of translated passages on the battle of Manzikert that have been chosen for this chapter and the two previous ones in this book. This chapter has also shown how Persian historical works shared a number of characteristics with those in Arabic but how there were also distinctive features of the Persian tradition which evolved separately and which enriched the Manzikert legend in the lands to the east, ruled for many centuries as they were by monarchs fiercely proud of their Turkish lineage.

## Notes

1. E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter LVII.
2. For a detailed discussion of these historiographical problems, cf. Luther, *The history of the Seljūk Turks*, 15–19; and more importantly, Morton, ed., *Saljūqnāma* 5–45. Morton has a very useful chart demonstrating the inter-relationships between the various extant and lost sources; *ibid.*, 42. For the Manzikert narrative, cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, Seljuq part, ed. A. Ateş as *Cami' al-tavarih (Metin)*, II. Cild, 5. Cuz, *Selçuklar tarihi*, Ankara, 1960, 31–9. Close attention has been paid to Luther's translation of this passage; cf. *The history of the Seljūq Turks from the Jāmi' al-tawārikh. An Ilkhanid adaptation of the Saljūqnāma of Zāhīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī*, Richmond, 2001, 48–53. For a partial translation of this Manzikert narrative, cf. also Vryonis, 'A personal history', 236–9.
3. Morton has shown that the work edited by Isma'īl Afshar as the *Saljūqnāma* of Nishapuri (Tehran, 1332/1953) was in fact written by Qashani; cf. Morton, *Saljūqnāma*, 8.

4. It is translated in Appendix B.
5. Qashani adds: 'making for the lands of Islam'.
6. Qashani has: 'he turned the reins of decision aiming at Azarbayjan'.
7. This is not the name given in other sources for Alp Arslan's wife. It is, however, the name of the wife of Malikshah, Alp Arslan's heir.
8. I.e. the Seljuq and Byzantine armies.
9. Qashani adds: 'he preferred to remain silent'.
10. Qashani adds: 'in men's mouths'.
11. Qashani has: 'and controlled access [to the sultan's tent]'.
12. Qashani has: 'because of being close [to him] and he conducted business'.
13. Qashani adds: 'This is not a sign of seeking peace'.
14. Qashani adds: 'before any more trouble'.
15. The eponymous founder of the Artuqid dynasty that ruled Mardin and its environs from the early twelfth century; cf. C. Cahen, 'Le Diyar Bakr au temps des premiers Urtukides', *Journal Asiatique*, CCXXVII (1935), 219–76; C. Hillenbrand, 'The establishment of Artuqid power in Diyar Bakr in the twelfth century', *Studia Islamica* LIV (1981), 129–53.
16. The alleged founder of the Saltuqid dynasty of Erzurum. From the lacunary evidence in the sources it would appear that Saltuq was a Turcoman chief operating in the post-Manzikert period in eastern Anatolia; cf. F. Sümer, *Anadolu'da Türk beylikleri*, Ankara, 1990, 17–45; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 106–8. For a genealogical table, cf. I. H. Konyalı, *Erzerum tarihi*, Istanbul, 1960, 27.
17. The founder of the little-known dynasty of the Mengüçükids which grew up between that of the Danişmendids to the west, the Saltuqids to the east and the Artuqids to the south; cf. O. Turan, *Doğu Anadolu Türk devletleri tarihi*, Istanbul, 1973, 1.
18. This version of the names is used by Sümer and Sevim, *İslâm kaynaklarına*, 61.
19. Literally: 'with this size of army'.
20. A famous well in Mecca.
21. Part of the call to prayer.
22. *manşūr*
23. The phrase: 'God is most great' (*Allāhu akbar*).
24. Qur'an 18:32.
25. Qur'an 9:72.
26. *saqālatūm*: usually means 'scarlet' but it can also mean 'blue' (cf. Steingass, 687) which Luther prefers: 50. These are an elaborate set of images to denote sunrise.

27. *awrād* – portions of the Qur'an recited at different hours.
28. Qur'an 101:4. An evocation of the Last Day and God's judgement when men will be dispersed like moths.
29. An echo of Qur'an 54:7, *jarād muntashir* ('locusts spread abroad') with reference to men emerging from the grave with downcast eyes. Cf. also Qur'an 7:33, which speaks again of locusts in the context of those who have opposed God's will in the past, including Pharaoh.
30. Qashani adds: *farr-i ilābī* – 'and the felicity of Divine effulgence'. This phrase denotes the aura of God-given authority given to kings since ancient times in Iran and which, in Qashani's text, is now being associated with Alp Arslan. Cf. A. Soudavar, *The aura of kings*, Costa Mesa, CA, 2003.
31. Qur'an 101:5.
32. Qashani adds: 'and the oppressive tyrant' (*tāghiyat*) – a term applied to the emperors of Byzantium; cf. Steingass, 806.
33. Qur'an 6:45.
34. *dabīr-i falak* – a term which can refer to Mercury.
35. This is the first time in this narrative that the slave is described as being of Byzantine origin.
36. *musāhamat*. This Arabic root can mean 'to take a share', for example, of booty; cf. Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, I, 1158.
37. *'arīs-i jahān* – Venus.
38. Unlikely as this may seem, the text seems to say that it is Alp Arslan who asks Romanus' pardon. Admittedly, the rest of the sentence speaks of the sultan's magnanimity and this could extend to an apology to Romanus for inflicting on him the inevitable indignities of imprisonment.
39. Legs which were wearing greaves.
40. A certain musical tone or mood; cf. Steingass, 1428.
41. Barbud/Barbad – the storied lutanist and singer of Khusraw II, Sasanian ruler (AD 591–628).
42. Here there is word play between *arghawāni* (red wine) and *urghanūn* (organ), as Luther mentions in one of his rare footnotes (this work of his was, after all, published in an unfinished form posthumously): cf. *History of the Seljuk Turks*, 169, n. 43.
43. *mukhaddarat* – a virtuous married woman or a young virgin kept in seclusion; cf. Steingass, 1195. There is also word play here of a slightly risqué kind, since *mukhaddar* also means 'tipsy'.
44. *umm al-khabā'ith* – i.e. wine.
45. A pun between *sirr* (secret) and *sar* (head).
46. Literally: 'burning' (*hurqat*).



47. Rhyming words – *malālat* and *kalālat*.
48. *jizya*
49. *zabarjad* – possibly corundum or emerald.
50. December 1071–January 1072. This is a very strange date for the battle.
51. The text has *Erzinjan-i Rum*. It is more likely to be referring to Arzan al-Rum – Erzurum.
52. *waswasa*
53. Rhyming words again – *taḡhyān* and ‘*aṣyān*’.
54. Literally: ‘facilitate’ (*muyassir*).
55. This is factually inaccurate. The Artuqids did not even acquire their major centre, Mardin, until the beginning of the twelfth century.
56. Zamantı.
57. In the area of Aksaray; cf. Le Strange, 150.
58. Kemah – a fortress on the western Euphrates, a day’s journey below Erzinjan; cf. Le Strange, 118; J. Markwart, *Südarmerien und die Tigrisquellen*, Vienna, 1930, 8. The Mengücekids also ruled Divriği.
59. Otherwise known as Koghonia (Kara Hisar Sharqı).
60. Cf. Hillenbrand, ‘Ibn al-‘Adim’s biography of Alp Arslan’, 240; Ibn al-‘Adim, *Bughya*, Sevim, 27–9.
61. *Musāmarat al-akhbār va musāyarat al-akhyār*, ed. O. Turan, Ankara, 1944, 16–17; Sümer and Sevim, 60–1.
62. Cf. C. Melville, ‘The early Persian historiography of Anatolia’, in *History and historiography of post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East*, eds J. Pfeiffer and S.A. Quinn, Wiesbaden, 2006, 145.
63. *Ibid.*, 146.
64. For a discussion of the sources used for his section on the Seljuqs, cf. *ibid.*, 148.
65. Literally: ‘the people of the stars’ (*ahl-i nujūm*).
66. *tālī* – literally: ‘the ascendant’. It also comes to mean the point on the zodiac rising above the horizon at the moment of the event for which a horoscope is cast; cf. L. P. Elwell-Sutton, *The horoscope of Asadullāh Mīrzā*, Leiden, 1977, 91. The Turkish translation makes no attempt to translate these phrases (*Sümer and Sevim*, 65), although they are included in the Arabic text given in the volume.
67. *istikhārat*: ‘looking in the Qur’an for a good augury’: cf. Steingass, 51.
68. Literally: ‘because of the goodness of the belief that was in his nature’.
69. Literally: ‘They say this, that in Baghdad’.
70. A cangue.
71. *sīlī*: ‘a blow upon the nape of the neck with the open hand’; cf. Steingass, 717.
72. Literally: ‘from the extremity of the goodness of his faith’.

73. Ed. A. Nava'i, Tehran, 1339, 432–3; ed. Sümer and Sevim, 62; French tr., M. Defrémery, as 'Histoire des Seldjoukides et des Ismaéliens ou Assassins de l'Iran', *Journal Asiatique* (1849), 20–2; Turkish tr., Sümer and Sevim, 67. Cf. also *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. Hamdullah-i Müstevfî (Z. V. Togan). Sümer and Sevim state that Hamdallah Mustawfi died in 1350, *İslâm kaynaklarına*, 67.
74. Hamdallah Mustawfi, *The geographical part of the Nuzhat al-qulub composed by Hamdallah Mustawfi of Qazwin in 740 (1340)*, Leiden and London, 1919. In this work he gives the longitude of Manzikert as 76 degrees and the latitude as 38 degrees, 45 minutes, 101.
75. This name is very difficult to decipher. The version given here is Sümer and Sevim's suggestion. The name is mentioned in Sümer's book on Turkish historical names; cf. F. Sümer, *Türk devletleri tarihinde şahîş adları*, vol. 2, Istanbul, 1999, 642. According to Defrémery, who used three manuscripts for his translation, all three have a different version of the name, 'Histoire des Seldjoukides', 21.
76. It is not clear if this last statement refers to Alp Arslan or Romanus. It could apply to either of them.
77. A number of nineteenth-century editions of the text are in existence and they differ from each other quite substantially. To attempt to coordinate these narratives would be a task well beyond the scope of this book. The present translation is an English version of Vullers' German translation of one version of the original Persian text: Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-şafâ' fî sîrat al-anbiyâ' wa'l-mulûk wa'l-khulafâ'*, edited as *Mirchondi historia Seldschukidorum*, ed. J. A. Vullers, Giessen, 1837, 68–83; German tr. J. A. Vullers, *Mirchond's Geschichte der Seldschuken aus dem Persischen zum ersten Mal übersetzt und mit historischen, geographischen und literarischen Anmerkungen erläutert*, Giessen, 1838, 62–73. Unfortunately, I was not able to have access to Vullers' edition of the Persian text until long after this volume went to press. Even a brief glance at this Persian text, however, is enough to show that Vullers' translation is too free at times and indeed is defective in that it omits certain words and phrases. Nevertheless, it seemed preferable for the purposes of this book to make a serviceable translation of this text available rather than to omit an English version of it altogether.
78. *EI2* s.v. Mîrkhwând (A. Beveridge – B. F. Manz).
79. The notion of 'countless patriarchs' reveals Mirkhwand's woeful ignorance of the governance of the Greek orthodox church.
80. The reference to Samarqand is a geographical and strategic nonsense. It highlights the natural preoccupation and horizons of a late Timurid historian writing in distant Herat and plainly out of his depth in the world

of eleventh-century eastern Anatolia, delicately balanced as it was between the forces of Christianity and of Islam.

81. Literally: 'he laid the finger of acceptance on his eye'.
82. In the interim, he seems to have left Khoy and to have travelled substantial distances south-east, taking him significantly further away from his enemy. It seems that Mirkhwand had a feeble grasp of the geography of this region.
83. Mirkhwand has reversed the rank of bishop and patriarch.
84. Literally: 'the slaughter of sacrifice', i.e. the Eucharist.
85. It is not clear from where the remaining six hundred and eight thousand men have appeared.
86. I.e. each of these sections had attached to it a small number of battle-hardened and skilful army commanders who placed themselves opposite the troops on the battlefield so as to fan the flames of war.
87. I.e. 'there arose at midday a hot and pernicious south wind and it began to blow with full power against the Muslims'.
88. I.e. 'with a detachment of his bravest men'.
89. I.e. 'they would gladly have ransomed their precious lives with much gold'.
90. I.e. 'he was forced to cast himself humbly onto the earth'.
91. I.e. 'out of the way'.
92. The reference is to the cup of Jamshid, a symbol of power. For a discussion of this cup, cf. Zick-Nissen, 181–93, and especially, 183. Ibn al-Athir recounts (Richards, *Annals*, 160) under the year 459/1066 that the defeated governor of Istakhr brought Alp Arslan 'a turquoise bowl containing two *manns* of musk, with an inscription labelled "Jamshid the King"'. Thus the traditions of ancient Iran were pressed into service for a Seljuq sultan. And Zick-Nissen notes (183) in the context of her article on such cups, which were still being produced in Seljuq times, that a 'green bowl' from the palace of the Khusraws at al-Mada'in was sent to Mecca by the seventh-century Muslim conquerors of the Sasanian empire, clearly as a trophy.

# Writing the battle

*(Alp Arslan said): 'Today God (to Him be power and glory) has favoured the Turks and given them dominion because they are orthodox Muslims and do not tolerate vanity and heresy.'*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

### *The nature of Islamic history*

From classical times onwards, history has been used not only to entertain but also to teach important moral, religious and political truths. Thucydides, for example, was constantly drawn away from events to some lesson that lurks behind them, to an unchanging and eternal truth.<sup>2</sup> Islamic historical writing is unashamedly didactic. It teaches lessons through recurring patterns of events. It is a God-centred model of history and His will is done through chosen élite individuals. Medieval Muslims wrote exemplary history with the twin aims of edification and entertainment.<sup>3</sup>

In previous generations, scholars were concerned to examine how 'reliable' medieval Muslim sources might be, in order to establish 'verifiable facts'. This is, of course, a valid point of view. More recently, however, the importance of the rhetorical nature of Islamic historiography has received greater prominence. Hayden White<sup>4</sup> spoke of a poetics of historical writing, and Waldmann<sup>5</sup> and Meisami<sup>6</sup> blazed a trail in this respect in the field of medieval Persian historical writing. But there is much more to be said on this matter, especially in connection with Arabic historiography, and the medieval Arabic and Persian narratives about Manzikert present an ideal opportunity to shed at least some light on their considerable literary value.

Earlier generations of scholars decried the overtly rhetorical 'school' of medieval Arabic historiography, as epitomised here in the Manzikert narratives of al-Husayni and of 'Imad al-Din, and even in the work of his so-called summariser al-Bundari, who aimed to simplify the original text.<sup>7</sup> Such writing has been dismissed as useless as a source of 'facts' and there has been a failure to see it as a literary artefact with its own aims, skills and aesthetic. This negative attitude is summed up by Gibb<sup>8</sup> as follows: 'History becomes a work of artifice, and the rhetorical and involved style of secretarial dispatches replaces simple narrative.'

Already in the eleventh century, the writing of history, when in the hands of the scribal class at court, could become extremely ornate, using rhymed prose and copious interpolated material, such as poetry. The 'chancery' style of writing history enabled the secretarial class to establish fine models for the genre; the exemplary nature of such works was underpinned by sophisticated rhetoric.<sup>9</sup> It was easy for these scribes, who regularly employed a high rhetorical chancery style in their letters, written on behalf of caliphs, sultans, governors and military commanders, to transfer such a discourse to the writing of history.

Other medieval Muslim chroniclers whose accounts of the battle of Manzikert have survived cannot be described as government scribes and court officials. Indeed, Ibn al-Jawzi and his grandson, Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi, were known principally in their own time as religious scholars and famous preachers. But they shared with high-flown stylists, such as 'Imad al-Din and al-Bundari, the desire to write exemplary history, to persuade through their work, and to impart irrefutable religious truths by the interpolation of Qur'anic quotations, pious anecdotes, prayers and sermons. These 'ideological' elements have nothing to do with the advancement of the story line but they have much to do with the meaning of history, 'salvation' history, God's plan for the inevitable triumph of Islam.

### *General comments about the Muslim texts about Manzikert*<sup>10</sup>

The texts analysed in this book do not issue from a single mould. They belong to a number of genres, including Universal Histories, dynastic histories and town chronicles. None of these sources is a record in any form of Turkish language and indeed it is not clear why this is so, given the fact that the eleventh-century Turkish dynasty of the Qarakhanids in Central Asia did sponsor literature in a Turkish

tongue. However, for the Seljuq Turks who ruled further to the west, their history, from their emergence in the Muslim world in the early eleventh century until their decline at the end of the twelfth century, was recorded in Arabic and Persian. Seljuq history is written by government scribes and religious scholars who see the Seljuq Turks through the prism of their own milieux and who understand little of the nomadic environment in which the Seljuqs operated in the eleventh century. The cultural gulf is widened too by the chronological gap between the events described and the period when they were recorded in writing. As has been shown earlier in this book, there are only a few surviving historical sources about the Seljuqs before the second half of the twelfth century. This great time lag favoured the retrospective 'invention' of the Seljuqs in the image of promoters of Sunni Islam and prosecutors of *jihād*, an image that later chroniclers wished to present and elaborate, despite the uncomfortable fact that the Seljuqs were usurping Turkish horse nomads with their own very different traditions. It would be unwise, however, to assume that the Muslim accounts are exclusively retrospective and simply reflect a pious recasting of history by later generations of Muslim historians. When comparisons are made between the Muslim and non-Muslim accounts of Manzikert, and especially taking note of the eye-witness narrative of the Byzantine historian Attaliates, there is a common core of details about the battle. It is also clear that the earliest Arabic and Persian Manzikert texts, although simpler and less sophisticated than those dating from the thirteenth century and beyond, share much common material with the later ones. This argues that the basic elements of the Muslim version of the Manzikert story had been established quite early on.

It was, however, especially in the thirteenth century that Muslim chroniclers showed a lively interest in the history of the Great Seljuqs, and in particular the battle of Manzikert. This interest came principally from Syria, where historiography in Arabic was encouraged by the Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties. This was a period of intense activity against the Crusaders and indeed of whole peoples on the move westwards in flight from the Mongols. As for historians in the Persian-speaking world of Iran and Central Asia, they also wrote about the battle; but they brought to their works the traditions of rhetorical-ethical historiography much favoured in those areas.

## The Manzikert narratives as instruments of faith

### *The inspiration of the Qur'an*

In medieval Islamic prose writing, the influence of the Qur'an is omnipresent, whether explicitly in the form of quotations, or implicitly through allusions known to every Muslim since childhood, whether in imagery, choice of vocabulary, style of writing or order of words.

Important Qur'anic phrases recur throughout the texts. Frequent emphasis is placed on the pronouncing of the *takbīr*<sup>11</sup> before battle, and God's name is invoked in the *bismillāh*.<sup>12</sup> In one narrative, that of Ibn al-Jawzi, the Byzantine emperor is given a flag to take home with him; on it is written the Muslim profession of faith – 'There is no god but God. Muhammad is the Messenger of God'. Predictably great emphasis is placed on those Qur'anic verses, such as Chapter 61:10–11, that speak of striving (*jihād*) in the path of God and which are quoted in the account of al-Husayni:

You should believe in God and His messenger, and should strive for the cause of God with your wealth and your lives.

Al-Husayni does not continue with the next verse, which promises Paradise – 'Gardens underneath which rivers flow',<sup>13</sup> but the point is that his audience would know this anyway. Rashid al-Din quotes another verse which offers the same joy in martyrdom: 'Blest the reward and fair the resting place'.<sup>14</sup> God's promise of divine help is recalled in 'Victory only cometh by the help of God'.<sup>15</sup> The cataclysmic terrors mentioned in the Qur'an as awaiting mankind on the Day of Judgement are invoked at the moment of the rout of the Byzantine army, who are likened by Rashid al-Din in powerful and well-chosen imagery to 'thickly-scattered moths'<sup>16</sup> and 'locusts spread abroad'.<sup>17</sup> The final defeat of the Byzantines is the moment for Rashid al-Din<sup>18</sup> to quote the grandiose verse – Chapter 6:45:

So of the people who did wrong, the last remnant was cut off. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

More allusive are certain other Qur'anic references, such as the mention of Gabriel, who is 'the trustworthy spirit' accompanying Alp Arslan at the height of the battle and protecting him.<sup>19</sup>

Qur'anic virtues are highlighted in the Manzikert narratives. *Ṣabr* (patience and steadfastness) is a key quality attributed to Alp Arslan before the battle. *Ṣabr* signifies the maintaining of constancy with God and the ability to face adversity. Although a number of Qur'anic echoes come to mind in this context, one particular verse stands out :

Seek help in steadfastness and prayer. Lo! God is with the steadfast  
(*al-ṣābirin*).<sup>20</sup>

There is, moreover, a link between courage and *ṣabr* which enables man to 'overcome his own blind passions and to remain tranquil and undisturbed in the face of the gravest danger'.<sup>21</sup> Such perseverance in the path of God empowers the warrior to embrace martyrdom and to suffer death with amazing heroism.<sup>22</sup> This theme is emphasised as early as the Manzikert account of al-Turtushi, who writes that at the battle 'the Muslims prayed that God would reinforce their hearts with endurance'.<sup>23</sup>

An emphasis on the great discrepancy in the respective numbers of the Seljuq and Byzantine armies is, of course, a key factor in the glorification of the Muslim victory. At a deeper level, however, the prototype for success is Muhammad's own struggle against the pagan Arabs. Every Muslim audience that hears the Manzikert story will be aware that the Prophet fought against Meccan armies which were significantly more numerous than his own young Muslim community. Yet God's victory is assured, as the Qur'an says:

How often a little company has overcome a numerous company by  
God's leave.<sup>24</sup>

Romanus' besetting sin is his overweening pride; he is an arrogant person (*mutakabbir*). This is clear from his awesome display of outward pomp and splendour even on military campaign; as he progresses across the Anatolian plateau, he takes with him a veritable multitude of troops together with four hundred wagons bearing a fearsome array of weapons, saddles, other equipment and a giant mangonel. As the Muslim narrative becomes more and more far-fetched, so too the details of Romanus' possessions grow in their ostentation. The effect of his bragging stance and arrogance further enhances the glory of the victory achieved by the humble and depleted Seljuq forces. The Qur'an contains over fifty verses which deal with the concept of pride – pride which pushes men to disobey God.





**Figure 5.1** Modern depiction of the captive Romanus before Alp Arslan

In response to such resistance *'God seals up every haughty, pitiless heart'*.<sup>25</sup>

There are in the Qur'an many communities and human beings who reject God's word. The most famous instance is that of Pharaoh who scorns God's message sent through Moses:

And he and his hosts were haughty in the land without right.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore We seized him and his hosts, and abandoned them unto the sea.<sup>27</sup>

Like Pharaoh, Romanus becomes a figure who exemplifies the awful consequences of arrogance and insolence.<sup>28</sup> Like Pharaoh, Romanus will burn in Hell – his final resting-place – for he has committed the sin of overweening pride:

Do not walk the earth exuberantly, for God does not like any self-important boaster.<sup>29</sup>

So, whether deliberately or sub-consciously, many of the Manzikert narratives portray Romanus in the image of the unhearing, disobedient rulers to whom the prophets of old came with God's message. Romanus is an anti-hero, a latter-day Pharaoh.

But how are the mighty fallen! The punishment for Romanus' pride is made even more shameful by the device of his being captured by a mere slave, and one of puny stature at that. This natural antithesis between the mighty Byzantine emperor and the Muslim slave who captures him is exploited for all that it is worth. In the earliest extant Muslim account of Manzikert – the version of al-Turtushi – the abusive image of the dog is used in connection with Romanus, the emperor of the greatest Christian empire in the world. The symbol of the dog works on at least three levels. In the account of al-Turtushi, the public shaming of Romanus is not watered down in any way, nor is it tempered, as in some later Muslim narratives, by overtures of friendship from Alp Arslan, or royal festivities, such as a banquet, shared with Romanus. Al-Turtushi recounts how the emperor is dragged round the camp with a rope round his neck and then sold, not for money, but in exchange for a dog. It is worth noting that the dog was associated on occasion in the medieval Muslim world with terrible torture and punishment; the notorious twelfth-century Turkish governor of Hama, al-Yaghi-Siyani, punished one official who had displeased him by tying him to a dog and putting both of them into a sack.<sup>30</sup>

This introduction of the theme of an alleged barter transaction between Romanus and a dog reflects at a deeper level Romanus' status as a polluted creature, for the dog is considered unclean in Islamic law. Finally, the similitude of the dog is used in the Qur'an<sup>31</sup> to refer to an unbeliever or apostate: 'So his likeness is as the likeness of a dog'. The

audience is thus able to enjoy with great relish the story of the dog on several levels simultaneously.

The omnipresence of the Qur'an is not surprising, of course, but the holy text works both overtly, as we have seen above, and in more subtle fashion. That master of Arabic rhetorical prose, 'Imad al-Din, even in the summary of his work given by al-Bundari, does not resort to direct Qur'anic quotations. He prefers to evoke Qur'anic echoes in a much more allusive manner – it is almost an intellectual puzzle for his listener or reader to solve. Let us take two typical examples. His phrase 'The earth was convulsed (*irtajjat*) with violent uproar and the sky was convulsed (*irtajjat*) with clamouring' may well echo the Qur'an, 56:4, which evokes with awe-inspiring imagery, using the same Arabic root *r.j.j.*, the cataclysmic upheavals of the earth before the Day of Judgement. The repetition of the verb *irtajjat* ('was convulsed') is rare in this text, since its original author, keen to display his linguistic virtuosity, usually prefers to find carefully balanced, rhyming synonyms in the two (or even more) parts of a phrase.<sup>32</sup> Here, then, it may be the very fact of this repetition that is intended to draw attention to the Qur'anic allusion.<sup>33</sup>

Later in the same narrative, the Byzantine emperor's advance is described with the phrase: 'he seized the seeing (*başar*) and hearing (*sam'*) of fate (*dahr*)'.<sup>34</sup> The somewhat arcane significance of this sentence is the result of the writer's primary aim to evoke the context of a Qur'anic passage. These three words occur in close proximity in two successive Qur'anic verses – 45:23–24<sup>35</sup> – and this fact would be known and understood by the sophisticated readership to whom the piece is addressed. Their use here is no mere coincidence. Nor is it only the direct use of these words that is important here. The Qur'anic context in which they occur is also of significance; in these two verses there is the clear message that all must die, that 'we die and we live, and naught destroyeth us save time' (*dahr*). Qur'an 17:36–37 also voices these sentiments, and incidentally contains the two key words *sam'* and *başar*. The message here – that man should not follow the path of ignorance nor walk with overweening pride and foolhardy disobedience on the earth – reminds the reader that Romanus, the emperor of the mighty Byzantine empire, is marching headlong and heedless to his doom, pre-ordained by God who alone knows everything. Romanus claims complete self-sufficiency and he commits *istikbār* (acting insolently and proudly, as Satan first did); this most sophisticated of the Arabic Manzikert narratives links Romanus with Satan both in its quoting of the Qur'anic verse, Chapter 35:43, which speaks about those 'behaving

arrogantly in the land and plotting evil', and in al-Bundari's own phrase describing Romanus as giving 'help to devils'. In one later narrative, the emperor's relationship with devils goes even further; unlike many of the Muslim accounts which show Romanus trying hard to pay Alp Arslan the money he has promised him in the treaty, Rashid al-Din speaks of Romanus renegeing on the arrangement, for 'the Satan of disappointment built a nest in his heart and the demon of evil suggestion (*waswasa*) did likewise in his brain'.<sup>36</sup> The onomatopoeic word *waswasa*, with its sinister whispering sibilance, is used on a number of occasions in the Qur'an in connection with Satan.<sup>37</sup>

### *Alp Arslan, the model jihād warrior*

As for Alp Arslan in the Manzikert narratives, he is also depicted as a paradigmatic figure whose conduct has its roots in Qur'anic inspiration. In sharp contrast to Romanus, Alp Arslan exhibits humility and lack of ostentation. His personality is glimpsed through the prism of Muslim piety. From the late twelfth-century account of Ibn al-Jawzi onwards, Alp Arslan is depicted as a full-blooded *jihād* warrior who puts his trust completely in God. If victory comes, it is because God wills it; if he falls in battle, then he has fought in the path of God and will be assured of entering Paradise. With his possible death in prospect, Alp Arslan puts on white clothing, which may later be his shroud, and he anoints himself. He rubs his face in the dust, declaring:

O God! I have placed my trust in You and I have come closer to You through this *jihād*. I have rubbed my face in the dust before You and I have smeared it with my life's blood.<sup>38</sup>

The Seljuq troops are not called the 'army of the Turks' but rather the 'army of Islam'. The army of Alp Arslan is presented as a single united entity, whilst Romanus' army is an ill-assorted bunch of mercenaries from many different areas, including other Turks, Franks and Armenians; they are shown as possessing no overall religious purpose. Alp Arslan, on the other hand, is fighting on behalf of his faith and his religious community, and before the onset of the battle the Muslim dimension swells, as Alp Arslan dismounts and prostrates himself on the ground before God. At the height of the battle, a dusty wind blinds the eyes of the Muslims and almost causes them to flee. However, God's favour is with the sultan and after he prostrates himself once



**Figure 5.2** Modern Turkish depiction of Alp Arslan the warrior

more in prayer, God changes the direction of the wind, blinding the eyes of the infidels. Thus, in the words of al-Husayni:

God's decree uprooted the tree of injustice, it amputated the nose of injustice and effaced the traces of the Christians.<sup>39</sup>

The image of Saladin as a model Muslim and *jihād* warrior is well known; this may well have been in the back of the minds of some at

least of the writers of the Manzikert narratives when they constructed their image of Alp Arslan. The foundation of 'truth' and historical memory right across the spectrum of the sources, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and above all Byzantine, makes it clear that Alp Arslan released his royal prisoner Romanus after almost a week in captivity, having treated him honourably by the standards of the time. So, long before Saladin's magnanimity towards the defeated Crusader leaders after his greatest victory at the battle of Hattin in 582/1187,<sup>40</sup> another great sultan, Alp Arslan, had shown the world how a Muslim ruler behaves with mercy and restraint. Most of the medieval Muslim sources mention that Alp Arslan dismissed Romanus honourably and provided him with a horse and an escort to return to Byzantium. The Anatolian chronicler Aqsara'i goes even further; he relates that when Romanus was brought into the royal tent, already humiliated by the wearing of a cangue, the sultan's prayer leader Abu'l-Fadl Kirmani struck him on the neck. This action is reproved by the sultan, who then advocates the true message of Islam, which is 'compassion for an infidel enemy'.

### *The topos of Friday*

It is not clear when Friday, the day when the people come together for communal prayer in the mosque, came to be regarded as the day of God's special bounty, an auspicious day for important events. It could be seen as a fortunate time to be born, to lay a foundation stone, to launch a battle or to enter a city in triumph. Because of Friday being the day all over the Muslim world when the entire community (the *umma*) was at prayer, the day became sanctified. God's favour was assured.

Take, for example, the compiler of a work entitled *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, the late twelfth-century AD writer al-Kisa'i, who, when writing about the pre-Islamic South Arabian prophet Hud, declares:

The ponds and rivers, the birds and beasts, wild and tame, rejoiced at the conception of Hud. The tree of the tribe of Ad became green and brought forth fruit out of season by the blessing of Hud. And when his mother's days were accomplished, he was born on a Friday.<sup>41</sup>

Of course it is not significant whether or not in actual fact the battle of Manzikert took place on a Friday.<sup>42</sup> The Muslim accounts which do put it on a Friday do so because of the power of that day in the Islamic consciousness. This feature of the Manzikert memory had begun by

the time of al-Turtushi,<sup>43</sup> who highlights the value of the whole community across the Muslim world praying for Alp Arslan. The two Baghdad historians, Ibn al-Jawzi and his grandson, as well as the Coptic Christian historian, al-Makin, in Egypt, actually give a date for the battle which does correspond to a Friday – either 19 August 1071<sup>44</sup> or 26 August 1071.<sup>45</sup> But this does not matter in the realm of spiritual truth. Many of the narratives painstakingly give the events of each of the days leading up to the Friday, as if building up to a climax, and they seem to document over-fastidiously the activities of each day, as if to emphasise the period of waiting until Friday.

Within the crusading context of the twelfth, and especially the thirteenth century, the concept of important events ‘occurring’ on a Friday had become deeply ingrained. Saladin took possession of Jerusalem on Friday 27 Rajab 583<sup>46</sup> and this was also a very special anniversary, the night of the Prophet’s ascent into the heavens (*mi‘rāj*). The fall of Acre in Jumada II 690/June 1291<sup>47</sup> was another moment full of emotional resonances for Islam, so Muslim authors portrayed this event, which was taken to symbolise the ridding of the Muslim world of the Frankish scourge, as having happened on a Friday.<sup>48</sup>

In his account of the battle of al-Zallaqa (13 Ramadan 476/22 December 1086), the thirteenth-century chronicler al-Marrakushi places it fairly and squarely on a Friday, with all the connotations which that implies.<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that al-Marrakushi had moved from Spain to Baghdad by the time he wrote his work entitled *Mu‘jib fi talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib* in 621/1224. It is probable therefore that he frequented religious circles in which talk of the Friday *topos* might have flourished. His own use of this idea for the battle of al-Zallaqa – which was fought between Yusuf b. Tashufin and the Christian king Alfonso in Ramadan 476/October 1086 and was a key stepping-stone in the Almoravid reconquest of southern Spain – is elaborate and fleshed out. He records that on Friday 13 Ramadan the Muslims prepared themselves for the Friday prayer, donning the garments appropriate for that purpose, in the belief that Alfonso would keep his promise to begin fighting on the Monday. Al-Mu‘tamid of Seville, however, was afraid of Christian treachery and he and his followers were armed. Yusuf and his companions began the prayer and after the first prostration the Christians launched their attack. The beginning of the battle, timed exactly to coincide with the Friday prayers of the faithful being said all over the Muslim world, could only have a victorious outcome, for God Himself had sanctioned it. Thus ‘God defeated the enemy’.

By the time of al-Maqqari (d. 1041/1632), the account of the battle of al-Zallaqa had become further elaborated. At some point the device of a dream had been introduced into the narrative. A religious scholar called al-Qurtubi dreams on the night of the preceding Thursday that the Prophet assures him of victory and that he will fall as a martyr at sunrise on the next day (Friday). So al-Qurtubi spends the night in prayer and anoints his head with perfume.<sup>50</sup> The similarities between this account and some of the Manzikert narratives are very striking.

### *Anti-Christian tropes*

It is entirely predictable in the long encounter between Byzantium and the Muslim world that a repertoire of stereotypical insults should have developed when writing about the 'Other'. These are used with varying degrees of vilification, and even *Schadenfreude*, by the Muslim authors of the Manzikert narratives. The misguided beliefs and sinful conduct of Romanus and his band of 'infidels' and 'polytheists' are roundly attacked and the symbols of Christianity are ridiculed and humiliated. After all, Romanus is described by Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī as having 'assembled the whole religion of Christianity'.<sup>51</sup>

As in the Muslim sources which deal with the conflict with the Crusaders, much is made of the symbol of the cross in the Manzikert narratives. According to Mirkhwand, the Byzantine army was preceded into battle by one hundred people bearing crucifixes.<sup>52</sup> Later in the same account, Romanus flies into a rage on receiving a message from Alp Arslan, grabs a crucifix and swears by 'the Holy Spirit and by the Godhead and by the Incarnation' that he will set up his throne in the sultan's residence that very day.<sup>53</sup> Such an oath will of course prove futile, as the audience already knows, because it has been sworn on the baseless Christian belief in the Trinity.

Romanus is described in several sources as being surrounded by the paraphernalia of Christian pomp and ceremony. In the account of al-Husayni, the Byzantine emperor:

erected a marquee of red satin and a canopy like it and tents of silk brocades. He sat on a throne of gold; above him was a golden cross studded with priceless jewels and in front of him was a great throng of monks and priests reciting the Gospel.<sup>54</sup>

By the time of Mirkhwand in distant Herat, anti-Christian hyperbolic utterances are allowed even freer rein. Romanus sits in a high tent of



scarlet satin on a golden throne, with forty rows of patriarchs ready to serve him:

Four bishops attended him, holding in their hands vessels of holy water. And they ascribed to Jesus – peace be upon our Prophet, and upon him – the titles of the Godhead, and busied themselves with decorating Mary with human titles. Other clerics read continually in front of his tent from the Gospels and the Psalms, while a certain quantity of monks celebrated the sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>55</sup>

The central symbol of the cross was clearly visible in military engagements. In the account of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, the emperor is recognised by the *ghulām*, who goes on to take him prisoner, by the fact that he is surrounded on the battlefield by slaves holding crosses over his head.<sup>56</sup> Capturing a cross, especially a big one, was the medieval equivalent of seizing the colours of the enemy.<sup>57</sup> Ibn al-Jawzī describes a wooden cross adorned with silver and turquoise pieces which was taken in the battle. Alp Arslan ordered it to be sent as a trophy to the caliph,<sup>58</sup> the principal figurehead of the *umma*; it is no ordinary piece of booty to be treasured as a valuable material object. It is a tangible sign of the defeat of Christianity.

The story about the cross in the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople inserted by Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī into his narrative is very interesting. It is an ideologically charged miracle tale put into the mouth of Romanus himself and it smacks far more of thirteenth-century anti-crusader fervour than the spirit of the eleventh-century Anatolian borderlands between Byzantium and the Seljuq Turks. As is often the case in a good story, it is divided into the conventional three parts, as Romanus visits the church on three successive days and is unable to control the lavishly decorated cross from tilting (in obeisance) in the direction of the Muslim direction of prayer (*qibla*). Even when Romanus chains it in place after the second day and revisits the church on the third day, his efforts have failed to prevent the inexorable force which pushes the cross towards the *qibla*. This is the stuff of sermons, a field in which Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī was a master. The story is ideal for his Muslim listeners, who can easily draw the necessary parallels between a past and a present Christian enemy. For in Ayyubid Damascus, where the memory of crusader aggression lingered on, the cross as symbol of Christianity was etched in the Muslim consciousness: had not a gigantic golden cross been placed atop the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem for a full eighty-eight years – 492/1099 to 582/1187?

And although Christians and Muslims had lived cheek by jowl in the Middle East for centuries, Muslim awareness of the significance of the cross for Christians had been enhanced by the new fanaticism and devotion to it displayed by incoming Crusaders, whose very name – in medieval Latin as in many Western European languages – encapsulated the idea of the cross.

As Rashid al-Din writes, Romanus pronounces ‘the praises of the religion of the Messiah’,<sup>59</sup> but the implication is that they avail him nothing. Christian ethical standards are faulty. Not even the Byzantine emperor keeps his word, for he breaks the treaty he has made with Alp Arslan, who in the version of Ibn al-Jawzi berates him<sup>60</sup> for infringing its terms. Christianity is wrong; its foundations have been elevated, according to al-Husayni, by a gathering of ‘rabble-rousing elements’.<sup>61</sup> The space between the two armies on the day before the battle – a *farsakh* – is balanced in rhyme and metaphor by al-Bundari<sup>62</sup> with *barzakh* – the interval of time between a person’s death and the Day of Resurrection. The gulf is, as he implies, between true belief in the Oneness of God – Islam – and the core Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which is false and which will lead to Hell and damnation.

As in Muslim texts about the Crusaders, there is an emphasis on the uncleanness of the Christians and the need for purification from their pollutions; in this spirit, al-Bundari declaims triumphantly that after the battle ‘the earth was purified of their uncleanness’.<sup>63</sup> This reminds the reader of similar sentiments expressed when the Muslims reconquered Jerusalem under Saladin and the Dome of the Rock was purified from the Crusader presence by rose-water.

## The Manzikert narratives as literary artefacts

### *Telling the story*

Some of the authors of the Manzikert narratives have literary ambitions, believing that such grandiose material deserves fine writing. Moreover, they clearly feel that it is important that the story should be told in as compelling, dramatic and satisfying a way as possible, with gripping, even fantastic details, and, of course, the right ending. The story needs sometimes to change pace and tone. Exaggeration is necessary in order to stress the magnitude of the victory. Indeed, although the result of the battle is known to the chronicler, he tells the story as if the outcome is uncertain, thus making the narrative more exciting.

There is no doubt that the battle of Manzikert makes a good story to its Muslim listeners and that the necessary ingredients to excite their interest are present. It is the stuff of fantasy in some respects; a slave, who is rejected as being unworthy of payment for military service, captures the emperor; the emperor is made to give the sultan a drink as his cupbearer; and like the tale of David and Goliath, there is an unexpected victor in the conflict and the unlettered nomad from Central Asia betters the ruler of the ancient Christian empire of Byzantium. The favourite storytelling device of a tripartite structure is present in the famous dialogue between Alp Arslan and Romanus. When asked what he thinks Alp Arslan should do with him now that he is his prisoner, Romanus mentions three options – the first two being death or the sultan parading him publicly round his empire as a punishment. But there is a touch of arch humour when Romanus suggests to Alp Arslan that his third option – namely to release him – is not at all likely.<sup>64</sup> Alp Arslan replies laconically that he has had no idea other than that in his mind.

Other dialogues are also bound to induce satisfaction in the ears of their Muslim listeners. In the account of Ibn al-Azraq, Romanus asks the sultan's envoy Ibn al-Muhallaban 'Which is better, Isfahan or Hamadhan?' Ibn al-Muhallaban replies: 'Isfahan'. Romanus says to him: 'We have heard that Hamadhan is extremely cold.' Ibn al-Muhallaban says: 'That is so.' The emperor then states 'As for us, we will winter in Isfahan and the riding animals will be in Hamadhan.' Of course, Ibn al-Muhallaban has the last word and enjoys doing so: 'As for the riding animals, it is true that they will winter in Hamadhan. As for you, I do not know.' The punch line, known already by the audience – i.e. that Romanus would not survive long after the battle – is bound to rouse applause and approbation.

The story of the slave capturing the emperor has embedded itself in the popular memory and is repeated in almost every narrative from the canonical account of Ibn al-Jawzi onwards. However, the story has variants, as its tellers need to explain how the slave was able to recognise the emperor, especially in the height of battle, and how Alp Arslan verified that the story was true. Different strategies are used; sometimes it is claimed that the slave is from Byzantium<sup>65</sup> and on other occasions Alp Arslan sends an envoy who has already seen the emperor to check out the prisoner's identity.<sup>66</sup>

Astrological allusions add savour to some of the narratives. After all, a knowledge of the planets and the stars formed part of the world-view of the authors, and was the birthright of any educated Muslim.

Al-Turtushi writes that the Byzantines had no doubt that the wheel of fortune had turned for them and that the ‘stars of good fortune’ (*nujūm al-su‘ūd*) were in their favour. Aqsara’i even mentions the role of astrologers in the life of the Seljuq court. The sultan seeks advice as to whether the moment is auspicious for embarking on the battle:

In that situation Alp Arslan consulted the astrologers. Those knowledgeable about the stars spoke about the conjunctions and influences of the stars and by [their own] choice and the horoscope of the time and the elevations of the hours, they advised delaying [the battle].

However, the sultan ends up taking the superior advice of the religious scholars.

In addition, the device of prophecy validates history and makes for a satisfying story. So the theme of Nizam al-Mulk scornfully saying ‘Perhaps this slave will capture the Byzantine emperor’ is presented to an audience that already knows that this really does happen. So too with the prophetic remark included in the account of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī from the lips of Alp Arslan, who tells a minor Persian ruler, whilst he is still in western Iran, that he will fight the king of Rum, take him prisoner and place him at his head as his cupbearer.<sup>67</sup>

### *Theatricality*

Many of the Manzikert accounts resonate with a strong sense of theatricality. It is as if Alp Arslan and Romanus Diogenes are the principal personages in a drama. There is, of course, a cast of other, secondary characters, such as the chief minister Nizam al-Mulk, the military commander Gawhara’in, the preacher al-Bukhari, and the slave who captures Romanus. But the major players are without doubt the sultan and the emperor. As in a classical play, everything is writ large; the two of them are highly stylised figures, who shape the course of history. These are no ordinary adversaries facing each other; these are the opposing rulers of two rival empires, and they are the representatives of two competing world religions.

Theatricality is demonstrated in particular in Alp Arslan’s treatment of Romanus when he falls into his hands as a prisoner. The public ceremonies enacted at this point deploy powerful symbols. The emotional and physical humiliation of Romanus is underlined by a set of quasi-ritualistic indignities that Alp Arslan inflicts on him – hitting him, kicking him, cutting his hair, forcing him to place his face in the

dust, and other degrading actions. The Syriac Christian writer Matthew of Edessa, under the year 1018–19, commented on the ‘strange appearance’ of the Turks, who were ‘armed with bows’ and had ‘flowing hair like women’.<sup>68</sup> So the cutting of the emperor’s hair may well have symbolised emasculation. One task which is imposed on Romanus by Alp Arslan in the narrative of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī is to make the emperor serve him a drink as his cupbearer; this reminds the reader of an even more famous incident after the battle of Hattin, when Saladin passes round a cup of water and allows Guy, the king of Jerusalem, to drink from it but refuses his arch-enemy Reynald of Chatillon the same privilege. Simple actions thus take on symbolic, ceremonial significance. Both episodes, as portrayed in the Islamic sources, exploit the situation of having such prestigious captives to show the superiority of Islam over Christianity.<sup>69</sup>

Already in the classical world of Greece and Rome, speeches were a traditional feature of high historiography. This tradition ensured that history-writing became literature. Muslim chroniclers were also well aware of the dramatic value of inserting speeches into their work at moments of emotional intensity. Just as Thucydides, for example, records Greek generals delivering speeches before battle and then leading their men to victory, so too in the narratives of the glorious military triumph at Manzikert, Muslim chroniclers show the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan addressing his military commanders in inspiringly rousing terms before launching into the fray. The sultan speaks to his assembled men, as did Queen Elizabeth I of England before the coming of the Spanish Armada, in a carefully constructed set piece, positioned for dramatic effect just before the battle itself. In the version of Ibn al-Jawzī, which should be regarded in many ways as the canonical Muslim account, Alp Arslan says to his army:

We are with reduced numbers of men. I want to throw myself at them [the Byzantines] when prayers are being said for us and for the Muslims on the pulpits. I will either achieve my aim or I will go as a martyr to Paradise. So he amongst you who wants to follow me let him follow me and he who wants to leave let him go.

The speech ends with the pronouncement:

Today I am only one of you and I am fighting alongside you. He who follows me and gives himself to Almighty God, Paradise and booty will be his. He who leaves [the battlefield] his due will be the Fire and ignominy.<sup>70</sup>

It does not matter that such speeches, delivered in high Arabic by the tongue of a Turkish-speaking nomadic chief, never took place. What matters is that the language chosen is appropriate, thus giving verisimilitude to the narrative.<sup>71</sup>

Alp Arslan is shown too as conversing at the same level of discourse with the Greek-speaking military general turned emperor, Romanus, who replies in similar vein. There is no mention of anyone as mundane as an interpreter. Like Thucydides, Livy and others, long before, the medieval Muslim chroniclers here choose thus to give dramatic impact to their narrative by putting into the mouths of their hero, Alp Arslan, and his redoubtable foe, Romanus, the sentiments they judge to be proper to their situation.<sup>72</sup> The speeches included in the narratives are most probably of their own invention. Such speeches enliven the account, demonstrate some underlying truth, point a moral<sup>73</sup> and adorn a tale.

Another aspect of this theatricality is its emphasis on a black-and-white narrative. Hence the propensity of these writers to indulge in unconvincing exaggeration and antithesis. The striking contrast between the two armies is drawn very graphically and exaggeratedly in the account of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī. The numbers of the Byzantine army are absurdly inflated – one hundred thousand fighters, one hundred thousand sappers, one hundred thousand workmen and so on. The lavish paraphernalia of Romanus' army is also stressed – four hundred carts drawn by eight hundred buffaloes bearing horseshoes and nails, and a further two thousand carts carrying weapons, mangonels and other instruments of combat. The emperor's portable treasury is bulging with valuable objects of legendary proportions and numbers. This strutting display of power and wealth is, of course, in striking antithesis to the depiction of the austerity of the Seljuq army and the humility of the sultan leading them. He will fight, he declares, as one of the soldiers. And maximum benefit is derived from the unexpected antithesis of the humble Muslim Turkish military leader treating the grand Christian ruler of the mighty Byzantine empire with such respect and ultimate benevolence.

### *High prose in Arabic and Persian*

The rhetorical literary style in medieval Arabic and Persian prose-writing has received very little true appreciation from western scholars, partly because it is so difficult to read and partly because it sacrifices content to form.<sup>74</sup>

As far as Arabic is concerned, it had always enjoyed unchallenged prestige in the medieval Islamic world. Poets and prose writers alike exploited the use of metaphor, alliteration, antithesis, assonance, puns and other forms of word play which lent themselves so well to the rhythms and structures of Arabic morphology and syntax.<sup>75</sup> *Saj'* (rhymed prose) became very popular with the scribal class at the time of the writing of the Manzikert narratives, and in particular with 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, whose difficult verbal pyrotechnics characterise his account.

The rhetorical prose style in certain historical works has also been condemned for the way in which it sets up barriers which prevent scholars from gaining access to the 'information' for which they crave. To be sure, the Muslim versions of the battle of Manzikert, as portrayed in the Arabic account of 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani<sup>76</sup> and his summariser al-Bundari, or in the Persian narratives of Rashid al-Din and Mirkhwand, are a far cry from a straightforward story of a battle with military manoeuvres, cavalry and infantry engagements, preliminary skirmishes and heated hand-to-hand fighting. But these accounts should not be dismissed lightly. Their value as literary artefacts and documents of religious history is undeniable. They are written in poetic prose which is intended to be recited. Indeed, such writings are intended to rival poetry, from which a range of rhetorical conceits have been borrowed. They are composed deliberately in verbal patterns that are meant to be memorable.

Thus, for example, the prayer found in the account of al-Husayni<sup>77</sup> is couched in high rhetorical style of a kind suitable to be declaimed from the pulpits:

Favour the sultan Alp Arslan, the Proof of the Commander of the Faithful,  
with the help which illuminates his banners and makes his goal easy.

The prayer is punctuated with Qur'anic quotations and ends with the rousing words:

Make easy for him every goal which he intends [to reach] and every aim to which he aspires and which he pursues, so that his victorious rise may become bright and so that the eyes of the polytheists, because they persist in going astray, may become blind to the paths of righteousness.

This very grandiose prayer was allegedly written for the Abbasid caliph, al-Qa'im, by one of his scribes, Ibn Mawsilaya, at the time of

the battle. Suddenly, with the insertion of the prayer, which breaks up the straight narrative of the battle, the level of discourse climbs steeply to the high-flown Arabic prose reminiscent of the famous *jihād* sermons of the tenth-century preacher Ibn Nubata.<sup>78</sup> Despite the failure of Ibn Mawsilaya to achieve the rhetorical heights and elegant good taste of the prose of Ibn Nubata, this prayer, with its accumulation of metaphor after metaphor and its second-rate, overstretched imagery and convoluted style, reminds us of the atmosphere of Muslim Syria at the height of the struggle against the crusaders in the thirteenth century.

The border with Byzantium in the tenth century in the days of the great *jihād* warrior, Sayf al-Dawla, who conducted regular campaigns against the Byzantines, had produced the splendid poetry of al-Mutanabbi.<sup>79</sup> However, the Muslim warriors of the eleventh century (the century of Manzikert) in Anatolia, Syria and further east, had not fought on a border noted for powerful *jihād* sentiments. So it is more than likely that the source on which al-Husayni drew for this florid piece of prose, full of bathos, was a later, probably twelfth-century writer who attributed the prayer retrospectively to the time of the caliph al-Qa'im. In fact, the prayer can fit any sultan waging *jihād* at any moment.

Not every attempt by al-Husayni, or by the authors whose excerpts he borrowed, to excel in the writing of high Arabic prose can be described as successful.<sup>80</sup> 'Imad al-Din, on the other hand, is a far more skilful writer, even if already in his own time he was regarded as 'too difficult' for his contemporaries. His long and detailed account of the battle of Manzikert which has come down to us in published form in the version of al-Bundari is a very interesting and sophisticated piece of high Arabic prose writing. Underlying its exuberance and power is a very strong element of anti-Christian feeling. The work is imbued with the spirit and, in many instances, the actual words of its far more distinguished originator, 'Imad al-Din. The intensity of that spirit is scarcely surprising, in view of the fact that 'Imad al-Din served both Nur al-Din and Saladin and lived through the heights of Saladin's successes against the Crusaders. Moreover, in view of his close association with Iran and his acquaintance with the memoirs of the Seljuq vizier Anushirwan b. Khalid (d. 538/1138), 'Imad al-Din was in no doubt about the importance of the battle of Manzikert and he therefore composed an extremely elaborate piece of rhetorical prose about it.

This high rhetorical style is not maintained all through his Manzikert account. From time to time 'Imad al-Din paces his story at



a different speed, moving on more quickly by interspersing rhetorical prose with simpler, straightforward phrasing. But at moments of high emotional intensity he deliberately raises the level of literary discourse and he brings out all the rhetorical weapons in his armoury. His account of the battle of Manzikert, even in the 'pruned down' version of it given by his so-called summariser, al-Bundari, is extremely dense, clotted with the most ingenious and wide-ranging word plays. His erudition is sparkling at best, tedious at worst, sometimes gloating, tasteless and unrestrained. But at its best his narrative lends deep religious and cultural resonances to an extraordinary tale. The main focus is the rhetorical potential offered by the battle itself. The ferocity, clash and passion of this epic struggle produce a linguistic *tour de force*. It is the equivalent in prose of the most polished classical poetry. It is intended to be read aloud, probably quite slowly, and savoured aurally; it also repays further attention on close reading. Thus more and more layers of meaning, symbol and allusion are uncovered and are enjoyed by the scholarly elite for whom it was intended. Its impact is incremental and the whole dramatic tension depends on the full appreciation of each phrase in its context and sequence.

In view of the work's dauntingly vast array of short or long sequences of alliteration, assonances, antitheses, metaphors, puns, hyperbole, onomatopoeic terms and other rhetorical devices,<sup>81</sup> further complicated by the intricate inter-relationships between words that are encouraged by the root system of Arabic itself, the comprehension and appreciation of some of the more clotted passages borders on the impossible. 'Imad al-Din, in particular, was a writer who, when the fit was on him, could create virtuoso structures of language balanced, as it were, precariously on a single idea. It is the triumph of manner over matter. But it was written for an audience that appreciated rococo display of this kind for its own sake and that was not inclined to criticise its inherent emptiness. To take just a few examples from the Manzikert passage, we may begin with the triple rhyming phrase of the title:

The account of the going out of the king of Byzantium, his defeat (*kasrihi*), his subjugation (*qasrihi*) and his being taken prisoner (*asrihi*).

A duo of words is sometimes rhythmically balanced with another such phrase:

The affliction of the country (*balā' al-bilād*) would grow greater and the burdens of the faithful (*a'bā' al-'ubbād*) would become heavy.

A trio of words can also be made to rhyme:

This past firm decision (*al-‘azīma al-mādiyya al-qarwiyya*) and copious cutting zeal (*al-ṣarīma al-ṣārīma al-rāwiya*).

A whole sentence can be composed of similar-sounding words with differing meanings:

He led their leader away in fetters (*wa-qāda qā'idahum fi'l qayd*).

The heights of verbal intricacy are reached, for example, in the following baroque phrases:

The sun was complaining of the heat from the sighs of resentments rising up to it (*tuṣā 'id*); it was as if its rays were blood which it had spilled into the horizons and they [the rays] were the stabbings of those lances (*ṣi 'ād*), vanguards (*al-talā'i'*) on high places (*al-maṭāli'*) and death (*al-manāyā*) on the mountain passes (*al-thanāyā*)

and

Armed defenders fought to the death and swarmed round vengeance (*al-kumāt al-ḥumāt yaḥmūna ḥimā al-ḥimām wa-yahūmūna ḥawl al-dhukhūl*).<sup>82</sup>

Small wonder his contemporaries admired him but felt the need to simplify his writings.

### High Persian prose-writing

High prose-writing in Persian was heavily influenced by the didactic nature of the *Mirrors for Princes* genre. Much of Seljuq historiography in Persian, which is also full of literary conceits, has not found favour with western scholars.<sup>83</sup> A taste for writing in the ornate style of Rashid al-Din, in contrast to the simplicity of Nishapuri, for example, may well have come about through the influence of Arabic and its rhetorical tradition, especially since many Persian-speaking scribes from Khurasan accompanied the Seljuqs to the west and may well have been impressed by what they heard and read in Arabic prose-writing.<sup>84</sup> The work of such scribes was constantly on show and subject to criticism from their superiors, peers and their enemies. They quite simply

had to demonstrate elegance and fine workmanship.<sup>85</sup> What they composed was to be read out in public in the highest circles of the land. Correspondence between rulers was a genre which required the very best work and it was written in a spirit of competition.<sup>86</sup>

The account of Rashid al-Din shows many such characteristics of display and ambition. In this high-flown literary account in Persian, key moments in the narrative provide the occasion for lavish verbal conceits and familiar Perso-Islamic motifs. On the one hand, the text is strewn with Qur'anic quotations, but on the other it reveals the influence of other, secular, traditions. It is a fascinating tapestry of motifs and imagery, woven together with considerable skill. Metaphors abound in his writing, as in the following periphrase that announces daybreak:

At daybreak on Friday, at the time when the morning cock crowed 'Come to salvation' and the backgammon players of the heavens gathered up the stones of the fixed stars and the planets on the blue carpet and the quicksilver-coloured playing cloth of the scarlet celestial globe.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly flowery flourishes speak of the coming of night:

The *ghulām* kissed the ground and said: 'The king should remain patient until the bride of the world puts on the veil of collyrium and the intense blackness becomes ornamented with shining stars, until I prepare two horses which race like the wind and the swift-paced violent [storm]. We will betake ourselves until morning to the borders of the realms of Byzantium.'<sup>88</sup>

The banquet given by Alp Arslan in Romanus' honour produces phrases liable to cause the unwary reader as much confusion as the alcoholic stupor it describes:

They listened to the organ, while drinking red wine. When the joy-inducing wine made brains warm, the secluded virgin of stupefaction removed the veil of modesty from the face of conversation.<sup>89</sup>

### **The influence of the *Mirrors for Princes* literature**

This is well illustrated in the Manzikert narrative of al-Turtushi. It should be borne in mind that the well-known and widespread *Mirror for Princes* literature, a genre in which this work of al-Turtushi fits

quite comfortably, has as its aim to teach princes and rulers how to govern. His account of Manzikert has a clear didactic purpose: it is intended by its author to instruct and entertain. Its sole purpose is to present an exemplar of strategic cleverness in battle for a ruler to emulate. In the section of Chapter 61 in which the account of Manzikert is placed, the particular military stratagem under discussion is the use of ambushes. As al-Turtushi writes earlier in the chapter:

Amongst the greatest artifices in war are ambushes. And they are innumerable.<sup>90</sup>

Using examples from the history of the conquest of North Africa and Spain in the early eighth century (an account of the reasons for the Muslim defeat of Roderick in Spain immediately precedes the story of Manzikert), al-Turtushi warns specifically that the leader of the army should take care not to be conspicuous by having telltale marks which can identify him to the enemy, such as his banner or his horse, for 'the eyes of his enemy are focused on him'.<sup>91</sup> Moving on to the account of Manzikert, al-Turtushi emphasises the vast difference in numbers between the Muslim and Byzantine armies, and then praises Alp Arslan for his speedy adoption of a plan to capture the Byzantine emperor and thus to create panic and disarray in the Byzantine army. Indeed, the heart of the matter is contained in the statement:

Alp Arslan had verified [the position of] the tent of the king of Rum, his banner, his horse and his outward appearance.<sup>92</sup>

In this account there is no sense of the sequence of the battle. Everything is over quickly because of Alp Arslan's skill in capturing the emperor and the subsequent disarray amongst his demoralised troops.

It is striking to note that the famous dialogue between Alp Arslan and Romanus Diogenes, mentioned in many of the later Muslim accounts of the battle, does indeed take place in the account of al-Turtushi, but here it is given a different twist. There is no attempt here to praise, idealise or romanticise Alp Arslan's treatment of the Byzantine emperor. To be sure, the Seljuq sultan does indeed ask Romanus what he would have done had he been in the position of having captured Alp Arslan. But instead of the chivalrous and respectful stance attributed to Alp Arslan vis-à-vis his royal captive found in the Byzantine sources and many of the later Arabic and Persian

accounts that deal with this battle, al-Turtushi shows the Seljuq sultan displaying nothing but contempt for him. Indeed, Romanus' status is that of an infidel dog, a point that is exploited as a device to amuse the audience and reinforce the moral of the tale. Although there is no reference here to the impact of the First Crusade on the attitude of al-Turtushi towards Christians, it should be remembered that he lived through the whole experience and it may well have coloured his judgement. Certainly there is violent antipathy expressed towards Romanus Diogenes in his account, combined with pious zeal.

Already in this earliest Muslim account of the battle of Manzikert, then, there is a heightened atmosphere of religious fervour, underlined by al-Turtushi's use of the *topos* that the battle took place on the Muslim holy day, Friday. Alp Arslan is also portrayed as aware of the value of prayer in times of battle, and bolstering the morale of his troops by reminding them that the Muslims to the east and the west of them have been praying for them. Earlier in the chapter, al-Turtushi remarks that in various books about war, their authors prove the efficacy of prayer to God 'from the depth of one's being'.<sup>93</sup>

What is significant, above all, in this early account of the battle of Manzikert is its already well-established moral and propagandistic tone. It had not taken long for this development to occur and for the battle to be used as a Muslim symbol against a Christian enemy. In his account the Turks are viewed as Muslims. Racial distinctions are quite beside the point here.

The narrative has a very long introduction, and – for such an extensive treatment of Manzikert – perhaps the most noticeable feature is that there is no real account of the battle itself. Instead, this is more of a metaphorical account. Its message is that if the commander of the Muslim army focuses in his attack on the leader of the enemy, success will follow. This account describes an attack on the heart of the Byzantine army, namely Romanus Diogenes himself. The ruse of shouting 'the emperor is dead' leads to the total demoralisation and defeat of the enemy.

### **Concluding remarks**

It is clear that the medieval Muslim accounts of the battle of Manzikert are very vague about the military details and the course of the battle itself. The date of it remains highly debatable. If we were to try to reconstruct the battle from Muslim sources alone, we would have very little concrete information. Only the grand sweep and broad outlines

would be known. It is fruitless to hope to reconstruct a battle from medieval Muslim sources.

Like the poets, the medieval Muslim historians discussed here in this chapter, far from producing 'factual' accounts, are much more concerned with extolling the deeds of their military overlords – the Turks – for the entertainment and edification of their listeners. By the thirteenth century, Arab and Persian historians were writing in a Turkified society, and in a highly charged atmosphere punctuated by external attacks both from the Crusaders and from the Mongols. All the weapons in the historians' literary armoury were employed to foster the image of their Turkish masters as good Muslims who would save the Muslim world and Islam. Indeed, for these writers, the eventual victory of the Seljuq sultan at Manzikert was not just a military triumph over the Byzantine emperor. His capture symbolised the subjugation of Christianity by Islam. Manzikert was perceived to be the first step in an epic story in which Turkish-led dynasties would defeat the Christians and proclaim the triumph of Islam.

According to Eco, rhetoric is the art of persuasion. Certainly there was much persuasion needed, as none of the Muslim writers who wrote about Manzikert had been present at the battle and lived indeed a very long time after it had happened. They needed to select the most appropriate *topoi* to establish a 'meeting place' for both audience and author. A repertoire of 'information' and 'themes' about Manzikert was passed from one account to the next, with often only slight variations. What did change, however, was the religious message of these texts, which became increasingly elaborated as the full potential of the story became recognised. The storytelling motifs became more and more embroidered and in some instances some very polished literary works of high 'poetic prose' emerged. A number of overlapping literary 'voices' can be heard in the Manzikert texts: those of the panegyric, the sermon, the prayer, the exemplary, the *jihād* warrior and of course, first and last, the storyteller.<sup>94</sup>

As this chapter has shown, historiography can be employed to reinforce a sense of Islamic identity. When medieval Muslims heard or read the Manzikert narratives – and both modes must be borne in mind – they would react to these accounts, which were often skilfully crafted and ideologically charged, with pride in the achievements of the Seljuqs. But more than that, they would be led to reflect on the inexorable working out of God's will in man's history. They would rejoice in the unstoppable advance of Islam and its triumph over its most ancient foe. And they would draw from this decisive victory fresh

courage and inspiration in dealing with the challenge of the infidel in their own times.

## Notes

1. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, tr. H. Darke, London, 1978.
2. R. G. Collingwood, *The idea of history*, Oxford, 1946, 30–1; quoted by M. I. Finley, *Ancient history. Evidence and models*, London, 1985, 14–15.
3. C. Robinson, *Islamic historiography*, Cambridge, 2003, 130–1; J. Meisami, *Persian historiography*, Edinburgh, 1999, 283–5, 292.
4. H. White, ‘Historicism, history and the figurative imagination’, *History and theory* 14/4 (December 1975), 48–67.
5. M. Waldman, *Towards a theory of historical narrative: a case study in Perso-Islamicate historiography*, Columbus, 1980.
6. Meisami, *Persian historiography*, *passim*.
7. A glance at the translation of the text of al-Bundari begs the question as to how much he actually simplified anything. An examination of the Paris manuscript of the original work of ‘Imad al-Din makes it clear that al-Bundari did not change very much.
8. *EI1*, *Supplement*, H. A. R. Gibb, s.v. *ta’rīkh*, 239.
9. Earlier generations of western scholars, such as Gibb and von Grunebaum, deplore this tendency, perceiving it as a symptom of cultural decline.
10. Considerable attention has been paid to the Byzantine accounts of Manzikert. These provide detailed information about many aspects of the actual battle. Above all, Attaleiates’ eye-witness narrative has given us ‘most of the reliable knowledge on the event that has come down to us’; cf. Vryonis, ‘The Greek and Arabic sources’, 439.

As regards the Arabic and Persian texts, Vryonis argues that they have transformed the Manzikert narrative into ‘rather substantial mythopoiesis’; *ibid.*, 442. He highlights what he perceives as ‘the vast critical distance’ which separates the Arabic texts from ‘the more sophisticated Greek sources’; Vryonis, ‘A personal history’, 228. He is, however, impressed by the ‘rich literary language and the wondrous fairy tale-like nature’ of the contents of the Arabic sources; *ibid.* Nonetheless, his three-fold linear categorisation of the sources for Manzikert, classifying the Greek texts as ‘history’, the Arabic ones as ‘dehistorization’ and the Persian as ‘mythopoiesis’, seems to me to undervalue the Arabic sources and to pay too little attention to the earliest Persian sources; *ibid.*, 239.

11. 'God is most great'. From early Islamic times, the pronouncement of the *tabkīr* was the sign for the battle to begin; cf. A. Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*, Bonn, 1973, 129.
12. 'In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful'.
13. Qur'an 61:12.
14. Qur'an 18:32.
15. Qur'an 8:10.
16. Qur'an 101:4.
17. Qur'an 54:7.
18. Chapter 4, p. 92.
19. Qur'an 16:102 and 26:193. There are other angels in the Qur'an, but the choice of Gabriel here is appropriate both as guardian and in his role of the guarantor of the coherence of the faith; cf. Chapter 3, n. 77.
20. Lane, I/4, 1643; cf. Qur'an 2:153.
21. T. Izutsu, *God and man in the Koran: semantics of Koranic Weltanschauung*, Tokyo, 1964, 205.
22. T. Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'an*, Montreal, 1966, 102.
23. Al-Turtushi, 696.
24. Qur'an 2: 249–50. This verse is used centuries later in the account of the Ottoman sultan Murad's prayer at Varna; cf. C. Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45*, Aldershot, 2006, 41.
25. Qur'an 40:35. It is interesting to note that the Syriac Christian, Matthew of Edessa (tr. Dostourian, 133) and the Armenian Christian, Aristakes, (tr. Canard and Berbérian, 125) both condemn Romanus' pride – Matthew speaks of him as 'arrogant, inflexible, stubborn' and Aristakes as having 'insolent pride'.
26. Qur'an 28:39.
27. Qur'an 28:40.
28. In the biblical account of Pharaoh, there are eleven references between Exodus 7:3 and 14:4 to God hardening Pharaoh's heart.
29. Qur'an 31:18.
30. Ibn al-Azraq, tr. Hillenbrand, 65.
31. Qur'an 7:176.
32. Cf. similar iterative features of the style of the Bible, whose authors use a range of literary devices, including parallelism, chiasmus and a combination of the two; see D. Howlett, *British books in Biblical style*, Dublin, 1997, 2.
33. Chapter 3, p. 61.
34. Chapter 3, n. 82.



35. 'Hast thou seen him who maketh his desire a god, and God sendeth him astray purposely, and sealeth up his hearing and his heart, and setteth on his sight a covering? . . . We die and we live, and naught destroyeth us save time'.
36. Chapter 4, p. 94.
37. For example, Qur'an 7:20: 'Then Satan whispered (*fa-waswasa*) to them'.
38. Chapter 3, p. 55. This is reminiscent of Sayf al-Dawla, the famous Hamdanid ruler and *jihād* warrior, who asked for his corpse to be washed for burial in a mixture of dust from a *jihād* campaign of his and his own blood shed in the path of God.
39. Chapter 3, p. 55. Ibn al-Jawzi mentions the capture of a silver casket which contains a copy of the New Testament; this is sent in triumph to the caliph in Baghdad with the rest of the booty.
40. With the exception of his arch-enemy Reynald of Chatillon, of course.
41. Al-Kisa'i, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, tr. W. M. Thackston, Jr., as *The Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa'i*, Boston, MA, 1978, 110.
42. In his otherwise lively and interesting book, Friendly is determined, for some undisclosed reason, to prove that the battle actually did happen on a Friday. He writes that 'almost the only item that is beyond question is that the battle fell on a Friday'; cf. Friendly, *The dreadful day*, 178.
43. Al-Turtushi, 696.
44. Al-Makin has Friday 20 Dhu'l-Qa'da 463/19 August 1071.
45. Ibn al-Jawzi and Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi give a date which is exactly one week later.
46. 2 October 1187; cf. 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, Gabrieli, 158.
47. The exact date of the fall of Acre is problematic but the month is clearly established; cf. Gabrieli, 347, n. 1.
48. Cf. Abu'l-Fida's account of the fall of Acre at which he was an eyewitness; *Mukhtaṣar tar'ikh al-bashar*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Orientaux*, I, Paris, 1872, 163–5; cf. also F. Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, tr. E. J. Costello, London and Henley, 1969, 346.
49. Cf. C. Melville and A. Ubaydli, *Christians and Moors in Spain*, Warminster, 1992, 92–9.
50. *Ibid.*, 98–9.
51. Chapter 3, p. 72.
52. Chapter 4, p. 100.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Chapter 3, p. 55.
55. Chapter 4, p. 99–100.

56. Chapter 3, p. 70.
57. Ibn al-ʿAdim describes the cross taken in the preliminary skirmish before the actual battle as ‘their biggest cross’; cf. Chapter 3, p. 74.
58. Chapter 2, p. 38.
59. Chapter 4, p. 93.
60. Chapter 2, p. 40.
61. Chapter 3, p. 53.
62. Chapter 3, p. 60.
63. Chapter 3, p. 62.
64. Bar Hebraeus, the very erudite Christian Arab writer, admires Romanus at the dangerous moment when he is responding to Alp Arslan’s question. Bar Hebraeus writes that Romanus was very careful in his response to Alp Arslan because Romanus ‘was a wise and understanding man, spake words carefully chosen and arranged’; Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography of Gregory Abu’l Faraj, the Hebrew physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, facsimile ed. and tr. E. A. W. Budge, London, 1932, 246.
65. As, for example in the account of Rashid al-Din; cf. Chapter 4, p. 92.
66. As, for example, in the account of Ibn al-Jawzi; cf. Chapter 2, p. 39.
67. Chapter 3, p. 72.
68. Matthew, 41 (pl. 8).
69. Saladin addressed his high-ranking captive, Reynald, reproving him in forceful language for his treachery and breaking of his oath, and then struck him with his sword, giving orders that his followers should cut off his head; cf. Gabrieli, 134.
70. Chapter 2, pp. 38–9.
71. There are many classical models for this, and notably Aristotle.
72. Cf. Egan, ‘Thucydides, tragedian’, in *The writing of history*, 79–80.
73. Cf. *ibid.*, 77–9.
74. There is a range of negative comments about this kind of prose-writing in Arabic. Lane-Poole spoke of the ‘intolerable rhetoric’ of ‘Imad al-Din; *apud* H. A. R. Gibb, ‘The Arabic sources for the life of Saladin’, in Gibb, *Studies in Islamic history*, ed. Y. Ibish, Beirut, 1972, 54. This view was shared by Gibb, who complained that the same ‘continuous and prolonged narration of events in this style is tedious and intolerable’. Gabrieli valiantly translated excerpts from the work of ‘Imad al-Din and spoke of his ‘wearisome obscurities’; cf. Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, 114.

Landberg, on the other hand, found the effort of reading such prose ultimately rewarding; Gibb, ‘The Arabic sources, 55. Anyone who attempts to translate the work of ‘Imad al-Din, even in the summary of al-Bundari, emerges full of admiration for his quite extraordinary virtuosity.

75. *EI2*, s.v. *tadjnās* (W. P. Heinrichs); *EI2*, s.v. *badīʿ* (M. Khalafallah).
76. For a recent analysis of ʿImad al-Din al-Isfahani, cf. L. Richter-Bernburg, *Der syrische Blitz. Saladins Sekretär zwischen Selbstdarstellung und Geschichtschreibung*, Beirut, 1998.
77. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 53–4.
78. Ibn Nubata, *Dīwān khutab Ibn Nubāta*, ed. T. al-Jazaʿiri, Beirut, 1894.
79. Cf. the discussion in C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic perspectives*, Edinburgh, 1999, 101–3.
80. Cf. the detailed criticisms of him in Chapter 3, p. 79, n. 19.
81. Such rhetorical devices have their own terminology in Arabic.
82. Chapter 3, pp. 60–1.
83. Morton, for example recently labelled the style of the Persian Seljuq chronicler Rawandi ‘a turgid combination of rhetorical ornamentation and moralising comment’; *Saljūqnāma*, 55.
84. K. A. Luther, ‘Islamic rhetoric and the Persian historians, 1000–1300AD’, in *Studies in Near Eastern Culture in memory of Ernest T. Abdel – Massih*, Ann Arbor, 1990, 90–1; Meisami, 297.
85. Luther, ‘Islamic rhetoric’, 93–4.
86. The Persian tradition about Manzikert has certain characteristics which it shares with the Arabic narratives about the battle, whilst also demonstrating interesting differences. Given the high level of cultural achievements of the Persian bureaucrats employed by the Seljuqs, it is not surprising that many of them were highly skilled in both Arabic and Persian. Nor were the two historiographical traditions hermetically sealed, although the relationship between histories written in the two languages is a complex scholarly problem.
87. Chapter 4, p. 92.
88. Chapter 4, p. 93.
89. *Ibid.*
90. Al-Turtushi, 684.
91. *Ibid.*, 691.
92. *Ibid.*, 696.
93. Alarcón, *Lámpara*, 325.
94. Christine Woodhead speaks about these literary ‘voices’ in connection with the Ottoman historiographical tradition, and in particular, with the Ottoman campaign histories in the *gazaname* tradition, a tradition which was especially popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Intended for public recitation at court, such works helped to reinforce cultural identity; cf. C. Woodhead, ‘The Ottoman *gazaname*: stylistic influences on the writing of campaign narratives’, in *Great Ottoman Turkish Civilisation, III*, ed. K. Çiçek, Ankara, 1999, 55–60. The prayers

of the sultan on the battlefield were a regular and central feature of Ottoman battle narratives, showing the exemplary nature of the sultan's leadership qualities (cf. Suleyman before the battle of Mohács in 1526). What is interesting to note here is that these traits of Ottoman historiography have their clear roots in the much earlier accounts of the battle of Manzikert in Arabic and Persian.



PART 2

---

# **THE LEGACY OF THE BATTLE**



# The ongoing Muslim–Christian confrontation: the victorious contribution of the Turks

*God made the sun rise from the zodiac of the Turks; made the states, which resemble the spheres in the heavens, revolve within the circle of their authority; and made the Turks the masters over the face of the earth* (Mahmud Kashgari)<sup>1</sup>

## Introductory comments

Almost from the very moment that the sedentary Muslims of Iran and Iraq realised that the new Islamic military elite – the leaders of the nomadic Turks – were going to remain inside the Islamic world, the scholarly and bureaucratic Arab and Persian establishment began to write works justifying the Turkish seizure of power. Their panegyrics, in prose and poetry, praised the military prowess of the Turks, their prosecution of *jihād* and the respectability of their credentials as Sunni Muslims. The bureaucrat Ibn Hassul, working in the service of the Seljuqs in the 1050s,<sup>2</sup> extols the virtues of the first Seljuq sultan, Tughril (ruled 431–55/1040–63), emphasising his justice and mercy.<sup>3</sup> Speaking of the Turks in general, he singles out their heroism<sup>4</sup> and endurance:

God has created them in the shape of lions, with broad faces and flat noses. Their muscles are strong, their fists are enormous and their bodies hairless . . . They are accustomed to desert and steppe . . . When they gallop their horses they continue as vigorously as when they began . . . They ascend high mountains, ride in the face of danger, climb distant peaks, raid narrow abysses, and go deep into unknown lands.

In the 1090s, the famous religious scholar al-Ghazali (died 505/1111) followed suit in putting on a brave face and accepting Turkish military power as a ‘necessary evil’:



In this age of ours, from amongst the various kinds of human beings it is the Turks who possess force . . . There is not one among them who on seeing strife beyond its frontiers (i.e. those of the Seljuq state) would not fight in the way of God, waging *jibād* against the infidels.<sup>5</sup>

Writing in the early twelfth century, the Persian author Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi extols the virtues of the conquering Turks in the following terms:

The Turcomans spread through the Islamic lands and there displayed an excellent character. So much so that they ruled over the greater part of these territories, becoming kings and sultans<sup>6</sup>. . . Those who live in deserts and steppes and lead a nomadic life in winter and summer are the strongest of men and the most enduring in battle and warfare.<sup>7</sup>

Like it or not, the Persians in Central Asia and Iran and the Arabs in Iraq, Syria, and eventually Egypt, were forced to admit that their new governors were Turks. But they could not foresee that this situation would prevail until the modern era.

Different writers and scholars nowadays might choose different landmarks from those selected in this chapter to trace the military and religious history of the Turks from their arrival in Anatolia in the eleventh century, and the victory at Manzikert, until the decline of the Ottoman empire by the nineteenth century. However, the decision taken here to demarcate this evolution through important battles and sieges – rather than through, say, political, economic or social history – will perhaps prove to be an illuminating and useful exercise in a key theme, the centuries-long Muslim/Christian, Turkish/Greek and Ottoman/Western European ideological conflict. The major milestones are well known – Manzikert, Myriokephalon and the fall of Constantinople – but other, lesser-known events and episodes will also be highlighted to demonstrate the power and tenacity of a tradition of Muslim, anti-Christian rhetoric focused on the military achievements of the rulers of the central Islamic lands – the Turks.

### **The immediate legacy of Manzikert in poetry: the battle as a rallying cry**

The victory of Alp Arslan at Manzikert in 1071 was destined to have a long afterlife. It was, moreover, not only in Anatolia, the site of the battle, that Turks, lately arrived in territories far from their original

homeland, bore aloft the banner of Islam in a protracted struggle against a Christian enemy. The lamentable lack of extant Muslim historical sources dating from the period 1050 to 1150 has already been noted in this book. Given the few explicit hints in the surviving literary works, we can therefore only imagine the inspirational impact, the propagandistic value and the political capital that the court chroniclers and poets working for late eleventh- and twelfth-century Turkish rulers of the Islamic world, and especially those in Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Anatolia, derived from this key victory against the Byzantine Christian empire. This, after all, was the only victory over the Byzantines which had resulted in the capture of the infidel emperor himself. So it was not easily forgotten. And it was an easy transition to utilise the triumph at Manzikert and apply its ideological potential to the new struggle with the Christian Crusaders, after their dramatic and unexpected arrival in Syria and the Holy Land from 1098 onwards, and their protracted stay of almost two centuries on Muslim soil.

After Manzikert, poetry proved a fertile ground for the continuing exploitation of the congenial theme of glorifying Turkish military triumphs against a Christian enemy. Take distant Iran, for example – the favoured land of the Great Seljuq sultans. The Persian poet Mu‘izzi (born 440/1048–9), for example, makes a number of references to the victories of his master Malikshah, the son and heir of Alp Arslan, in Rum (Byzantium). Since Mu‘izzi’s father, ‘Abd al-Malik Burhani Nishapuri (d. 465/1072–3), had been the court poet (*amīr al-shu‘arā*) of Alp Arslan himself,<sup>8</sup> one can well imagine that Mu‘izzi had heard of the great triumph at Manzikert from his own father.<sup>9</sup> Be that as it may, Mu‘izzi is at pains to portray Malikshah as continuing and building on his father’s achievements in Byzantium; in one place the poet declaims:

He is a *ghāzī* whose aim is to destroy the Byzantine empire and its  
Christian idol-temples

whilst in another poem he writes:

In three months he tamed Rum and the Arabs;  
No-one had ever dreamed such a thing could be done.<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis is on the ease of Malikshah’s conquests. Addressing the sultan directly, the poet declares:

You conquered Syria with a (mere) threat, without war or battle;  
 You took Rum with one message, without sword or spear.<sup>11</sup>

By the fourteenth century, a much more famous Persian writer, Rashid al-Din, probably building on a tradition well established by his own time, includes the following passage at the end of his account of Manzikert:<sup>12</sup>

He [Alp Arslan] gave orders to the commanders that they should venture deep into the lands of Byzantium, that each territory or city they succeeded in seizing and acquiring,<sup>13</sup> each one should have it, together with his relatives and sons, and that nobody apart from him should gain access or control over it.

Amir Saltuq immediately took Erzurum and its adjoining dependencies. Amir Artuq took Mardin, Amid, Manzikert, Malatya, Kharput and those places which are even until today attached and linked to them.<sup>14</sup> Danişmend took Kayseri, Zamandu,<sup>15</sup> Siwas, Davalu,<sup>16</sup> Tokat, Niksar and Amasya. Çavlı took Mar'ash and Sarus. Amir Mengücek Ghazi took the districts of Erzinjan, Kamakh,<sup>17</sup> Kughuniyya<sup>18</sup> and other districts in their entirety.

Here one is conscious once again of a mythical dimension to the text and of an attempt to develop its potential as a building block of Turkish history. The inclusion in a fourteenth-century text of these details about Alp Arslan sending certain Turkish commanders to Anatolia after the battle to seize whatever Byzantine lands they can points both backwards to the distant eleventh century and forwards to a future dominated by the Turks of Anatolia, the great Ottoman dynasty. This amounts to a retrospective legitimising of Seljuq power in Anatolia and the linking of the Great Seljuqs to the Seljuqs of Rum. A line of Turkish prestige based on participation in the battle of Manzikert is thus established.

### **The crusading context**

We turn now to the arena of the First Crusade. Little contemporary evidence exists to document the reaction of the Muslims living in Syria and Palestine to the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders in 1099 and the subsequent setting up of Crusader states in traditionally Muslim territory. That is why the few surviving poems which date from the early twelfth century in that area are such valuable evidence. Even allowing for the stereotypical nature of medieval Arabic poetry, these verses

carry a potent emotional charge, as they bemoan the flagging spirit of *jihād* which, in the view of the poets, has brought about the Muslim defeats by the Crusaders (the Franks).

Much nearer to the newly won territories of the Franks, one of these Arab poets, Ibn al-Khayyat, writing for his patron, ‘Adb al-Dawla, a military commander in Damascus in the early twelfth century, rails against the massacres perpetrated by the Franks and calls on the Muslims to rise up against them. The climax of one such poem recalls the great victory of Alp Arslan at Manzikert:<sup>19</sup>

For indeed, in circumstances like this, Alp Arslan marched out and  
wielded the cutting edge of the sword.  
He has become more lasting in remembrance than the stars<sup>20</sup>  
And more brilliant in glory than the sun.

Thus the scene has shifted from Anatolia to Syria, from one Christian enemy, the Byzantine empire, to another, the newly arrived Crusaders. Such a political, ethnic and geographical transition is easily made. Writing in the last decades of the eleventh century, Mu‘izzi, the Persian poet quoted earlier, is speaking of the Great Seljuq sultan Malikshah – one son of Alp Arslan – who is ruling in Iran but whose sovereignty extends to the frontiers of Byzantium. Ibn al-Khayyat, in the early decade of the twelfth century, is writing in Syria, the appanage of the Seljuq prince Tutush, another son of Alp Arslan; his lands now border Crusader territory. So Manzikert can be invoked in both cases. And a precedent has been set; the new Rumis are the Franks and the newcomers will be vilified with the same epithets as those previously attached to the long-standing Christian enemy, the Byzantines.

But a greater emotional intensity will inform this anti-Christian rhetoric after the shock of the coming of the Franks. And it is Mu‘izzi, writing in Persian in distant Iran, who sets the tone. Addressing Malikshah’s son, Berkyaruq, almost certainly just after the capture of Antioch by the crusaders in 491/1098, he calls on him to lead the *jihād* in a violently anti-Christian tirade which embraces both Byzantium and the newly conquered crusader state of Antioch:

For the sake of the Arab religion, it is a duty, o *ghāzī* king,  
To clear the country of Syria of patriarchs and bishops, to clear the land  
of Rum from priests and monks.  
You should kill those accursed dogs and wretched creatures, the wolves  
who have sharpened their teeth and claws.

You should take the Franks prisoner and cut their throats, with jeweled, life-devouring, blood-spurting daggers.  
 You should make polo-balls of the Franks' heads in the desert, and polo-sticks from their hands and feet.<sup>21</sup>

### **Nur al-Din and Saladin – the two great twelfth-century Muslim leaders against the Franks**

The activities of the famous Turkish military commanders in Syria, Palestine and Egypt against the Frankish intruders are much better known than those of the Seljuqs of Rum against the Byzantines. The adapting of the Islamic repertoire of anti-Christian images used against Byzantium to attack the Crusaders gained momentum towards the middle of the twelfth century. As in their depiction of Alp Arslan, Muslim chroniclers give pride of place to the religious dimension in their accounts of the careers of Nur al-Din and Saladin. However much this is image-making on their part, that is the way they wish to portray these two usurping warlords. The rhetoric sweeps away ethnic labels; indeed, Saladin is seen as an 'honorary Turk'.<sup>22</sup> Saladin's contemporary, the poet Ibn Sana' al-Mulk, celebrates Saladin's capture of Aleppo in 579/1183 as a *Turkish* Muslim victory:

The community of the Arabs has become powerful by means of the empire of the Turks.<sup>23</sup>

This 'Turkish' victory thus redounds to the glory of the Arabs in a true spirit of pan-Islamic unity.

The chronicler Abu Shama (d. 665/1267) sees no difficulty in drawing a comparison between Nur al-Din and Saladin; for him this is a comparison between two pious Muslim sultans:

I found the two of them amongst the moderns like the two 'Umars – may God be pleased with them – amongst the ancients, for indeed each second of the two groups followed in identical fashion the example of the one who had preceded him in justice and *jihād* and strove to strengthen the religion of God. And what a striving!<sup>24</sup>

Here two virtuous caliphs of early Islam – 'Umar I and 'Umar II – are paired with Nur al-Din and Saladin.

In his *History of the Atabegs of Mosul*,<sup>25</sup> a work which is unashamedly biased in favour of Nur al-Din and his descendants at

Mosul, Ibn al-Athir explains how he wishes to record their achievements:

I was resolved to record accounts about them and to assemble their traces and to mention what Almighty God has bestowed on Islam and the Muslims and what protection He has afforded to their [the Muslims'] frontiers by their fighting and what punishment He has imposed on the Franks at their hands and what territories of theirs [the Franks] He has rescued by their *jihād*.

A similar focus on the role of defender of the frontier is made for Saladin by the poet Abu'l-Hasan b. Dharawi after Saladin's triumph at the battle of Hattin in 583/1187:

You have protected the frontiers of the Muslims  
 And they have become frontiers rinsed with the waters of iron lances  
 You have taken the kings of unbelief captive and you have left unbelief  
 With no vein in it pulsating with the forces of life.<sup>26</sup>

It may not be too fanciful to see here, perhaps, an oblique reference not only to Saladin's achievement in taking the king of Jerusalem prisoner at the battle but also to Alp Arslan's famous capture of the Byzantine emperor at Manzikert a century earlier.<sup>27</sup>

### **The battle of Myriokephalon, 572/1176: a lost historiographical opportunity**

Only a century or so after the battle of Manzikert, in 572/1176, the Seljuq Turks, now more securely established in Anatolia with their capital in Konya and ruling a more developed Perso-Islamic state,<sup>28</sup> inflicted another defeat on the Byzantine army at Myriokephalon near Lake Eğridir. It was in a number of significant aspects a replay of Manzikert.

A few words about the course of the battle are necessary as background here. After the death of the powerful 'counter-crusade' Turkish ruler Nur al-Din in Syria, in 569/1174, the Seljuq sultan Qilij Arslan (d. 588/1192) had little to restrain him from pursuing his own aim of expanding his suzerainty in Anatolia. On the Byzantine side too, the emperor, Manuel Comnenus, was also keen to wage war, and had his sights on Konya. In the summer of 1176, therefore, Manuel moved at the head of a large, strong army towards

Konya by way of the upper Menderes valley; from Soublaion he advanced slowly in the direction of Myriokephalon with a vast baggage train.

Qilij Arslan lay in wait for the Byzantine army in an ambush at the Tsivritze Pass beyond Myriokephalon. Going through the narrow pass, the Byzantine army was stretched out over as much as ten miles. Its vanguard emerged safely from the pass, protected by the infantry, and the main body of the army managed to join up with them. But it was then that the Turks sprang into action and attacked the right wing of the Byzantine army, which was protecting the baggage train. They were then pinned against the steep slopes of the southern side of the pass and they had little hope of being able to manoeuvre themselves out of such a confined space. Animal corpses and the debris of carts prevented the two halves of the Byzantine army from joining up again. They sustained heavy losses and the Turks blocked the centre of the pass. The baggage train was trapped. At that point Manuel decided to try to extricate himself and reach the safety of the vanguard. Both sides waited until dawn to resume the battle but when morning came, Qilij Arslan offered peace terms, which Manuel took with alacrity. Such is the generally accepted outline of events during the battle of Myriokephalon.<sup>29</sup>

For knowledge of Myriokephalon scholars have had to rely almost exclusively on the accounts of the defeated side, written by the Byzantine chroniclers, as well as other narratives of the battle found in the Oriental and western medieval Christian sources.<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that Manuel himself included a graphic account of what he clearly viewed as his own disastrous defeat in a letter dated November 1176, which he wrote to Henry II of England.<sup>31</sup> The Crusader historian William of Tyre takes a similarly lugubrious view of the effect of the battle on Manuel:

In short, the ever-present memory of that defeat so oppressed him that never again did he enjoy peace of mind or his usual tranquility of spirit.<sup>32</sup>

There is – inexplicably – only one extant *Muslim* source on Myriokephalon. The battle is dealt with very briefly and allusively in an anonymous fourteenth-century Persian chronicle of Seljuq history entitled *Tāʾrīkh-i āl-i Saljūq dar Anaṭūlyā* (*The History of the Seljūq family in Anatolia*).<sup>33</sup> The unknown author of this work dates the battle accurately to the year 572/1176–7. He relates how Manuel wanted to attack the territories of Islam and came with an army of

70,000 infantry. The sultan selected 1,700 cavalry and then the hostilities began:

He struck the drums of war on the first night and attacked the enemy.  
By the morning the infidels were routed.

With his retreat blocked by the sultan, Manuel sued for peace and undertook to pay the sultan 100,000 gold pieces and 100,000 silver *dirhams*, as well as horses, textiles and other objects as tribute. He then returned to his own territory.<sup>34</sup>

We can see here some isolated fragments of the generally accepted Christian version of the battle – the bellicose intentions of Manuel, a large discrepancy in the size of the two armies, the speed of the Seljuq victory, the rapid request for peace by Manuel and details of the tribute imposed by Qilij Arslan. No precise geographical information is given. Although the numbers of the Byzantine troops and the size of the tribute are obviously exaggerated, the anonymous author of this text does little to exploit this Seljuq victory for ideological reasons, as he could well have done. However, it has to be admitted that the laconic format of this particular chronicle does not, in any case, encourage such historiographical strategies. In view of the apparently general silence in the other Muslim chronicles about this battle, this enigmatic account written some two centuries later acquires special value, even if it is difficult to assess its importance properly.

Whilst there is a rich store of modern Byzantinist research which deals with this battle, the same cannot be said of work done on it within the context of the modern writing on the Seljuqs of Anatolia. The plain fact of the matter is that scholars of medieval Islamic history, both western and Turkish, have tended to overlook Myriokephalon. Even Cahen, who wrote many pioneering articles on the early presence of the Turks in Anatolia, gives scant attention to this battle.<sup>35</sup> It is therefore fortunate that Vryonis provides such a thorough account of Myriokephalon, based on all available sources, and also mentioning briefly the only extant Muslim narrative.<sup>36</sup> Amongst modern Turkish scholars it is really only Köymen who sees any overall significance in the battle. As will be shown in Chapter 7, Köymen describes the encounter as an attempt by the Byzantines ‘to drive the Turks out of their new homeland’.<sup>37</sup>

There is ongoing scholarly debate about the significance of Myriokephalon for subsequent Byzantine history.<sup>38</sup> The resemblance between this battle and that of Manzikert just over a hundred years



earlier is mentioned by Cahen<sup>39</sup> very briefly and by Vryonis at greater length. In their view, it is right to argue that just as Manzikert may be viewed as a convenient historical event to mark the full-scale and unchecked infiltration into Byzantine Anatolia by the Turkish nomads in the eleventh century, so too it is possible to see Myriokephalon as the moment when Byzantine hopes of expelling or assimilating the nomads under their sway were annihilated. Like Manzikert, Myriokephalon is a significant milestone in the Turkification and Islamisation of Anatolia. Vryonis attaches great importance to Myriokephalon not only because in his view it spelt the end of 'Byzantine plans to conquer Asia Minor', but also because the defeat had 'a very demoralizing effect' on Manuel and on the Greek inhabitants of Anatolia.<sup>40</sup> In fact, Vryonis goes so far as to say that Myriokephalon is the 'single most significant event' to have taken place on Anatolian soil since Manzikert.<sup>41</sup> He also stresses that the battle took place far to the west of Manzikert, thus underlining the progress the Turks had made in the intervening century in consolidating their hold over substantial parts of Anatolia.<sup>42</sup> The French Byzantinist Cheynet reinforces this view, saying that Myriokephalon marked for Byzantium the relinquishing of territorial claims to the Anatolian plateau.<sup>43</sup>

Other Byzantinists argue that the battle seems not to have been such a disaster after all. Angold, for example, points out that the Byzantine army emerged from this encounter 'more or less intact'.<sup>44</sup> However, here is not the place to discuss whether or not the battle had a serious impact on subsequent Byzantine military strength. But one significant point should be stressed about the Byzantine perception of the battle; however much its impact may be minimised nowadays by scholars, it was in fact viewed as a major catastrophe in the twelfth century itself. As already mentioned, Manuel himself said so in a letter to the people of Constantinople, comparing his defeat to that suffered by Romanus Diogenes at Manzikert.<sup>45</sup> The psychological impact of this perception is not to be underrated.

What is more interesting in the particular context of this book is the question of why the battle of Manzikert receives such thorough coverage in the medieval Arabic and Persian sources while Myriokephalon does not, and why such great propagandistic advantage is derived from the first of these Turkish victories against the Byzantines whilst the second is glossed over in almost complete silence.

In many respects there are significant similarities between the narratives of Manzikert and Myriokephalon. In both cases the protagonists

are the same, both battles take place on Anatolian soil, both armies are led by their respective sovereigns, both encounters result in Turkish victory and both show perhaps surprising lenience on the part of the Seljuq sultan towards the Byzantine emperor. So why does the second of these Seljuq triumphs fall, so to speak, into a historiographical black hole? Why does the Turkish victory at Myriokephalon in 1176 remain ignored and unexploited by medieval Muslim chroniclers, and, significantly, by the same ones who expatiate at length and with great enthusiasm on the victory at Manzikert a century earlier? The historiographical potential of Myriokephalon is totally neglected and it is particularly noteworthy that the great Muslim chroniclers of the thirteenth century, and above all, Ibn al-Athir, overlook this seminal event in Anatolian history.

A partial – though not entirely satisfactory – answer to these questions would appear to be the preoccupation of the great thirteenth-century historians of Syria, Egypt and even Iraq in their accounts of the 570s/1170s with the Muslim struggle with the Franks, and especially with the exploits of Saladin, which were just beginning. And yet, it has to be admitted, a chronicler such as Ibn al-Athir finds room in his narrative, essentially a history of the Islamic world, for events in distant North Africa and Spain. So why not in nearby Anatolia? Certainly, the *mise-en-scène* had shifted, and with it the focus of those who wrote the history of the times. Anatolia was no longer centre stage. In other words, the ongoing struggle between Islam and Christianity was a drama that, in their view, was now being played out not in distant Anatolia, as at Manzikert, but on Syrian, Egyptian and Palestinian soil against the Franks rather than the Byzantines. So Myriokephalon lost out not just to Manzikert but also to Hattin. Perhaps the key part of the latter narrative clinched the preference for it on the part of later writers – the capture of the Byzantine emperor himself and its wonderful ideological potential, with the illustrious head of eastern Christendom being taken prisoner by a mere Muslim slave. Manzikert was, moreover, the *first* major victory of the Turks in Anatolia and could therefore be used as a potent hinge of history.

As for the Seljuqs of Rum themselves, they had to wait nearly for a century or more for their royal chronicler Ibn Bibi, and the beginnings of a true court historiographical tradition, based on Konya, to appear.<sup>46</sup> His panegyric dynastic history of the Seljuqs, written in elaborate Persian, starts only in the year 588/1192 and ends in 679/1280. Sadly, Ibn Bibi does not indulge in a retrospective glance at earlier Seljuq rulers in Rum or Iran (in fact, he lacked information up

to the reign of Kaykubad I – 616/1219 to 633/1236) and he mentions neither Manzikert or Myriokephalon in his work.<sup>47</sup> Thus a proper sense of historical context for the dynasty that he extols so enthusiastically is missing. Apart from Myriokephalon, any court chronicler of the Rum Seljuqs would look in vain over the lifetime of the dynasty for a glorious military triumph on the battlefield; the only other significant battle, an ignominious defeat by the Mongols at Köse Dagħ in 641/1243, is best glossed over in silence. So it is interesting that even locally in Muslim Anatolia the battle of Myriokephalon was not engraved in the memory of the court chronicler at Konya.

### Early Turkish folk literature in Anatolia

Early folk literature, written in Turkish, played its part in perpetuating in the popular memory the exploits of the first Turkish heroes in Anatolia. A work such as the *Battāl-nāma* helped to keep alive the spirit of *ghazā*, the *jihād* against the infidel on the frontier with Byzantium.<sup>48</sup> This still little-known body of literature, recited and sung long before it was written down, reinforced the emphasis on *jihād* found in the ‘learned’ historiographical works, composed by Arabic and Persian religious scholars and bureaucrats working for the ruling Turkish dynasts.

Turkish folk literature records the exploits of *alps* (heroes) and *ghāzīs* (warriors for the faith). One such *ghāzī*, Sayyid Battal, who participated in the Umayyad campaigns of the seventh century into Anatolia, became the foundation for many *ghāzī* legends. The *Battāl-nāma* deals ostensibly with the Arab confrontation with Byzantium during the early Abbasid period. However, it hints at events within the context of the later Turkish struggle against Byzantium and evokes the process by which the Anatolian heroes who fought on the frontiers conquered the Christian Byzantine empire.<sup>49</sup> Committed to written form in the fifteenth century (the earliest extant manuscript is dated 840/1436–7), the oral roots of the *Battāl-nāma* may well go back as far as the twelfth-century Turkish Danishmendid dynasty in Malatya. Two other works, the *Dānīshmend-nāma* and the *Saltuqnāma*, are also set within the milieu of the frontier marches between Byzantine and Muslim territory with a shared rich heroic tradition of storytelling. These ‘epic’ accounts portray within a vague chronological framework the gradual but inexorable Turkish conquest of Rum.<sup>50</sup>

The *Battāl-nāma* begins with a fanciful prophecy about the Muslim conquest of Byzantine lands. A young man called ‘Abd al-Wahhab

tells none other than the Prophet Muhammad about this highly desirable new land:

‘Apostle of God, I have travelled far and wide and visited many climes, but of all the places I have seen, I never saw a place like the land of Rum. Its towns are close to each other, its rivers are full of water, its springs are gushing . . . and its people are extremely friendly, except that they are all infidels’. And he described it at such great length that the blessed mind of the Apostle became very fond of Rum indeed.<sup>51</sup>

This conversation is then followed up by an anachronistic, authenticating, ‘revelation’ from God through the Angel Gabriel:

My blessed Apostle has taken a liking to Rum, so I on my part must grant that province to his community. May they pull down its monasteries and set up mosques and madrasas in their places.<sup>52</sup>

In the military exploits of Sayyid Battal Ghazi, the *jihād* atmosphere and ethos of battles waged between Muslims and Christians, be they Byzantines or Crusaders, are evoked in phrasing similar to that used at the battle of Manzikert:

As for the army, the cavalry charged and shot arrows. Battal gave a war-cry and charged in attack. The army of Islam shouted ‘God is great’ and also charged in attack. Thus the armies mingled and there was tremendous bloodshed. Battal moved along planting banners and breaking through the enemy divisions until he snatched the standard with the shape of the cross. Finally the enemy army was defeated and turned to fleeing.<sup>53</sup>

The work ends with an account of the events leading to Battal’s death. When he is in Medina, the Prophet appears to him in a dream, telling him to go to Rum, for the Muslims there are ‘in dire straits’. Sustained and heartened by Muhammad’s voice of support from his ‘holy and sacred tomb’, the Sayyid, who has now become old and weak, sets off again for Rum. Later, after valiant fighting in battle, he delivers a valedictory sermon, stressing his devotion to *jihād*:

I have tried to do whatever I could on the path of God, I lowered the heads of the enemies of religion . . . As much as my powers allowed me I struggled in the path of religion, at times on land, at times at sea.<sup>54</sup>

What matters in such works of folk literature is not history but heroic legend. The heroes whose exploits are sung are Muslim warriors for the faith, regardless of their ethnic origins, Arab or Turkish. So the exploits of the shadowy figure of Sayyid Battal Ghazi are effortlessly associated and conflated with those of the Turks after Manzikert. The Turkish newcomers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries establish continuity with the Arab Muslim past in the same geographical area and they inherit the glorious Muslim pedigree personified in Battal.<sup>55</sup>

### Epigraphic evidence from thirteenth-century Anatolia

For eighty years or so after Manzikert – a period in which the nomadic Turks continued to infiltrate Anatolia and put down roots there – there are very few surviving monumental inscriptions signifying their presence and announcing how their leaders saw themselves. In the wake of the post-1092 fragmentation of the Seljuq state, Turkish warlords and commanders, such as the Artuqids of Mardin, the Nisanids of Amid (modern Diyarbakir) and the Shah-i Arman dynasty which ruled the area around Lake Van, established small, more long-lasting principalities in eastern Anatolia. The few monumental inscriptions that have survived from that region in the twelfth century reveal that these rulers liked to view themselves publicly as fighters of *jihād* against the Christians on the Byzantine border.<sup>56</sup> An inscription in the name of the Mencükid ruler of Diwriği, Amir Shahanshah, dated 592/1195–6, is revealing in this respect; this minor Turkish ruler is hailed as:

Refuge of the *ghāzīs* who profess the oneness (of God), defender of the frontiers of the believers, slayer of the infidels and polytheists, . . . hero (*pahlawān*) of Byzantium, Syria and Armenia . . . the martyr, the *ghāzī*.<sup>57</sup>

These grandiose Muslim titles, moreover, stand side by side with proud ancient Turkish names – Alp (hero) Qutluğh (fortunate) and Tughrultegin (falcon prince).<sup>58</sup>

Such a public stance was adopted especially by the Seljuqs of Rum, who, positioned further to the west as they were, remained keenly aware of their position on the actual frontier with Byzantium. So the historiographical silence over the great Seljuq victory at Myriokephalon should not lead one to imagine that its impact was not felt and exploited locally by the Seljuq sultans of Anatolia and their entourage. The Seljuqs' star was in the ascendant as the second half of

the twelfth century progressed, and some signs of their increasingly self-confident image vis-à-vis Christian Byzantium can be teased out of the monumental inscriptions that they commissioned in newly conquered cities and lands. Indeed, the foundation inscriptions of Seljuq Anatolia, with their stereotypical formulae, may be viewed, as it were, as official documents.<sup>59</sup> They therefore help in filling the gap left by the relative dearth of contemporary chronicles. That said, they obey the rules of a different, if parallel, set of literary conventions. They should be seen less as a source of 'factual' evidence and more as a type of official proclamation.

The 'Ala al-Din mosque in Konya bears an inscription around the *minbar* in the name of the energetic Seljuq sultan Qilij Arslan II; it dates from early in his reign, around 551/1156.<sup>60</sup> In it the Seljuq sultan is accorded grandiose *jihād* titles:

The mighty sultan, the greatest King of Kings, lord of the sultans of the Arabs and Persians, possessors of the necks of the nations, glory of the world and religion, pillar of Islam and the Muslims, pride of kings and sultans, helper of the truth by proofs, killer of the infidels and the polytheists, aid of the warriors of *jihād*, guardian of the lands of God, protector of the servants of God, supporter of the caliph of God, sultan of the countries of Rum, Armenia, the Franks and Syria, Abu'l-Fath Qilij Arslan b. Mas'ud b. Qilij Arslan, helper of the Commander of the Faithful, may God make his rule endure and his power doubled.

By its conscious use of a traditional repertoire of regnal titles (such as 'pillar of Islam and the Muslims', or 'possessor of the necks of the nations'), this very ambitious inscription places Qilij Arslan firmly in a long line of pious Sunni rulers who 'support and help' the caliph and promote Sunni Islam. Yet there is also a clear allusion here to the current and grandiose territorial aspirations of the sultan, who is shown as having his eyes firmly set on ruling the lands of *all* Christian rulers within his reach – Byzantine, Armenian and Frank. The victory at Myriokephalon is yet to come, but already that future triumph can be seen in retrospect as a logical part of the programme of conquest planned by this ruler, who at the time of the inscription has only just taken over the reins of power. The grandiose claims made in this inscription, including his right to govern *Byzantine* lands,<sup>61</sup> make Qilij Arslan look even better than his Turkish arch-competitor, the anti-crusader ruler in Syria, Nur al-Din, and this inscription can also be seen in the light of the rivalry between these two men.

The walls of the important southern Turkish port of Antalya date back to Roman times. Until 1204 the city was ruled by Byzantium. It was then seized by a Frank of Tuscan origin called Aldobrandini,<sup>62</sup> before falling into the hands of the Seljuq sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw I in 603–4/1207.<sup>63</sup> What happened next is recorded in epigraphic form on the walls themselves. In fact, Antalya underwent frequent changes of overlord in a short space of time, being retaken by the local population in 612/1215 only to fall again into the hands of the Seljuq sultan ‘Izz al-Din Kayka’us within a few months.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps this rebellious attitude on the part of the local people prompted the sultan to commission an especially long and imposing inscription on the city walls;<sup>65</sup> its presence would serve as a warning about who ruled Antalya and what might happen if further insubordination occurred. This southern port was a very important acquisition for the Seljuqs, since, having also taken the northern port of Sinop in 611 /1214,<sup>66</sup> they now had access to both the Black and Mediterranean Seas.<sup>67</sup> And the inscription speaks of the ‘sultan of the two seas’ who is ‘the shadow of God on the two horizons’.

This triumphal inscription, dated by the American scholar Scott Redford to 613/1216–17, is located high up on the city walls and is a historical document of the first importance. The precise configuration of its text remains problematic,<sup>68</sup> but, in view of its obvious significance in the context of the self-image of the Seljuq sultans of Rum, some mention of it will be made here. Even in its occasionally disordered form, this inscription is extraordinarily long; indeed, it is the longest in Seljuq Anatolia. It is written, as usual, in Arabic.<sup>69</sup> Unusually it tells within the text the story of actual historical events – the seesawing of conquest and re-conquest of Antalya in the early thirteenth century. The chronicler Ibn Bibi’s flowery account of these events records, without providing any dates, that the inhabitants of Antalya rebelled and that the sultan Kaykhusraw, having taken back the city, ‘also undertook the improving and elevating of the city walls’.<sup>70</sup> So the inscription adds flesh to Ibn Bibi’s skeletal narrative.

In its present unsatisfactory published form, the order of the inscription mixes in jumbled fashion straight narrative details with literary flourishes. Putting the narrative together, we learn that the sultan, the martyr, Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw b. Qilij Arslan, conquered the town but that after his death:

The people of the town rebelled and unbelief appeared there a second time and *shirk*<sup>71</sup> returned to its customary state.<sup>72</sup>

However, this short interlude of Christian recovery soon ended:

The sultan surrounded it (the town) by land and sea and besieged it for a whole month.

The text then declares that ‘The Word of God (*kalimat Allāh*)’ appeared with the conquest of the town by ‘Izz al-Din Kayka’us on 1 Ramadan 612/24 December 1215.

The inscription is also a highly rhetorical document, written at times in elaborate rhyming prose<sup>73</sup> in the same vein as the genre of victory letters (*fatḥmāmas*) sent by triumphant Muslim leaders to their defeated enemies. Here the message is carved on spolia, which are used very unusually<sup>74</sup> and tellingly to proclaim a Seljuq triumph over rebels in Antalya, a city whose population at that time was probably still mostly Christian. Here the Seljuq sultan, ‘Izz al-Din Kayka’us, announces his sovereignty over the city and he has the inscription placed along the exterior of the city wall next to its main gate.<sup>75</sup>

So the inscription serves as an epigraphic *fatḥmāma* in the name of the Seljuq sultan. The border spirit between Christian Byzantium and the House of Islam is evoked by Antalya being called ‘the strong frontier-post’ (*al-thaghr al-ḥāṣin*) and by the Muslims being referred to as the *muwāḥḥidīn* (those professing the Oneness of God) who pursue *jihād* in the path of God. It is written in the Arabic language to impress and overawe the *mushrikīn*<sup>76</sup> (polytheists), the largely Greek-speaking inhabitants of Antalya, on behalf of Turkish-speaking sultans, who were supported by a Persian-speaking bureaucratic elite. In other words, this reveals a similar linguistic milieu to that of Alp Arslan at Manzikert well over a century earlier, and to that of the little Turkish Seljuq-successor states which sprang up in the wake of the decline of the Great Seljuqs in the first half of the twelfth century in eastern Anatolia.<sup>77</sup> But there are some interesting details not found in other inscriptions of the period and which perhaps indicate that the text of the inscription is speaking more directly than usual to Christians.<sup>78</sup>

Why, then, write such an imposing inscription in Arabic? Who could read it, except a very small elite of Seljuq officials? The answer may well lie in the iconic value of Arabic, the language of the Qur’an, the ‘tongue of the angels’. The use of Arabic here on the very frontiers of the Muslim world<sup>79</sup> is reminiscent of the lofty inscriptions, also in Arabic, carved on the minaret of Jam in distant eastern Afghanistan, or on the Qutb Minar in Delhi, both of them aimed at least in part at a non-Muslim audience. These too, as well as the much better-known



testimony of the inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, can surely best be seen as architectural memorials to the triumph of Islam over other faiths and to the glory of the One God.

Interesting corroborative evidence on this score is provided by an inscription on the north side of the Kızıl Kale in Alanya in the name of the grandson of Qilij Arslan, Sultan Kayqubad b. Kaykhusraw, who reigned at the peak of Seljuq power and self-confidence.<sup>80</sup> The text reads as follows:

It may be translated as:

Our Master, the exalted Sultan, the greatest King of Kings, the possessor of the necks of the nations, the Sultan of the land and the two seas, 'Ala' al-dunyā wa'l-dīn, Abu'l-Faṭḥ Kayqubād b. Kaykhusraw b. Qilij Arslān, the proof of the Commander of the Faithful, may God perpetuate his rule, ordered the construction of this blessed tower on 1 Rabi' II 623 (31 March 1226).

Amongst the stereotypical titles and phrasing of this inscription it is significant to note the grandiose claims made by this sultan vis-à-vis Byzantium. Here he is called euphoniously 'the sultan of the land (*al-barr*) and the two seas (*al-baḥrayn*)' (the Black Sea and the Mediterranean) and is arrogating to himself the classic title 'the master of the necks of the nations', which often denotes a ruler who wages *jihād*. So we may assume that the Seljuq and other Turkish rulers of Anatolia saw themselves as standing well within the tradition of their illustrious predecessors in terms of defending the frontiers of Islam and waging *jihād* against the Byzantines, just as Alp Arslan and Qilij Arslan had done.

## **The *jihād* of the Turkish Mamluk sultans against the Crusaders**

### *The fall of crusader Antioch, 666/1268*

The early Turkish Mamluk sultans of Egypt and Syria, notably Baybars (ruled 658/1260–676/1277), carried on the traditions of the Seljuq sultans and other Turkish rulers in Syria and Palestine before them and they bore titles reflecting their *jihād* against the Christian infidel.

Baybars was the subject of an idealised biography written by Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir (d. 692/1292).<sup>81</sup> It was no easy task to portray as an ideal Muslim sovereign a ruler such as Baybars, a usurper of the sultanal

throne, who had made his way to the top of the Mamluk state through violence, bloodshed and intrigue. But his biographer succeeds by turning his subject into the supreme *mujāhid*, victorious on two fronts – for he shattered the aura of Mongol invincibility by his victory over them at the battle of ‘Ayn Jalut in 658/1260 and waged holy war against the crusader states.<sup>82</sup>

Baybars’ capture of Antioch, the capital of one of the four original crusading states, was yet another prestigious triumph to add to his list, and the chroniclers and biographers trumpet it abroad as a victory of Islam over Christianity. Before taking Antioch, Baybars gave warning in a characteristically threatening letter to the crusader leader, Bohemond, that his army was going to advance, and the city was duly taken on 4 Ramadan 666/19 May 1268. A short extract from the text of the letter will suffice to show the range of violently anti-Christian images deployed and the high-flown tone in which they are expressed:

If you had seen your churches with their crosses broken and rent, the pages from the false Testaments scattered, the graves of the patriarchs rifled, your Muslim enemy trampling down the sanctuary; had you seen the altar on which had been sacrificed the monk, the priest and the *deacon*, with the patriarchs crushed by disaster and the children of your kingdom enslaved . . . had you seen these things, you would have said: ‘Would that I were dust’.<sup>83</sup>

The tenor of this rhetorical diatribe goes well beyond Qur’anic teaching and traditional Muslim writing about the treatment of Christians. Indeed, its ferocity is at direct odds with the precepts of the *Sharī‘a* regarding the appropriate treatment for the People of the Book.

### *The fall of Acre in 690/1291*

The fall of Acre in 690/1291 is rightly regarded as a key event in the long and ongoing struggle between Christians and Muslims in medieval times. Indeed, it is the moment conveniently viewed by scholars as the definitive departure of the Crusaders from Muslim soil in the Levant. Not surprisingly, Muslim writers were not slow to exploit its ideological possibilities and to portray their Turkish leaders as the liberators of the Holy Land from the infidels. References to Manzikert are not made by the Muslim chroniclers who record the triumphant siege of Acre conducted by the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Khalil. However, there is no doubt in their minds that this once again

is a military victory achieved for Islam by the *Turks*. The high tone of exultation which permeates some of the accounts of this event is familiar from the Manzikert narratives, as are the rhetorical devices and the panoramic canvas on which the story is depicted.

Instead of focusing solely on the religious preliminaries to the battle and in particular on the prayer of the sultan before entering the fray, as was the case in certain Manzikert narratives, the spiritual dimensions of the entire struggle for Acre are evoked at length and emphasised from beginning to end. One week before the campaign, al-Ashraf Khalil assembled religious scholars and Qur'an reciters at his father's tomb in Cairo and the whole Qur'an was recited there. Later, at the end of the campaign, after the successful outcome of the siege, a procession made its way triumphantly back to the tomb of the father of al-Ashraf Khalil. So the circle of piety was completed.

Purification images are used with great impact in this final moment of Muslim triumph over the Crusaders:

Thus the whole of Syria and the coastal zones were purified of the Franks, who had once been on the point of conquering Egypt and subduing Damascus and other cities. Praise be to God.<sup>84</sup>

As Little has shown so clearly in his article on the fall of Acre, Muslim historians try to place this seminal event within a wider historical perspective.<sup>85</sup> Above all, it is the poets who, as usual, can extract the maximum benefit from the event. Thanks to their pens a single military victory is transformed, as at Manzikert, into a panoramic conflict between Christianity and Islam which results in a total Muslim victory. And it is the Turks who have achieved this triumph. Each of the following lines recorded in the history of Ibn al-Furat underlines the religious dimensions of the victory at Acre:

Because of you no town is left to which unbelief can repair, no hope for the Christian religion!

Through al-Ashraf the Lord Sultan, we are delivered from the Trinity, and Unity rejoices in the struggle!

Praise be to God, the nation of the Cross has fallen; through the Turks the religion of the chosen Arab has triumphed!<sup>86</sup>

And a monumental inscription, dated two months after the fall of Acre, engraved on the citadel of Baalbek, proclaims that al-Ashraf Khalil is:

the probity of this world and of religion . . . the subjugator of the worshippers of the cross, the conqueror of the coastal marches, the revivifier of the 'Abbasid state.<sup>87</sup>

### The military achievements of the early Ottoman sultans

The following discussion examines certain key battles and episodes in Ottoman history until the success represented by the Ottoman occupation of Crete (1645–69), though this was soon followed by the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna (1683). With the coming of the Ottomans, we witness the establishment of the greatest Turkish empire in history,<sup>88</sup> which by the sixteenth century had not only taken over the lands ruled by the Mamluk state in Egypt but had also added the new territories of the Balkans, Albania and Hungary to the *Dar al-Islam*.

Like the Seljuqs and Mamluks before them, the Ottomans in their heyday maintained firm mutual ties with the Sunni religious classes, who wrote prolifically in support of the ruling dynasty in the new Sunni centre of the Muslim world, Istanbul. In the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries two major strands could lend support for Ottoman legitimacy and recognition – imperial ancestry and *ghazā*. Imperial ancestry meant the claiming of links with the Seljuq rulers of Anatolia. No doubt in that spirit, the scholar Yaziji-zada 'Ali dedicated a historical work in Turkish to the sultan Murad II (died 855/1451); it was entitled *Ta'riḫ-i āl-i Saljūq* (*The history of the family of Seljūq*) and was to a large extent an adaptation of the history of Ibn Bibi written in Persian.<sup>89</sup> And when they got into full swing, the historical traditions of the Ottomans would 'remember' the Turcoman origins of their earliest rulers. Thus Osman's father, Ertoghrul, is, like the Seljuqs, given a lineage which links his dynasty to the Oghuz Turks.<sup>90</sup>

But that putative link with the Seljuqs and with the Oghuz Turks would not suffice to justify Ottoman conquests in the Balkans where the Seljuqs had never trod. So a second strand in their ideology of legitimisation was needed – the sultan's role as *ghāzī* in the *jihād*, waged against the infidel in general and Christians in particular.<sup>91</sup> This legitimising ideal was one already familiar from preceding medieval Turkish dynasties. Pre-eminence in the *ghazā* was required for the Ottomans to wrest the mantle of leadership of the Sunni world from the Mamluks of Egypt; and the conquest of Constantinople was seen as securing this. Indeed, in the letter sent by Mehmet II to the Mamluk sultan after the conquest of Constantinople, he claimed that 'he was chosen by God to be the leader of the Muslims in the *ghazā*'.<sup>92</sup>

In early Ottoman times, the *ghāzī* spirit was very strong. In his *History of the kings of the family of 'Osman*,<sup>93</sup> the Ottoman moralist and poet Ahmedi (d. 1412), attributes to the Ottoman sultans as their major quality their prosecution of holy war: the imagery is well known from the descriptions of Alp Arslan, Nur al-Din and other prominent earlier Turkish leaders:

A *ghāzī* is one who is God's carpet-sweeper  
 Who cleanses the earth of the filth of polytheism.  
 Do not imagine that one who is martyred in the path of God is dead.  
 No, that blessed martyr is alive.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, this is not raiding for booty or even in pursuit of epic deeds of valour, but *jihād* following the rules of warfare laid down in the *Sharī'a*,<sup>95</sup> *jihād* conducted by the sultan on behalf of the entire Muslim community.

Another development, so clearly analysed by Imber – and one which springs naturally from the earlier Sunni milieux of the Turkish dynasties of the eleventh to the thirteenth century – is a single-minded focus on the *jihād* of the sultan himself. Neshri, writing in 1485, can therefore speak of the Ottoman sultans as 'the pre-eminent *ghāzīs* and *mujāhids* after the apostle of God and the rightly-guided caliphs'.<sup>96</sup>

It was important for the historians of the Ottomans to explain where their rulers had come from and what right they had to govern their enormous empire. The early Ottoman historian, 'Ashikpashazada (d. after 889/1484), begins his history with a peroration praising and justifying Ottoman rule:

I have written down here the famous deeds of the House of Osman:  
 The line of heroes of the Holy War, the adornment of the sultanal  
 throne . . .  
 I wish to tell you where their origin, their root was.  
 I am presenting to you the descent of these heroes of the faith.  
 So listen and heed the history of their might,  
 The fame of their eminence and their splendour as rulers!  
 Whence they once came, whither they wandered,  
 And how they then conquered this new land,  
 And what they set in motion, thanks to their ability to rule,  
 How they reached the rank of supreme power.<sup>97</sup>

### **The battle of Nicopolis, 21 Dhu'l-hijja 798/25 September 1396 – another lost historiographical opportunity?**

This event (pl. 14), often labelled the Crusade of Nicopolis, was the 'last serious attempt in which western Europe cooperated with eastern Christendom against the common enemy – the Turk'.<sup>98</sup> Cries for help had reached Europe from the Byzantine emperor, Manuel II Palaeologus, and the king of Hungary, Sigismund, for the Ottoman sultan Bayazid was rumoured to have said that he was aiming at France and that en route he would go through Rome to feed his horse on the altar of St Peter's.<sup>99</sup> Crusader armies – notably from France and Hungary – besieged Nicopolis, planning thereafter to progress towards Constantinople to relieve it. Bayazid heard of the coming of the Europeans and interrupted his siege of Constantinople to move his whole army northwards to Nicopolis. This he managed to do in the remarkably short time of less than three weeks, to the amazement of the Crusaders; and this feat earned him his nickname, Yıldırım, the 'Thunderbolt'.<sup>100</sup>

The battle, which took place on 21 Dhu'l-Hijja 798/25 September 1396 near Nicopolis (now Nikopol in modern Bulgaria), a town on the southern bank of the Danube, has often been described by scholars, notably Atiya.<sup>101</sup> The French cavalry launched an attack without waiting for the Hungarian army, which was advancing more slowly behind them. This initial French advance dispersed the Ottoman vanguard but the French were then forced to negotiate a steep slope, reinforced with sharpened wooden stakes, and were attacked by the Ottoman cavalry, which had been hiding in some neighbouring woods. The French were easily defeated. When the Hungarians finally arrived in support, they too were routed by the full force of the Ottoman army. Many crusaders were drowned or taken prisoner, but King Sigismund escaped by boat down the river.<sup>102</sup>

This triumph allowed the Ottomans *inter alia* to extend their conquests into Greece. It also afforded them a 'breathing space' to consolidate the Ottoman European territories and enabled them to 'survive the critical struggles of the next decades'<sup>103</sup> and in particular to weather the dreadful defeat inflicted on them by Timur in 804/1402. Bayazid's victory at Nicopolis had other important consequences, for never again did France, or, for that matter, any other of the traditional crusading lands, such as England and the Holy Roman Empire, undertake the defence of western Christianity against the Muslim Turk. That responsibility was left to those countries which bordered on the Ottoman empire. Constantinople would now have been ripe for

plucking by the Ottomans, had not Timur appeared when he did. But when the Turks finally captured Constantinople in 857/1453, there would be no more help from Europe west of Italy.

Ottoman chroniclers fail to exploit the victory at Nicopolis. Indeed, Imber's extremely full account of the battle relies on medieval European sources, except for one detail which comes from the narrative of 'Ashikpashazada's chronicle.<sup>104</sup> One may speculate that perhaps two factors at least played a role in this neglect – the vivid memory of the subsequent humiliation of Bayazid by Timur, which followed hard on the heels of this battle, and the overshadowing of this victory by the more glorious triumph at Constantinople. As for the significance of Nicopolis within a *crusading* context, that was a European perspective, far removed from the preoccupations of Ottoman chroniclers.

### **Sultan Murad II at the battle of Varna, 847/1444<sup>105</sup> and the second battle of Kosovo, 852/1448**

After the transient union of the Eastern and Western Churches – something of a shotgun marriage – in 1439, Pope Eugenius IV orchestrated an attempt to free Byzantium and the Balkans from the Ottoman threat. The key event of this so-called Crusade was the triumph of the Ottoman sultan, Murad II, at the battle of Varna, an event which can be seen as signalling the establishment of Ottoman hegemony in the Balkans. The major Muslim source for this battle is the anonymous Ottoman work entitled *The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad son of Sultan Mehmed Khan*.<sup>106</sup> Murad II<sup>107</sup> was recalled from his retreat in Manisa to fight the battle of Varna in Rajab 848/November 1444. The encounter took place outside the eastern Black Sea port of Varna (now in Bulgaria) between the mountains and the sea.

The Ottoman involvement is portrayed as *jihād* against the infidel Christian army under Ladislas (Vladislav) III, King of Hungary and Poland, in another Ottoman anonymous work, entitled *Histories of the House of Osman*:

Under God's care, he (Murad II) gave great thanks to God and girded his loins with the intention of waging holy war . . . Sultan Murad marched against the accursed Hungarian and met him at Varna. It was a great battle.<sup>108</sup>

At the outset, fortune did not favour the Ottoman side. The sultan had placed his Anatolian troops, under Karaca Bey, on his right, and his

Rumelian forces, under Shihab al-Din Pasha, on his left. Murad himself stood with his Janissaries in the centre. Initially his army faced defeat when both his wings were routed and fled from the battlefield.<sup>109</sup> The author of *Holy Wars* writes as follows:

Not one remained; they ran away without looking behind them. Sultan Murad saw this, looked up to heaven, and prayed to God:

‘O God, give strength to the religion of Islam and bestow victory and help on the religion of Islam out of respect for the light of Muhammad, for the sake of the light of Muhammad Mustafa who is the noblest of beings, for the religion of the true light of Islam and for the light of Muhammad’. So he prayed and humbly implored. Before even the arrow of prayer had reached the target of response, God the Almighty granted his prayer. Through the blessings of the miracles of the Prophet, through the intercession of holy men, through the blessing of the belief of the warriors in the holy war (*ghāzīs*), Almighty God gave him victory.<sup>110</sup>

We have seen how the motif of another sultan’s prayer, that of Alp Arslan before battle, played an important part in some accounts of Manzikert.<sup>111</sup> By the Ottoman period, the sultan’s prayer had become a core historiographical theme in a corpus of writing that aimed both to entertain and to edify.<sup>112</sup> In such writings, the sultan, on the eve of a pitched battle, or at a critical turning point in it, is portrayed as humbly turning to God to beseech His help in a spirit of intense spiritual contemplation, and as expressing his willingness to experience martyrdom in battle.<sup>113</sup> This prayer can result either in a God-given triumph or indeed in the sultan’s glorious death as martyr.<sup>114</sup> The early Ottoman sultans are also shown as displaying heroism at the same time as humility. This would change in the more grandiose depiction of later sultans such as Mehmet II and Suleyman the Magnificent.<sup>115</sup>

It is interesting to note that the same sultan Murad II is depicted four years later as praying again before the second battle of Kosovo in 852/1448. This conduct on the part of Murad II is strikingly similar to the behaviour attributed to Alp Arslan at Manzikert by earlier Arabic chroniclers. According to the Ottoman chronicler ‘Ashikpashazada, who was actually present at this battle, Murad surveyed his troops at dawn – once again, as at Manzikert, it was a Friday – and he then performed a prayer of supplication:

He dismounted, performed a petition-prayer of two *rik’at*, touching the ground with his face. He spoke the supplication:



‘O Lord, preserve Thou this handful of the community of Muhammad . . . help them for the sake of the Prophet; do not make these men weak at the hands of the enemy because of my sins.’ He then mounted his horse (and attacked).<sup>116</sup>

This is a sequence of actions echoing those of Alp Arslan at Manzikert.

### **The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 857/1453**

The Muslim Arabs had long dreamed of taking Constantinople in the name of Islam. Rum (the Byzantines) are even mentioned in the Qur’an in a very rare reference to an actual historic event:

The Rum (Byzantines) have been defeated in the nearer land, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious within ten years.

This allusion to Byzantium’s defeat at the hands of the Sasanian Persians in the early seventh century and to Byzantium’s subsequent triumph is then followed by the clear pronouncement that God will give the *ultimate* victory to the Muslims:

In that day believers will rejoice in God’s help to victory. He helps to victory whom He will.<sup>117</sup>

God’s word on this issue remained in the hearts of the Muslims and was interpreted as a constant reassurance of the truth that they would one day conquer Constantinople.<sup>118</sup> By the early ninth century, however, after a sequence of failed attempts, the realisation dawned on the Muslims that they were simply not going to take the Byzantine capital in the foreseeable future. In the Muslim consciousness, therefore, whether in popular religion or in legend, this ambition was relegated to a distant, indeed messianic, extra-temporal horizon.

It is an irony of history, perhaps, that the long-cherished Muslim ambition to capture Constantinople should have been the work of the Turks. After all, medieval Arabs and Persians often looked down on the Turks, either overtly or slyly.<sup>119</sup> But like it or not, they were forced to accept in the fullness of time that it was not an attack by sea or land launched by them, the Arabs, that was to culminate in the fall of Constantinople. Instead, this great coup would be achieved by the inexorable movement of the Turks across Anatolia, and through

Turkish military supremacy. After the early Ottoman successes it became imperative that Constantinople should no longer remain under the authority of a Christian ruler, let alone the Byzantine emperor himself. Mehmet II, the ‘Conqueror’, the Ottoman sultan, was able to bring off a triumph which centuries of Arab domination of the Muslim world had failed to do – the conquest of the ancient and venerable capital of the Byzantine empire. The momentous fall of the city on 21 Rabi‘ I 857/29 May 1453 represents in many respects the high-water mark of medieval Turkish military achievements.

It is clear that by the heyday of the Ottomans, in the sixteenth century, the conquest of Constantinople is portrayed unambiguously by the chroniclers as *jihād*, as a military endeavour sanctioned by God as part of His overall design for the world. But the historiographical picture did not begin like that. As Bernard Lewis points out, the earliest Ottoman historians provide unvarnished accounts in the spirit of the frontier *ghāzīs* and ‘their spokesmen’, ‘written in plain Turkish for plain men’.<sup>120</sup> Runciman calls the Turkish sources of the siege and fall of Constantinople ‘peculiarly disappointing’ and he goes on to remark that it might have been expected that ‘this notable achievement of the greatest of the Ottomans’ would have been ‘fully recorded by Ottoman historians and chroniclers’.<sup>121</sup> But a lapse of a century or more was necessary before a full historiographical and ideological exploitation of this momentous event would appear.

By the sixteenth century – a significant period of time after the event – in a process now familiar from the Manzikert narratives, the court historiography of the Ottoman empire had come to depict the fall of Constantinople in a grandiose and ornate fashion. However, the language is no longer the Arabic or Persian used to write the history of earlier Turkish dynasties, and, above all, the Seljuqs. It is Ottoman Turkish. Nevertheless, the ethos, imagery and tone of these accounts cross the chronological and linguistic divide and are entirely reminiscent of the Manzikert and other narratives already discussed in this chapter. For one Ottoman chronicler, ‘Ashikpashazada (d. some time after 889/1484), it is sufficient to list the genealogy of the Ottoman Turkish sultans which was read out in the great church of Haghia Sophia on the first Friday after the conquest and then to pronounce the *khutba* in the name of Mehmet Khan Ghazi who achieved this victory in the year 857 of the Hijra. ‘Ashikpashazada’s account, with its long incantatory list of the unfamiliar names of the Turkish rulers going back nine generations, sums up, in rhetorical fashion, this extraordinary and irrevocable transformation of Constantinople, the venerable centre of eastern

Christendom, into Istanbul, the seat of a vibrant and dynamic Ottoman Turkish empire. This rite of passage took place in Hagia Sophia itself, the mother church and very symbol of Byzantine Christianity.<sup>122</sup>

Lamented in poignant fashion as the end of an era by the Christian West, this momentous event was also celebrated by the later court chronicler, Saʿd al-Din (d. 1008/1599) in his *Tāj al-tawārīkh* (*The Crown of Histories*), in characteristically high-flown and ornate prose. His vision of the long-awaited conquest of Constantinople is painted on a grand canvas as a cosmic conflict between Islam and the infidel: Mehmet II, fighting with ‘heaven-assisted troops’, erects the standard of *jihād* to conquer the city so that he may ‘protect the prosperity of the people of Islam, and break the backs of the wretched unbelievers’. The language is trenchant in its imagery: the sultan ‘cauterises the liver of that blind-hearted emperor’.<sup>123</sup>

The sultan has been blessed with divine approbation and his deeds have deep religious resonances. His actions are given religious legitimacy by the memory that the Prophet himself foretold the conquest of Constantinople. Typically, there are few concrete details of the military engagement; instead, the ideological dimensions are elaborated:

He exhorted those furious, blood-lapping lions of the forest of valour . . . telling them of the universality of the command ‘Strive’ . . .<sup>124</sup> and of the purport of the Divine promises in the verses concerning the Holy War . . . how the promise of the Prophet foretold that that vast city, that lofty fortress, would be subdued by the exertions of his followers and become the abode of the people of the faith. . . . Having . . . inclined the hearts of the champions of the Faith to partake of the honey of martyrdom, he turned the rein of the steed of his fortune in the direction of Constantinople.<sup>125</sup>

The overblown imagery used here for those who fall ‘in the path of God’ is reminiscent of the conceits of Persian poetry and the threnodies on the graves of modern *jihād* martyrs in the cemeteries of the Iran/Iraq war:

The stones and cannon and musket balls that descended from the cruel misbelievers overthrew . . . the existence of many a champion of the Faith; and the martyrs in their gore-stained garments gave to the field of battle the aspect of a garden of tulips.<sup>126</sup>

The *jihād* aspects of the conflict are later expressed in more explicit terms in which martyrdom is assured:

From morn until eve, and from dusk till dawn, intent on battle, they united the greatest of meritorious works – holy warfare and passing the night in prayer; and in the stream of the blood of martyrdom they cleansed their garments from the soil of sin.<sup>127</sup>

The climax of the narrative in this most hyperbolic account concerns, not surprisingly, the religious monuments of the two rival faiths, Christianity and Islam:

For the evil-voiced clash of the bells of the shameless misbelievers was substituted the Muslim call to prayer, the sweet five-times-repeated chant of the Faith of glorious rites; and the ears of the people of *jihād* were filled with the melody of the call to prayer. The churches were emptied of their vile idols, and cleansed from their filthy and idolatrous impurities; and by the defacement of their images, and the erection of Islamic prayer-niches and pulpits, many monasteries and chapels became the envy of the Gardens of Paradise. The temples of the misbelievers were turned into the mosques of the pious, and the rays of the light of Islam drove away the hosts of darkness from that place so long the abode of the despicable infidels, and the streaks of the dawn of the Faith dispelled the lurid darkness of oppression, for the word, irresistible as destiny, of the fortunate sultan became supreme in the governance of this new dominion . . .<sup>128</sup>

The fall of the Byzantine capital, the seat of the eastern Christian empire for over a thousand years, is not just a military and political conquest of the greatest magnitude. The event is here cast as a struggle between light and darkness. Churches are exchanged for mosques and they are cleansed from infidel impurities. Mehmet II mounts to the sanctuary of Haghia Sophia, throws down the altar and tramples on it. Well-worn rhetorical antitheses abound in this account. Church bells and statues are replaced; the light of Islam has dispelled the darkness of unbelief. All very familiar. In particular, the successive insults heaped upon the Christian faith recall the torrential abuse of the letter which Baybars sent to Bohemond of Antioch in 666/1268.<sup>129</sup>

The well-known Ottoman traveller and scholar Evliya Celebi, writing in the seventeenth century, also gives a long account of the event, embellished with many legendary aspects and infused with the later piety of high Ottoman times. Runciman describes Evliya's narrative as being full of 'fanciful details'.<sup>130</sup> But they are more than that. They are a record of how the Ottoman elite now saw the 'defining

event' in the history of their reigning dynasty, both within a traditional Turkish framework and above all in Islamic terms.

The importance of the bow and arrow as an ancient Turkish symbol is well known. Evliya's account does not forget this aspect of Ottoman Turkish legitimacy. Two important folkloric memories from the Seljuq period may have been known to him. According to Ibn al-Athir, the Byzantine emperor repaired the mosque in Constantinople in honour of the first Seljuq sultan, Tughril, and in the *mihṛāb* he placed a bow and arrow.<sup>131</sup> Tughril's nephew, Alp Arslan, famed for his archery skills, died when for once his arrow missed the mark.<sup>132</sup> Mehmet II, on his triumphal entry into Haghia Sophia, reminds his onlookers of the ancient Turkish world of the steppes:

in order to leave them a memorial of his skill in archery, (he) shot a four-winged arrow into the centre of the cupola, and the trace of his arrow is still shown there.<sup>133</sup> (pl. 6)

In religious terms, Evliya's account has moved on significantly from the depiction of Alp Arslan humbly dismounting from his horse before the battle of Manzikert and beseeching God's help. According to Evliya's narrative, Mehmet II, a 'mighty but bloodthirsty monarch',<sup>134</sup> is none other than 'the father of victory, a sultan, son of a sultan of the Islamic sovereigns of the House of 'Osman'.<sup>135</sup> The highly polarised religious dimension of the conflict is stressed throughout. Before one of their attacks on the walls, the Ottoman troops perform their ablutions and pray with two *rak'as*:

On one side, the troops of Islam surrounded the walls like bees, crying out *Bismillāh*, and beginning the assault with the most ardent zeal; on the other, the besieged, who were twice one hundred thousand crafty devils of polytheists.

Evliya's account makes implicit comparisons between the achievements of the Ottoman sultan, Mehmet (Muhammad) II and the Prophet himself. Not only do they bear the same name, but the sultan carries visual symbols of a palpable link between himself and the Prophet; he bestrides a mule 'which might rival Duldul'<sup>136</sup> (Muhammad's mount) and he bears aloft 'the sword of Muhammad in his hand'.<sup>137</sup>

Themes of purification recur in his description of the entry of the sultan into Haghia Sophia on Wednesday 20 Jumada II/1 July 1453 when the process of Islamising the church took place:

He caused this ancient place of worship to be cleared of its idolatrous impurities and purified from the blood of the slain . . . before fumigating it with amber and lign-aloes.<sup>138</sup>

The sultan's visit to the newly converted mosque on the following Friday was the climax of the conquest:

He climbed up the *minbar*, and cried out with a voice as loud as David's, 'Praise be to God the Lord of the worlds',<sup>139</sup> on which all the victorious Muslims lifted up their hands and uttered a shout of joy.

The choice of quotation here, from the very beginning of the Qur'an, is pregnant with meaning. The *Fātiḥa*, traditionally breathed into the ears of the new-born and the dying, functions as a liminal statement. It marks momentous change.

So we see that the taking of Constantinople was not just the conquest of a key city. The possession of it had tremendous symbolic significance: in the grandiose words of Joseph Fletcher, 'the Ottoman ruler now adorned himself with the symbols of Caesar. The Turkish Grand Khan had become an institutional emperor.'<sup>140</sup> He had also taken over the mantle of the sultanate as the promoter, upholder and defender of the whole Sunni world.

### **The battle of Mohács, 21 Dhu'l-Qa'da 932/29 August 1526**

The first ten years of the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent were full of military activity. Unlike his father, Selim I, Suleyman focused his attention on the lands of Europe, not only with an eye to their strategic value but also for their symbolic significance.<sup>141</sup> He enjoyed a series of triumphs, including the conquest of Belgrade in 1521 and Rhodes in 1522, before his campaign in the spring of 1526. In that year he won a famous battle against the Hungarians under King Louis II which took place in the Mohács valley on the west side of the Danube.<sup>142</sup>

The Ottoman forces were superior in number and readiness for war. There was a striking difference between the distances covered by the two armies in order to engage in combat. Indeed, when they met at Mohács, the Ottomans had travelled 1,500 kilometres across mountains and rivers in an impressive 128 days. As for the Hungarians, they had taken a full 38 days to march a mere 170 kilometres across flat countryside.<sup>143</sup> Thus the tough resilience of the Turkish army was clear

even before the battle began. The actual conflict lasted only an hour and a half. The Hungarian army was totally crushed and the king drowned. After this battle two-thirds of Hungary fell into Ottoman hands.<sup>144</sup>

The German scholar Forrer summarised the contents of the Ottoman chronicle written by Rustem Pasha (born c. 1500). According to this source, the Hungarian king assembled more than 150,000 men. He chose Mohács because it was the site of a famous Hungarian victory over the Tartars. After his army had crossed the bridge, Suleyman destroyed it or, at any rate, it collapsed. Suleyman oversaw the battle from a hill. After a brief, heated combat, the unbelievers turned away in flight; their losses were so great that for several days corpses floated down the river as far as Semendere and Belgrade.<sup>145</sup>

The *ghazānāma* (the campaign monograph) became a very popular form of historical narrative in the Ottoman period. The role of Suleyman as the *ghāzī* sultan, waging *jihād* and extending the frontiers of the Muslim world (and the Ottoman empire) acquires pre-eminence in the portrayal of him in the sources.<sup>146</sup> As we have already seen, a similar role for Alp Arslan at Manzikert is developed by the Muslim chroniclers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Indeed, there is a striking resemblance between the Manzikert and Mohács accounts in the way in which the eve of the battle is described. Just as Alp Arslan infused courage into his army before the battle of Manzikert, so too, in the face of tension in the Ottoman camp before the battle of Mohács, Suleyman's public prayers inspire his troops to victory.<sup>147</sup>

Sixteenth-century Turkish painters liked to choose their subjects from actual events of Ottoman history.<sup>148</sup> Mohács was ideal in this respect. The battle of Mohács is illustrated dramatically on a double folio, with the spine of the book acting as no-man's-land; the picture shows the two armies facing each other on opposite pages.<sup>149</sup> The picture, analysed by Atasoy and Çagman, shows the sultan and his army marching on the hills rather than fighting down in the valley, as the text implies. The army is drawn up in well-ordered rows. The sultan himself, far from overseeing the battle from a hill at a safe distance, is depicted in the midst of his troops, riding a white horse, and he is much larger than his soldiers. His army has its flags flying and its cannons at the ready. Many of these details are formulaic and there is no attempt to capture the details of the battle as described by Rustem Pasha. In art as in literature, then, symbolism scores at the expense of realism.

### The account of the battle of Mohács by Kamal Pasha Zada<sup>150</sup>

The prolific Ottoman religious scholar Kamal Pasha Zada (d. 940/1534) served in the high position of Shaykh al-Islam during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent, usually regarded as the zenith of Ottoman power. His writing is imbued with the supreme confidence that comes from the awareness that his master is the ruler of a world empire. His Ottoman Turkish style is full-blown, and heavily dependent on Arabic and Persian vocabulary and literary conceits.<sup>151</sup> In its ethos of Muslim piety and *jihād* spirit, his description of the battle of Mohács (pl. 13) closely resembles the much earlier accounts of Manzikert, but the virtuoso rhetoric, although powerful, is prolonged, repetitive and rambling. The imagery is unashamedly and virulently anti-Christian. Actual concrete 'information' on the course of the battle itself is rare in this long account.

The preface to the work sets the tone for what is to follow with a reference to 'the glorious troops of Islam that are pursued by victory everywhere'. Indeed, it is God

Who maintains the fire of their prosperity and greatness with the fat of the entrails of the enemies who rebel against the Faith.

The lines of verse which follow this fervent outburst place the ensuing conflict firmly within a context of *jihād* and martyrdom:

Those who taste the sherbet of martyrdom (*shurbat-i shahādat*),  
Those intoxicated by the goblet of the blade,  
Will attain a perpetually happy life.  
They will drink a heavenly, beneficial liquor  
Given to them by the hand of the *houris*.<sup>152</sup>

The impeccable ethnic and religious credentials of the Ottoman sultans are then emphasised:

The illustrious, generous sovereigns who have emerged from this pure race and glittering stock, they who are the columns of the dome of Islam, override by far all the most powerful kings and princes.

From this prestigious line comes Sultan Suleyman himself, who is 'the centre of the earth and time' and 'the light of the world and



the shadow of the Creator'.<sup>153</sup> A tenuous link is made later in the narrative with the Seljuq sultans when Suleyman's vizier, Ibrahim Pasha, is likened to the Seljuq vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, who served two sultans, Alp Arslan and Malikshah, but even here the comparison is weighted heavily in favour of Ibrahim and his master Sulayman:

Nizam al-Mulk is only his (Ibrahim's) disciple;  
Malikshah is only the slave of the sultan of the world!<sup>154</sup>

Nevertheless, the presence of this reference to the Seljuqs in this highly literary production suggests that the distant Turkish past was still considered relevant in the context of Ottoman royal panegyric. It is noticeable, however, that, on this occasion at least, Malikshah rather than Alp Arslan, the victor of Manzikert, is the chosen point of reference for the Seljuq empire. And this even though Nizam al-Mulk served as the vizier of Alp Arslan too.

Kamal Pasha Zada then moves on to an account of the expedition itself, against the land of the Banu'l-Asfar ('The Yellow Tribe') – a side-swipe at the alleged cowardice of the Hungarians. He claims to be giving a detailed narrative, based on scrupulously checked facts, using reliable authorities.<sup>155</sup> The date of early 932 AH is given for preparations for the campaign<sup>156</sup> and he notes that the Ottomans built a bridge of boats.<sup>157</sup> However, more detailed information is scarce. Form matters more than content and ideology prevails over military manoeuvres. Verses which hark back to the *topos* of Turks making drinking goblets from the skulls of those they have defeated in war – an image which is used derogatively by medieval Arab and Persian writers – is here turned by an unknown Ottoman poet into a cause of triumphal exultation and the glory of *jihād*:

Their skulls serve us as goblets.  
The sword and dagger perfume us,  
Shaming the narcissus and the myrtle.<sup>158</sup>

As in the accounts of Manzikert, it is important here to stress the imposing strength of the foe, in order to highlight the magnitude of the ensuing Muslim victory:

The *kral* of the Hungarians was one of the most powerful sovereigns amongst the infidels, as solid as a mountain.<sup>159</sup>

The Hungarian leader has an army of 150,000 men<sup>160</sup> and their advance is like ‘the invasion of the darkness of the night, irresistible as a flood the dykes cannot hold back’<sup>161</sup> and like ‘a triple-headed dragon whose mouth spews forth flames.’<sup>162</sup>

The climax of the account comes with a lengthy victory letter (*fatḥnāma*),<sup>163</sup> which the author claims was sent to all the governors of the Ottoman provinces by Suleyman after the battle of Mohács. The *fatḥnāma* is replete with Qur’anic quotations and Suleyman is portrayed as the supreme *mujāhid*, changing temples and churches into mosques.<sup>164</sup>

### Rhetoric before defeat: the Ottomans before the walls of Vienna, 1094/1683

The unsuccessful second siege of Vienna in 1094/1683 has been regarded as the ‘turning point in the monumental struggle between western Christianity and the foremost Muslim power, the Ottoman sultans’.<sup>165</sup> In retrospect, the supremely confident tone of an extant official Ottoman document, addressed to the people of Vienna, sounds like misplaced bluster. It is placed within an epistolary tradition already beloved of the Mamluks and Mongols, who would send fierce written warnings to enemies they were about to attack, reminding them of the dangers of resistance to them and recommending peaceful surrender to them. The document begins by invoking God and His Prophet before turning to the lofty attributes of the disaster-prone Ottoman sultan Mehmet IV:

We have come, at the supreme command of the greatest of the sultans of the age and the most powerful of the *khāqāns* of the world, His Majesty, our master, the all-powerful, highest, respect-commanding and illustrious *Pādishāh* of the world, the Shadow of God on earth, with innumerable victorious troops to the fortress of Vienna, with the intention of conquering this citadel and preaching the True Religion.<sup>166</sup>

As was customary according to the *Shari‘a*, the inhabitants of the fortress are then offered the choice of embracing Islam, or at least of agreeing to peaceful surrender (in this case, they will not be harmed). On the other hand:

If you are stubborn and offer resistance and it should turn out that the will of Almighty God is that the fortress . . . is conquered and subjugated,

no mercy or pardon will be accorded to any one at all. Then, by Almighty God, who created heaven and earth and has no partners, your possessions will be plundered and your children enslaved.<sup>167</sup>

As things turned out, however, the Viennese need not have worried.

### **The ode by Muhammad Budayr celebrating Napoleon's defeat at Acre in 1212–13/1798**

This chapter will end with a strutting piece of bombastic bravado produced in the face of the lengthy and slow decline of Ottoman power on the world stage. It concerns, of all people, Napoleon, and thus brings full circle the ancient cycle of Christians from Western Europe invading Muslim space. Napoleon is a perfect figure on whom to pin the lineaments of the invading, western Christian coloniser. The shock of his invasion into the heartlands of the Middle East was reminiscent of the Muslim reactions to the crusades. For the first time since that epic conflict, and again from France, an expeditionary force came out of the blue in 1798 and landed on Egyptian soil at Alexandria, then under Ottoman rule.<sup>168</sup> Using imagery reminiscent of that favoured by Muslim writers in describing the battle of Manzikert and the subsequent Muslim encounter with the crusaders, the Egyptian historian al-Jabarti (died 1240/1825–6) writes:

They went ashore with weapons of war and soldiers . . . and by the next morning they had spread like locusts around the city.<sup>169</sup>

While the Ottoman empire has long since passed its zenith, the victory of a Turkish commander in one corner of the ailing Ottoman empire over the world-conquering French leader, Napoleon, provides a rare opportunity to recall past greatness. And a little-known poem does just that. It is called *The history of the siege of the Franks of God-protected<sup>170</sup> Acre' and the obtaining of victory over them.*<sup>171</sup> It was composed in Arabic by one Muhammad Budayr Efendi in the *basîṭ* metre. The subject of this ode is Napoleon's defeat while besieging Acre in 1798. The translators of the poem, Alman and Strunk, date its composition to some time between 1213–14/1799 and 1218–19/1804.<sup>172</sup>

The poem is long (it contains 74 couplets) and bombastic. Its imagery is tired and ludicrously inflated. Lines 1–2 present the victory at Acre as God-given and Ahmad Pasha as His vehicle for this victory.

The usual antithesis is drawn between the religion of God (*dīn Allāh*) and those who do not believe (*man kafara*):

God is most great! The religion of God was rendered victorious  
 By the victory of Ahmad Pasha, the most eminent of the *wazīrs*  
 And religion, the religion of God, became victorious  
 And he who did not believe returned with disgrace and depravity.<sup>173</sup>

Lines 9–12 return to long-familiar motifs of pollution, expressed in zoomorphic terms. But here these clichés used to denote Christian infidels are given additional, abusive vehemence. Impurity in eating and washing is expressed in powerfully vituperative tones. The Christians' appearance is foul like that of beasts, especially swine:

How much they eat the flesh of predatory animals! You would think  
 they were  
 Dogs of Rome, had they not resembled men.  
 Their shapes are like the stones of deep pits, and  
 You have not seen anything that looks like them, no, not even cattle.  
 They remove the dust from their faces  
 With their urine. May they remain in it, forever defiled!  
 Each of them is a barnyard animal like the swine  
 They eat. How many of them you find with such a likeness!

The exaggerated and implausible historical importance given to this encounter reaches its climax here in lines 25–6 in the likening of the victory over Napoleon achieved by the Turk, Ahmad Pasha, nicknamed 'the Butcher' (*al-jazzār*), to the Prophet Muhammad's famous military triumph at Badr:

God is most great! What is 'Akka and its battle  
 Unless it is like the battle of Badr, may God increase its Ahmad . . .

The comparison of Ahmad Jazzar Pasha with the Prophet, one of whose names was also Ahmad, is absurdly inappropriate.

This, then, is a fully decadent and debased use of once potent imagery: anti-Christian rhetoric seems to have run its course and has been rendered bathetic. But at the same time, this poem shows the tenacity and longevity of the themes of Christian impurity and Turkish pride in their leadership of the Muslim world.

This poem by Ibn Budayr forms an apt coda to this chapter. It reveals a remarkable continuity in the repertoire of images used by medieval Muslim writers to denigrate the Byzantine and Frankish intruders into the House of Islam. A thousand years have passed, but still the same range of symbols and metaphors are exploited for all they are worth. Despite the true nature of the Ottoman governor at the time, Ahmad Jazzar (well named ‘The Butcher’) Pasha, his tyrannical rule is portrayed as preferable to that of the dreadful Frankish leader Napoleon. Mercifully, according to the poet, God once again gives the Muslims the victory in embattled Acre.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are no parallels drawn by Ibn Budayr between the previous and very celebrated siege of Acre in 1291 and Napoleon’s in 1798. Much could have been made of a comparison between this pair of events. But here again there is emphasis on the fact that Jazzar Pasha is a *Turkish* conqueror, being lauded in Arabic for a splendid victory over the Christian European ‘crusaders’ (the Franks). Ethnic differences and tyrannical rule are forgotten in a heightened atmosphere of pan-Islamic pride.

But the one small triumph at Acre in 1798 that is lauded here cannot disguise the reality of a declining Ottoman empire, ‘the sick man of Europe’. The repertoire of images used since Manzikert to display the glorious contribution of the Turks – as warriors of the faith, upholders of Sunni Islam and rulers of a Muslim world empire – was now worn out and redundant, and it would be replaced in the modern era by a new interpretation of the Anatolian Turks based on very different criteria. Although the forces of nationalism and secularisation were marshalling, Anatolia would still have to wait some time for them to make their impact. But when they did eventually occupy centre stage, Manzikert would once again have an important symbolic role to play, and would re-assert its millennial power.

### Concluding comments

This chapter has examined only one dimension of the role of the medieval Turks within the Muslim world from Manzikert until the coming of Napoleon and renewed western European intervention in the Middle East.<sup>174</sup> That dimension is their image in the medieval Muslim sources as exemplary upholders of Sunni Islam and fighters of *jihād* against the infidel, both Byzantine and Crusader. The preceding discussion has revealed a marked continuity of religious ideology and a tenacious attempt by religious scholars and court historiographers

alike to present the Turks, who were firstly nomadic invaders, raiders and warlords and later self-confident and energetic rulers of the non-Turkish populations of Anatolia, Greater Syria and Egypt, as model Muslim sovereigns.

In particular, this chapter has concentrated on the continuing role model of Manzikert, symbolising the superiority of Islam over Christianity. For a short while Manzikert was explicitly mentioned by Muslim poets, keen to re-activate *jihād* against the invading western European Christians in the First Crusade. Later, in the heyday of Arabic historical writing in Syria and Iraq in the thirteenth century, Muslim chroniclers give great prominence, as we have seen, to elaborate historiographical set pieces about the battle of Manzikert. These show this seminal event as a latter-day David and Goliath struggle, a conflict between a Turkish nomadic leader and a Greek emperor. Alp Arslan's victory over Romanus Diogenes is a triumph of Islam over Christianity and Muslim writers exploit its ideological potential to the full.

Building on their full-blooded embracing of Alp Arslan as the quintessential *mujāhid* and pious Sunni Muslim sultan, chroniclers, poets and epigraphers transfer the qualities he personifies at Manzikert to subsequent Turkish rulers in Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. Motifs and symbols used to portray Alp Arslan at Manzikert are easily re-deployed to laud the achievements of the Seljuqs of Rum, as well as Nur al-Din and Baybars, and, of course, the Ottomans.

It should be emphasised, however, that the ideological dimension explored in detail in this book is but one facet of the complex interaction between medieval Muslim Turkish rulers and their Christian neighbours, be they Byzantine or Frank. The role of the Turks as staunch defenders of the Muslim frontiers frequently co-existed with peaceful, mutually beneficial relations and exchanges between the Byzantines and the Turks in Anatolia. Neither the Byzantines nor the Seljuqs were particularly fanatical in matters of religion. There was thus a yawning gap between rhetoric and reality, and a number of fine scholars on both sides of the divide have pointed this out.<sup>175</sup> They have examined in some detail the same historical period covered in this chapter and highlighted aspects of Turkish-Byzantine commercial contacts and *convivencia*. This chapter has concentrated, by contrast, on the sphere of medieval Muslim historical writing about the Turks. Far from being mere repositories of 'factoids' about Turkish history (although dates of battle and conquests do pepper these texts), the surviving historical sources are often sophisticated literary artefacts

carrying a strong ideological charge. And the accounts of Manzikert offer a blueprint, followed and elaborated in later times in Muslim accounts of other glorious exploits of the medieval Muslim Turks.

## Notes

1. Mahmud Kashgari, *Dīwān lughat al-turk*, ed. B. Atalay, Ankara, 1939, I, 3; cited in G. Leiser, *A history of the Seljuks – Ibrahim Kafesoğlu's interpretation and the resulting controversy*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1988, 91.
2. Ibn Hassul, *Tafḍīl al-atrāk ‘ala sā’ir al-ajnād*, ed. A. al-Azzawi, Istanbul, 1940, 40–1. In his description of the military skills of the Turks, Ibn Hassul is building on earlier descriptions of Turkish slave soldiers working at the Abbasid and other medieval Muslim courts. The most famous description of them is given by al-Jahiz in his treatise on the merits of the Turks; cf. al-Jahiz, *Manāqib al-turk*, partial tr. C. T. Harley-Walker as ‘Jahiz of Basra to al-Fath ibn Khaqan on the exploits of the Turks and the army of the Khalifat in general’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1915), 631–99. For a fine and detailed account of the pre-Seljuq Turks, cf. E. Esin, ‘The Turk al-‘Aḡam of Sāmarrā and the paintings attributable to them in the Ğawsaq al-Hāqānī’, *Kunst des Orients* IX 1/2 (1975), 47–88.
3. Ibn Hassul, 43 and 49.
4. *Ibid.*, 49.
5. Al-Ghazali, *Kitab al-Mustazhirī*, partial ed. I. Goldziher as *Streitschrift des Gazālī gegen die Bāṭinijje-Sekte*, Leiden, 1916, 183; tr. C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic perspectives*, Edinburgh, 1999, 17–18.
6. Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi, *Ṭabā’i‘ al-ḥayawān*, tr. V. Minorsky, London, 1942, 29.
7. *Ibid.*, 38.
8. G. Tetley, *Panegyric poetry in Persian as evidence for political and social history in the age of the early Ghaznavids and the Great Seljuqs: the poetry of Farrukhī Sīstānī and Amīr Mu‘izzī*, unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 2002, 133–4, 172.
9. It is even conceivable that Burhani Nishapuri had written a panegyric ode to Alp Arslan in the year before he (Burhani) died. But nothing of that kind seems to have survived; cf. Tetley, 134.
10. *Ibid.*, 173.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 94–5.

13. Literally: facilitate (*muyassir*).
14. This is factually inaccurate. The Artuqids did not even acquire their major centre, Mardin, until the beginning of the twelfth century.
15. Zamantı.
16. In the area of Aksaray; cf. Le Strange, 150.
17. Kemah – a fortress on the western Euphrates, a day’s journey below Erzinjan; cf. Le Strange, 118; J. Markwart, *Südarmerien und die Tigrisquellen*, Vienna, 1930, 8. The Mengücekids also ruled Divriği.
18. Otherwise known as Koghonia (Kara Hisar Sharqi).
19. Hillenbrand, *Crusades*, 70–1; Ibn al-Khayyat, *Dīwān*, ed. H. Mardam Bek, Damascus, 1958, 186.
20. Literally *al-farqadān*: ‘the two bright stars of the four that form the angles of a quadrilateral figure in Ursa Minor’; cf. E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English lexicon*, vol. 6, Beirut, 1980, 2387.
21. Tetley, *Panegyric poetry*, 190. Tetley dates this poem to ‘Id al-fitr 491/September 1098. Antioch had fallen to the Crusaders in June of that year.
22. As distinct from the situation in later centuries, when he has been viewed as an honorary Arab.
23. Ibn Sana’ al-Mulk, *Dīwān*, 1.
24. Abu Shama, *Kitāb al-rawḍatayn*, RHC, HO, IV, 9–10. For a recent study of Abu Shama, cf. K. Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic historiography: authors as actors*, London, 2006.
25. Ibn al-Athir, *Al-ta’rikh al-bāhir fi’l-dawlat al-atābakiyya*, ed. A. A. Tulaymat, Cairo, 1963, 1–2.
26. Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa anbā’ ibnā’ al-zamān*, 2 vols, Cairo, 1299/1881-2; tr. Baron MacGuckin de Slane as *Kitāb Wafayāt al-A’yān: Ibn Khallikān’s Biographical Dictionary*, Paris, 1843–71.
27. In one crusader source, the famous incident of Saladin refusing to allow his arch-enemy Reynald of Chatillon, now his captive, to drink water is given extra dramatic impact by Saladin asking Reynald what he would have done if he (Saladin) were his prisoner. Like Romanus with Alp Arslan, ‘who would have done ugly things’, Reynald replies saying that he would have beheaded Saladin. The dialogue trope is reused here to good effect; cf. ‘The Lyons Eracles text’, in Edbury, *Conquest*, 48.
28. This dynasty, the Seljuqs of Rum, still awaits a comprehensive monograph. Nevertheless, important new research is contained in *Les Seldjoukides d’Anatolie*, ed. G. Leiser, in *Mésogéios, Méditerranée* 25–26 (2005). Gordlevski’s work, though still useful in parts, is now outdated; cf. V. Gordlevski, *Gosudarstvo Seldzhukidov maloi Azii*, Moscow, 1941. The Seljuqs of Rum effected a transition from a rudimentary Muslim



- presence in Anatolia to the establishment of a fully fledged urban Islamic society.
29. Cf. M. Angold, *The Byzantine empire, 1025–1204. A political history*, London, 1997, 223; C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 104; Cahen, *La Turquie pré-ottomane*, Istanbul, 1988, 45–7; S. Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*, Cambridge, 1954, II, 413–14.
  30. Cf. Runciman, *Crusades*, II, 413, citing Nicetas and Michael the Syrian.
  31. A. A. Vasiliev, ‘Manuel Comnenus and Henry Plantagenet’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 29 (1929–30), 237–40. Runciman says that Manuel tried to minimise the disaster in his letter to Henry: *Crusades*, II, 414, n. 1.
  32. William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, tr. E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey as *A history of deeds done beyond the sea*, New York, 1943, II, 415: quoted by Angold, *Byzantine empire*, 224.
  33. Facsimile reproduction and Turkish translation by F. N. Uzluk as *Anadolu Selcuklulari devleti tarihi. III. Histoire des Seldjoukides d’Asie Mineure par un anonyme*, Ankara, 1952.
  34. *Ibid.*, Persian text, 39; Turkish tr., 25.
  35. Unusually, Cahen’s performance on the matter of Myriokephalon is hurried and disappointing. This is true even in the later, updated version of his work on pre-Ottoman Turkey; cf. C. Cahen, *La Turquie pré-ottomane*, 1988, 45–6: cf. also Cahen, ‘Une famille byzantine au service des Seldjuquides d’Asie Mineure’, *Polychronion. Festschrift für F. Dölger*, Heidelberg, 1966, 147.
  36. S. Vryonis Jr., *The decline of medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the process of Islamization from the eleventh through the fifteenth century*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1971, 123–6. He cites a detail from the only Muslim source for the battle on p. 125, n. 234.
  37. M. A. Köymen, ‘Einige Bemerkungen zur Geburt der neuen Türkei’, *Cultura Turcica* 8 (1971), 12; cf. the discussion in Chapter 7, p. 209.
  38. Cf. for example Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 223–4; R.-J. Lilie, ‘Die Schlacht von Myriokephalon (1176): Auswirkungen auf das byzantinische Reich im ausgehenden 12. Jahrhundert’, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 35 (1977), 257–75.
  39. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 104; Cahen, *EI2*, s.v. Kılıdġ Arslan II.
  40. *Decline of medieval Hellenism*, 125–6.
  41. *Ibid.*, 125.
  42. *Ibid.*, 126. The Turks had, of course, penetrated very far to the west of Anatolia in the first half of the eleventh century, but this had not been followed up by the establishment of permanent Turkish polities there.
  43. Cheynet, ‘Concentration’, 67.
  44. *The Byzantine empire*, 223.

45. *Ibid.*, 224.
46. Ibn Bibi, *Al-awāmir al-‘alā’iyya fi’l-umūr al-‘alā’iyya*, published as *Histoire des Seldjoucides d’Asie Mineure d’après Ibn Bibi (Recueil de textes relatifs à l’histoire des Seldjoucides)*, iii, ed. M. Th. Houtsma, Leiden, 1902; tr. H. W. Duda as *Die Seltschukengeschichte des Ibn Bibi*, Copenhagen, 1959.
47. T. Yazıcı, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, VIII, 8–9, s.v. Ebn Bībī.
48. T. Majda, ‘Characteristics of early Turkish epic style (13th- 1st half of 15th century)’, in *Problemy języków Azji i Afryki*, Warsaw, 1987, 224–5; A. Bombaci, *Histoire de la littérature turque*, tr. I Mélikoff, Paris, 260–1. This corpus of material is also a source of ancient Turkic legend which lies beneath an Islamic overlay; cf. J. Baldick, *Animal and Shaman. Ancient religions of Central Asia*, London and New York, 2000, 58.
49. Y. Dedes, *Baṭṭālnāme*, vol. 1, Cambridge, MA, 1996, 1.
50. *Ibid.*, 1–2.
51. *Ibid.*, 99.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, 132.
54. *Ibid.*, 331–2.
55. *Ibid.*, 9–11.
56. The Nisanid ruler of Amid, Mahmud b. Ilaldı, is recorded in an inscription dated 550/1155–6 as ‘the killer of the infidels and polytheists, the support of the *jihād* fighters, the commander of the marches’: E. Combe, J. Sauvaget and G. Wiet, eds, *Répertoire chronologique d’épigraphie arabe*, IX, Cairo, 1939 [hereafter, RCEA], 2–3 (inscription 3203).
57. M. van Berchem, and H. Edhem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Troisième partie. Asie Mineure. Vol. 1 – Siwas, Diwriği*, Cairo, 1917, 66–7.
58. For Tughrultegin (Tuğrlı Tigin), cf. F. Sümer, *Türk devletleri tarihinde şahış adları*, II, Istanbul, 1999, 678. For a discussion of zoomorphic names amongst the medieval Turks, cf. J.-P. Roux, *La religion des Turcs et des Mongols*, Paris, 1984, 178–88.
59. J. M. Rogers, *Patronage in Seljuk Anatolia 1200–1300, unpublished D. Phil.*, University of Oxford, 1972, 297.
60. The inscription is not dated, so, following their usual practice, the editors of Volume IX of the RCEA place it in the half-century to which they judge it to belong, immediately after the mid-point of that century, i.e. under the year 551/1156, the first year of the reign of Qilij Arslan: RCEA, IX, 11–12 (inscription 3218).

61. Cf. the title *pahlawān al-rūm* used by the Mencükid ruler of Divriği, Amir Shahanshah (n. 57 above).
62. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 165.
63. Ibn Bibi, tr. Duda, 44–6.
64. *Ibid.*, 61–4.
65. *RCEA*, X, eds E. Combe, J. Sauvaget and G. Wiet, Cairo, 1939, 109–12; inscription no. 3757. The inscription, as recorded in the *RCEA*, consists of 38 fragments, re-assembled in what the editors hoped is the right order. It is clear that they were wrong in some places on this score.
66. A number of inscriptions in Sinop date from 612/1215; cf. *RCEA*, X, nos. 3760–3773.
67. S. Redford, *Landscape and the state in medieval Anatolia*, Oxford, 2000, 24.
68. S. Redford, ‘Documentation of the 613H. inscription on the city walls of Antalya, Turkey’, *Newsletter of the Fondation Max van Berchem*, Geneva, December 2005, no. 19, 4–6.
69. The inscription contains mistakes of Arabic grammar in the *idāfa* construction.
70. Ibn Bibi, tr. Duda, 61 and 63.
71. The grave sin of allowing anything to share in God’s unassailable Oneness – an accusation directed from very early days at the Christian doctrines of the divinity of Jesus and the Trinity.
72. *RCEA*, X, 110.
73. E.g. the parallelism of: ‘*al-Mu‘tašim bi-‘iṣmat Allāh al-kāfiya . . . , al-Muntazam bi qudrat Allāh al-bāqiya*’. An even longer and thus still more striking example runs: ‘*Ruken al-dawla al-qāhira, Mu‘izz al-milla al-bāhira, Mughīth al-umma al-zāhira*’.
74. Redford says that ‘this inscription constitutes the sole instance of spolia being used for a proclamation of victory’; *Landscape and the state*, 4.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *RCEA*, X, 109.
77. Redford suggests that this inscription is not ‘persuasive as a piece of public propaganda’: Redford, ‘Documentation’, 6. An assessment of that judgement will have to await his full publication of the inscription. One may hope that he will also discuss the size of the letters of the inscription and mention the height at which they are placed.
78. For example, the rare epigraphic use of the phrase ‘*kalimat Allāb*’, whilst found in the Qur’an, is likely to evoke resonances of the Logos of St John’s Gospel in Christian ears.

79. The 613/1216–17(?) inscription on the walls of Antalya uses the word *thagbr*, which denotes ‘border fortress or defence’; Redford, *Landscape*, 25.
80. S. Lloyd and D. Storm Rice, *Alanya* (‘*Ala’iyya*), London, 1958, 54.
81. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahīr, *Al-rawḍ al-zāhir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Zābir*, ed. ‘A. al-Khuwaytir, Riyad, 1976; cf. especially 73–96.
82. P. M. Holt, ‘The sultan as ideal ruler: Ayyubid and Mamluk prototypes’, in *Süleyman the Magnificent and his age. The Ottoman empire in the early modern world*, eds M. Kunt and C. Woodhead, London and New York, 1995, 129 and 133.
83. Ibn al-Furat, *Ta’rīkh al-duwal wa’l-mulūk*, tr. U. and M. C. Lyons as *Ayyubids, Mamluks and Crusaders*, II, Cambridge, 1971, 124.
84. *Ibid.*
85. D. P. Little, ‘The fall of ‘Akkā in 690/1291: the Muslim version’, in *Studies in Islamic history and civilization in honour of Professor David Ayalon*, ed. M. Sharon, Jerusalem, 1986, 179–81.
86. *Ibid.*, 181, citing Ibn al-Furat, *Ta’rīkh*, VIII, 114–15; Sivan, *L’Islam et la Croisade*, 183–4.
87. *RCEA*, XIII, inscription no. 4947, 100–1.
88. Indeed, my Ph.D. supervisor, the late J. R. Walsh, once went so far as to describe Ottoman civilisation to me as ‘the supreme Muslim cultural achievement’.
89. C. Kafadar, *Between two worlds. The construction of the Ottoman state*, Berkeley, 1995, 94 and 184, n. 4; Cahen, *La Turquie pré-ottomane*, 352.
90. J. H. Kramers – E. A. Zachariadou, *EI2*, s.v. ‘Othmanlı’; Kafadar, *Between two worlds*, 96.
91. C. Imber, ‘Ideals and legitimation in early Ottoman history’, in Kunt and Woodhead, *Süleyman the Magnificent*, 38–9, 146.
92. H. Inalcık, ‘How to read ‘Ashik Pasha-Zade’s history’, in *Studies in Ottoman history in honour of Professor V. L. Ménage*, eds C. Heywood and C. Imber, Istanbul, 1994, 152.
93. N. S. Banarlı, ‘Ahmed ve Dâsitân-i tevârih-i mülûk-i âl-i Osmân’, *Türkiyat mecmuası* 6 (1936–9), 111–35.
94. Tr. Imber, ‘Ideals’, 139.
95. *Ibid.*, 143–4.
96. Mehmed Neshri, *Kitāb-i cihānümâ*, I, ed. F. Unat and M. Köymen, Ankara, 1949, 55; cited by Imber, ‘Ideals’, 144.
97. ‘Ashikpashazada, *Menākib-i Āl-i ‘Osmān*, tr. R. F. Kreutel as *Vom Hirtenzelt zur hohen Pforte*, Graz, 1959, 18.
98. A. S. Atiya, *The crusade of Nicopolis*, London, 1934, 1.

99. Cf. the recent treatment of this battle in J. Harris, 'The last crusades; the Ottoman threat', in *Crusades. The illustrated history*, ed. T. Madden, London, 2004, 184.
100. *Ibid.*
101. *EI2*, s.v. 'Nīkbūlī' (A. S. Atiya); Harris, 'The last Crusades'.
102. An anonymous Ottoman chronicle provides a short account of the battle; cf. Lewis, *Islam*, 137.
103. *EI2*, s.v. 'Nīkbūlī' (A. S. Atiya).
104. Imber, *Ottoman empire*, 45–7.
105. Imber has recently published a highly impressive set of translations about Varna; cf. C. Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45*, Aldershot, 2006.
106. *Gazavât-i Sultân Murâd b. Mehmed Hân*, eds H. Inalcık and M. Oğuz, Ankara, 1978.
107. Ruled 824–48 and 850–55/1421–44 and 1446–51.
108. *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân (Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken)*, ed. F. Giese, Breslau, 1922, 68–70; tr. B. Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the capture of Constantinople*, I, New York, 1974, 142–3.
109. For a detailed account of the battle, based on *Holy Wars*, cf. Imber, *Crusade*, 133–4.
110. Imber, *Crusade*, 143.
111. Cf. Chapter 3, p. 55.
112. B. H. Flemming, 'The sultan's prayer before battle', in *Studies in Ottoman history*, 63.
113. *Ibid.*, 63–4.
114. *Ibid.*, 71 and 75.
115. *Ibid.*, 70.
116. Tr. Flemming, 'The sultan's prayer', 69. Flemming also provides a translation of the version of the same events by another Ottoman historian, Neshri, which follows closely the account of 'Ashikpashazada: *ibid.*, 69. In her very interesting article, Flemming analyses the concepts found in the supplicatory prayers of the early Ottoman sultans before some of their important battles and she points to the links between their soliloquies and the *ghazawatnāma* tradition of pre-Ottoman times.
117. Qur'an, 30: 3–5.
118. Traditions of the Prophet also reflect the conviction that God's will to bring Islam to the whole earth will soon be accomplished. The Prophet foretells that the imminent conquest of Constantinople will be followed by that of Rome.
119. For example, the sources enjoy making snide comments about the drunkenness of the Turks. This characteristic is mentioned in connection

- with the hero of Manzikert himself, Alp Arslan. This is noteworthy in the same sources that exalt the Turks in a military context. Ibn al-‘Adim tells a comic story about Alp Arslan hitting his head on a tent pole when drunk and how Nizam al-Mulk dealt with the problem. Cf. C. Hillenbrand, ‘Ibn al-‘Adim’s biography of the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan’, *Actas XVI Congreso Union Européene des Arabisants et Islamisants*, Budapest, 1995, 281–96.
120. B. Lewis, *The Muslim discovery of Europe*, London, 1982, 310, n. 10; Oruç, *Oruç Beg tarihi*, ed. N. Atsız, Istanbul, 1972, 108–9. Such a description does not apply to Tursun Beg (born after 1426), a government official whose history possesses what its translators call a ‘rather cumbersome literary garb’; Tursun Beg, *Ta’rīkh-i Abu’l-Fatḥ*, facsimile reproduction and summary translation by H. Inalcık and R. Murphy, Minneapolis and Chicago, 1978, editors’ preface, n. p.
  121. S. Runciman, *The fall of Constantinople*, Cambridge, 1966, 197.
  122. Tr. B. Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the capture of Constantinople*, vol. 1, New York, 1974, 146; Kreutel, *Vom Hirtenzelt*, 199.
  123. Sa‘d al-Din, *Tāj al-tawārīkh*, Istanbul, 1279 AH, I, tr. E. J. W. Gibb as *The capture of Constantinople: from the Taj-ut-tevarikh*, ‘The diadem of histories’, Glasgow, 1879, 12.
  124. Qur’an 5:39.
  125. Sa‘d al-Din, *Tāj al-tawārīkh*, tr. Gibb, 16–17.
  126. *Ibid.*, 22.
  127. *Ibid.*, 27.
  128. *Ibid.*, 33–4. Gibb’s old usages (such as ‘Musulman’) have been changed.
  129. Cf. p. 165.
  130. Runciman, *Fall*, 198.
  131. Ibn al-Athir, *Kamil*, tr. Richards, 144–5.
  132. Cf., for example, Rashid al-Din, tr. Luther, 53–4.
  133. Evliya Chelebi, *Narrative of travels in Europe, Asia and Africa in the seventeenth century by Evliya Efendi*, tr. J. von Hammer, London, 1834, 44.
  134. *Ibid.*, 31.
  135. *Ibid.*, 45.
  136. *Ibid.*, 37.
  137. *Ibid.*, 43.
  138. *Ibid.*
  139. Qur’an 1:1.
  140. J. Fletcher, ‘Turco-Mongolian monarchic traditions in the Ottoman empire’, in Fletcher, *Studies in Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, VII, 246.

141. *EI2*, s.v. Süleymān (G. Veinstein).
142. Mustafa b. Celal, *Geschichte Sülтан Süleyman Kanunis von 1520 bis 1557*, facsimile reproduction and commentary by P. Kappert, Wiesbaden, 1981, ff. 146b–150b.
143. E. Atıl, *Süleymanname. The illustrated history of Süleyman the Magnificent*, New York, 1986, 67. For an illustration of the battle (*Süleymānnāme*, ff. 219b–220a) cf. *ibid.*, 90, picture 41b. For a detailed account of the battle, cf. *ibid.*, 134–5.
144. *EI2*, s.v. ‘Othmānli’ (C. E. Bosworth).
145. L. Forrer, *Die osmanische Chronik des Rüstem Pascha*, Leipzig, 1923, 71.
146. C. Woodhead, ‘Perspectives on Süleyman’, in Kunt and Woodhead, *Süleyman the Magnificent*, 172–3.
147. *Ibid.*, 173, citing Celalzade’s account.
148. N. Atasoy and F. Çagman, *Turkish miniature painting*, Istanbul, 1974, 31.
149. Atıl, *Süleymanname*, 41–2. Cf. also I. Stchoukine, *La peinture turque d’après les manuscrits illustrés. 1re partie. De Sulayman 1er à ‘Osman II 1520–1622*, Paris, 1966, 169.
150. Kemal Pasha Zada, *Mahajnāma-yi Kamāl Pāsha Zāda*, tr. M. Pavet de Courteille as *Histoire de la campagne de Mohács par Kemal Pasha Zadeh*, Paris, 1859; for a long list of other accounts of Mohács, cf. *ibid.*, 184–6.
151. Pavet de Courteille describes his style as ‘too extravagant for French taste’; *ibid.*, vi. Not just French taste either.
152. *Ibid.*, tr., 1; Ottoman text, 1.
153. *Ibid.*, tr., 3–4.
154. *Ibid.*, tr., 6: Ottoman text, 8–9.
155. *Ibid.*, tr., 4; Ottoman text, 4.
156. *Ibid.*, tr., 8.
157. Cf., for example, *ibid.*, tr., 74.
158. *Ibid.*, 76.
159. *Ibid.*, 9.
160. *Ibid.*, 75 and 150.
161. *Ibid.*, 86.
162. *Ibid.*, 87.
163. *Ibid.*, 144–52; Ottoman text, 157–65.
164. *Ibid.*, 148.
165. R. F. Kreutel, *Kara Mustafa vor Wien. Das türkische Tagebuch der Belagerung Wiens 1683, verfasst vom Zeremonienmeister der Hohen Pforte*, Graz, 1955, 11.
166. R. F. Kreutel and K. Těply, *Kara Mustafa vor Wien 1683 aus der Sicht türkischer Quellen*, Graz, 1982, 254.

167. *Ibid.*, 254–5.
168. B. Lewis, *The Muslim discovery of Europe*, London, 1982, 51.
169. *Ibid.*, 54; al-Jabarti, *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār fi’l-tarājim wa’l-akhbār*, Cairo, 1297 AH, III, 2–3.
170. The word *maḥrūṣa* means ‘protected (by God)’.
171. Muhammad Budayr Effendi (*sic*), *‘Ta’rīh ḥiṣār al-Ifranġ li-Akka-l-maḥrūṣa wa-ḥusūl al-naṣr ‘alayhim’*, tr. and ed. M. Bakir Alman and William T. Strunk, *Arabica* 20 (1973), 246–60.
172. *Ibid.*, 246.
173. *Ibid.*, 248–9.
174. The crusading enterprise is taken here as the first instance of western European intervention in the Muslim world.
175. Such as Kafadar and Cahen.



# The heritage of Manzikert: the myth of national identity

*It is claimed that religious unity is also a factor in the formation of nations, whereas we see the contrary in the Turkish nation. Turks were a great nation even before they adopted Islam. This religion did not help the Arabs, Iranians, Egyptians and others to unite with Turks to form a nation. Conversely, it weakened the Turks' national relations; it numbed Turkish national feelings and enthusiasm. This was natural, because Mohammedanism was based on Arab nationalism above all nationalities. (Atatürk)<sup>1</sup>*

## The aims of the chapter

It is important to bring the subject of this book, if only modestly, up to the present day. The following discussion will show the versatility of the myth of Manzikert and how a battle fought in the eleventh century could serve as a key symbol in the formation of the new Turkish Republic almost a millennium later. It will demonstrate how the Islamic credentials of the Seljuq Turks, so stressed and exploited in the medieval accounts of the battle, could give way to an emphasis on the 'Turkishness' of the Seljuqs in a new and strongly nationalist political context. It is also of considerable interest to focus for a while on the contribution of modern Turkish scholars to the field of Seljuq history, and more generally, the themes addressed in this book. Their work is almost always ignored by western scholars of medieval Islamic history.<sup>2</sup>

## The late Ottoman background and the writing of history

The vast, sprawling entity that constituted the Ottoman empire in its heyday comprised many different lands with their own languages,

ethnicities and cultures. What is now Turkey formed only part of it. In the Ottoman period, the Turkish sultan ruled an Islamic imperium; any incipient sense of specifically Turkish national identity lay dormant and was for the moment submerged.<sup>3</sup> Writing in the same vein as Arab or Persian chroniclers had done in the thirteenth century, the great Ottoman historian Cevdet Pasha (d. 1895) could still regard the traditional Muslim appeals to *jihād* and martyrdom as the most effective means for a military commander to arouse the zeal of his men in war.<sup>4</sup> So it is not very surprising that even in the early twentieth century the study of history in Turkey, underpinned from 1910 by the establishment of the Ottoman Historical Society, was still devoted to a political identity based on citizenship of the Ottoman empire.<sup>5</sup> Its focus was on pluralism rather than on a narrowly conceived nationalism; and after all, the nation state we know as Turkey still lay in the future. All this was to change with the influx of European ideas of nationalism, which spread to the non-Turkish lands of the Ottoman empire, and thence to Anatolia itself.

### **Atatürk and the study of history**

Historiography and the creation of national myths played an important role in the formation of new nation states in the twentieth century. In some countries, especially those with long-recognised territorial borders, the concept of nationhood and national identity has been able to evolve slowly and steadily over many centuries. Others have been born suddenly and dramatically, after a revolution, or under the hand of a charismatic and strong leader with remarkable vision. Such was the case of the country now known as Turkey. Indeed, Atatürk midwifed a new country, with fixed frontiers, an Anatolian homeland (Anadolu), free of any Balkan or Levantine links and divorced from a Turanian mythology. After Atatürk's disestablishment of Islam in Turkey, the new Turkish Republic came into being – a secular state based on the twin concepts of a Turkish nation and a Turkish homeland. In a speech to the Second Congress of the Republican Party in October 1927 Atatürk announced specifically and explicitly to the Turkish people that he would banish all 'universalist' thoughts, such as pan-Islam and pan-Turanism, from his new agenda: 'the people of Turkey can do nothing except look after their own life and wellbeing'.<sup>6</sup>

The huge multi-ethnic Ottoman empire was therefore replaced by the territorially restricted, nationalist Turkish Republic. What was to be its ideological base? Regardless of the direction chosen by Atatürk,

it would not be accepted immediately and universally. As Tachau argues, although Ottomanism and Islamism were soon politically discredited, pan-Turanism did not lose its popularity so quickly. Indeed, Tachau points out that even in 1925 Atatürk was not yet ready to define Turkish identity. Köymen reiterates this point, arguing that it was much easier to see what Turkish identity was not; it certainly was not the only surviving piece of the ruined Ottoman empire.<sup>7</sup> However, under Atatürk's guiding hand, Anatolianism (*Anadoluculuk*) became the symbol of national identity.<sup>8</sup> It should not be forgotten that momentous changes had taken place since the beginning of the twentieth century. Before the First World War the Ottoman empire, though 'the Sick Man of Europe', still ruled a vast swathe of the Arab world. With the establishment of the British and French Mandates in the Levant after 1918, the loss of so much Ottoman territory made it of capital importance to guard and redefine what was left. Atatürk's decision to focus doggedly on Anatolia – 'Turkey for the Turks' – was an extremely astute and realisable aim. He could not take on the Great Powers but he believed that he would defeat the Greeks. And in that conviction he was right.

In a context of the Turkish people being identified with a clearly defined territorial space – that of Anatolia – it is not surprising, as we shall see later in this chapter, that interest began to focus intensely on the Seljuqs. Their achievements in conquering and settling Anatolia from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries came to be viewed as a hinge of Turkish history. It was the Seljuqs who first defined the boundaries of the Turkish fatherland. These broadly corresponded to those of the new Turkey.<sup>9</sup>

After the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, the Ottoman Historical Society gave way to the Turkish Historical Society, a clear reflection of the new orientation in Turkish historiography. Bernard Lewis writes tellingly that Atatürk's 'chosen instrument was history'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, he was a 'keen amateur of history'<sup>11</sup> and he contributed personally to the creation in 1930 of the *Türk Tarih Kurumu* (the Turkish Historical Society).<sup>12</sup> Its purpose was to be the vehicle for the imposition of specific historical theories and to draw up history curricula aimed at arousing patriotism in the new Republic. Unfortunately, some of these theories were wildly outlandish.<sup>13</sup> There is no need here to elaborate on the notorious propositions that held currency for a while, such as the notion that the Hittites and the Sumerians had been Turks and that all languages originated from Turkish. However, because of Atatürk's charismatic aura, these theories were allowed to

flourish for a while, and, according to some western scholars, the end justified the means.<sup>14</sup> As Bernard Lewis elegantly put it, Atatürk's aim was:

to teach the Turks that Anatolia – Turkey – was their true homeland, the centre of their nationhood from time immemorial, and thus to hasten the growth of that ancient, intimate relationship, at once mystical and practical, between nation and country that is the basis of patriotism in the sovereign nation-states of the West.<sup>15</sup>

The French scholar Robert Mantran dismissed the notion that any lasting harm was caused by such theories, writing with cheerful confidence that 'these excesses were fairly rapidly corrected'.<sup>16</sup> Others might think more negatively that they discredited the reputation of Turkish historians, not least abroad, for a while. Indeed, the excesses of some Turkish thinking in the early days of the Republic have occasioned much negative comment; Germanus described the situation as 'an overbrimming enthusiasm' which is prone to see as Turkish the legendary heroes of ancient history and to find 'the infant of world-culture in a Turanian cradle'.<sup>17</sup> With hindsight, some of these obvious excesses can be seen, on the one hand, as the result of a reluctance on the part of scholars to disagree with the prevailing authoritarian ethos of the nationalistic government, and on the other hand as springing from the intoxication of being in the creative phase of a brand-new state.

At all events, the study of history became a powerful ideological weapon. Not surprisingly in view of the attempts by the Great Powers after the First World War to carve up Anatolia,<sup>18</sup> to the detriment of those of the population who were ethnically Turkish, the historiography of Atatürk's new Republic was strongly defensive.<sup>19</sup>

### **Prominent early twentieth-century Turkish historians**

The period before the First World War had already been one of transition from old to new. The atmosphere of the time is very well analysed by Rossi; he describes a culture 'already turned towards new taste, touched with national sentiments and presaging radical innovations, even though still surrounded by a traditional oriental atmosphere'.<sup>20</sup> It was a key moment in the national awareness of Turkey, awakened, as Rossi puts it, 'under the pressure of external and internal events'. Köprülü (born 1890) was the most precocious of the prominent literati

in Turkey at the outbreak of the First World War and by that time he had already lived through the revolutions of 1908–9 and the Balkan war of 1912–13. Despite his increasing involvement in Turkish politics and the resultant demands on his time, he was to remain the key figure in the field of historical scholarship for most of the first half of the twentieth century. Leiser describes him as ‘the most dynamic Turkish intellectual’ of the era, publishing prolifically between 1915 and 1950.<sup>21</sup> In a sense the career and aspirations of Köprülü encapsulate the academic response to the groundbreaking events which were taking place in Turkey in the early decades of the twentieth century. He can justifiably be called the founder of the study of Turkish culture in modern times.<sup>22</sup> Unsurprisingly, Köprülü turned to the subject of the origins of Turkish culture and literature.<sup>23</sup> Such an endeavour, in itself academically valuable, was important for the Turkish people in their quest for a national identity, which had gone astray from its natural course in pursuit of a court literature of foreign imitation.<sup>24</sup> Although it has been alleged that he was largely self-taught, Köprülü had greater powers of penetration and higher scholarly standards than a number of his contemporaries in the academic field. Köprülü was a pioneer who espoused European scholarly methods, despite local opposition, and applied them to his studies. He realised the enormity of the task he had set himself, not least because of the wall of ignorance that he faced; as he remarked: ‘There is no country on the face of the earth whose history is as unknown as ours’.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, he set out to put the study of history on what he saw as the right path, and the ephemeral scholarly journal *Millî tetebbül* (*National researches*), which he edited and published in 1915, focused predominantly on the history of the Turks as a people.<sup>26</sup>

### **The study of the Seljuqs in twentieth-century Turkey: a patriotic duty**

With the growth of Turkish nationalism and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, then, the importance of history as a scholarly discipline grew.<sup>27</sup> It was linked to feelings of patriotism. In the new Republic of Turkey, whose nationalist ethos was so different from that of the Ottoman empire, twentieth-century Turkish historians, such as Köprülü, Köymen, Kafesoğlu and Turan, to name but a few, could leap back over the multi-cultural complexities of the Ottoman period to focus with piercing concentration on the original conquerors of Anatolia, the Seljuqs. A number of twentieth-century Turkish

scholars were attracted to the Seljuqs, and especially the Seljuqs of Anatolia (the Rum Seljuqs), since they felt justified on territorial grounds in viewing this polity as being the predecessor of the modern Turkish Republic.<sup>28</sup> According to one of these scholars, Kafesoğlu, the presentation of Seljuq history 'in all its glory' is a patriotic task: 'fulfilling this sacred duty falls above all on us, the Turks'.<sup>29</sup>

The same spirit of patriotism pervaded other fields of the humanities apart from history. A clear example is provided in the opening speech of Suut Kemal Yetkin, the President of the First International Congress of Turkish Arts held in Ankara in 1959.<sup>30</sup> Yetkin argues that Turkish art has been treated unjustly and with negative and prejudiced attitudes on the part of Western scholars, but his chauvinism is disturbing: 'We Turks believe in the creative virtue and superiority of our art. We are persuaded that its contribution to the history of civilization is very large.'<sup>31</sup>

### **School history curricula**

Just as the history of the battle of Manzikert would be written for a modern Turkish readership by Turkish scholars in a spirit of national pride, so too similar sentiments of patriotism motivated those who constructed the curricula for the teaching of Turkish history in Turkish schools.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, these curricula were seen as a means of turning school children into fully-fledged members of the nation and arousing national pride in their hearts – what de Jong and Strohmeier label 'hypernationalisation'.<sup>33</sup> At the outset of the Republic the history curricula in schools were changed in accordance with the new secular horizons of Turkish nationalism. The teaching of Islamic history was dropped and for a while Turkish history began with the Huns. Geoffrey Lewis has a positive view of this development, pointing out that 'this innovation was beneficial to the Turkish ego at a critical time and did no lasting damage.'<sup>34</sup> But the linking of knowledge of history and Turkish patriotism is inherent too in more recent legislation. In recommendations laid down in 1977 it is stated that: 'The Turkish schoolchild should consider it an honour to be a child of the Turkish nation . . . and to identify himself with the principles of the Kemalist Revolution and Turkish nationalism'.<sup>35</sup> Children must also respect the Turkish flag, the soldiers of the Turkish army and the great figures of history, above all Atatürk. Not for nothing does he still appear on all Turkish banknotes some seventy years after his death.

## The study of the battle of Manzikert in the twentieth century

What of the status of the battle of Manzikert after 1925, in the early and heady days of the Turkish Republic? It is important to recognise that it was not in the forefront of Turkish consciousness at this period. It did not fit the spirit of the time and as a consequence it did not figure prominently in the image of Turkey that was being so sedulously constructed. A key battle which inaugurated the arrival of the Turks in Anatolia could not be regarded as significant in the context of arguing, in accordance with the *Türk tarih tezi* ('The thesis of Turkish history'), that there had been a Turkish presence in Asia Minor for millennia<sup>36</sup> with 'Sumerian Turks' and 'Hittite Turks'. Only after the watering down of the ideological excesses of the early Turkish Republic and its fatuous interpretations of proto-Turkish history could Manzikert assume its key symbolic role as initiating the process of Turkification of Anatolia.<sup>37</sup> The brilliant Seljuq victory on Anatolian soil at Manzikert would eventually be recognised as a perfect symbol for the birth of the modern Turkish nation on Turkish soil.

According to one of the most famous modern historians in Turkey, Kafesoğlu, Turkish scholars have generally done their best work in the field of Seljuq history.<sup>38</sup> Why did they choose to work on the Seljuqs and in particular on the battle of Manzikert? It seems likely that the attraction of the Seljuq dynasty lay in their polity being considered as the genuine precursor of the modern Turkish Republic. It is, of course, a cliché that historical writing reflects in some way or other the atmosphere and spirit of the age in which it is conceived.<sup>39</sup> As has been shown in earlier chapters of this book, the battle of Manzikert has been seen by historians, in the West as well as in the Muslim world, as a convenient peg on which to hang the twin phenomena of the Turkification and the Islamisation of Anatolia. Which aspect would receive greater emphasis in the work of modern Turkish scholars in the new Republic of Turkey? Or would there be an attempt to combine both these dimensions in their analyses of the event and significance of Manzikert? It is worth remembering that in the original Constitution drawn up in 1924, Article 2 stated that 'the religion of the Turkish state is Islam'.<sup>40</sup> By 1945, however, this article had been modified to exclude any mention of Islam and to stress its secular agenda: 'The Turkish state is republican, nationalist, étatist, secular and reformist'.<sup>41</sup> In the Ottoman period, as Bernard Lewis argues, the Seljuq achievements could provide a twin focus: on the one hand, the Turkishness which

brought into being the House of Osman, and on the other, a full identification with Islam.<sup>42</sup> For the Ottomans, it was certainly the latter trend that prevailed most decisively. As will be apparent in the following discussion, in the new Turkey scholars responded differently to the twin aspects of Manzikert – Turkification and Islamisation – and whilst the nationalist agenda had pride of place, it is true to say that the Muslim platform for this victory, so emphasised throughout the Middle Ages, was not always ignored by the first generations of twentieth-century Turkish historians. It is now time to look more closely at the various ways in which modern Turkish historians have interpreted the battle and its aftermath.

### **The quality of Turkish scholarship on Manzikert and modern Turkish interpretations of the battle**

Prominent Turkish historians varied in their responses to Manzikert and their detailed interpretations of it. For a crucial number of them the conquest of Anatolia was seen as a deliberate enterprise. Köymen prioritised the Turkish dimension, seeing ‘Turkishness’, and especially military tactics, as the reason for the Seljuq triumph over Byzantium at Manzikert, rather than Alp Arslan’s allegiance to Islam.<sup>43</sup> For Turan, on the other hand, the battle of Manzikert becomes a key moment marking the rise of the ‘Turkish Islamic world’, thereby altering a balance of the power between the Muslim and Christian spheres that had seen no radical change since the seventh century.<sup>44</sup> Turan interpreted the victory at Manzikert as a manifestation of the will of God.<sup>45</sup> According to his interpretation, the Seljuq army, inferior in numbers and resources, was fired by a spiritual inspiration which proved decisive in the battle. He likens the victory at Manzikert to the great battles of Qadisiyya and Yarmuk in the period of the early Islamic conquests when Islam was spreading throughout the world. He calls Alp Arslan’s fighters the army of God (*Tanrı'nın ordusu*) who achieved victory through God’s decree.<sup>46</sup>

Another well-known Turkish historian, Kaymaz, sees the debate surrounding Manzikert at the time of the 900th anniversary as an instrument for distorting historical truth, declaring that ‘works have been written in an atmosphere of legend and romance’ which would soon be taken as true.<sup>47</sup> Kaymaz is also critical of a triumphalist approach.<sup>48</sup> To be sure, he regards Manzikert as a pivotal event in Turkish history; but he warns that care must be taken not to attribute too much forward planning by Alp Arslan in the matter of the Turkish



conquest of Anatolia. Had Alp Arslan really planned the conquest of the whole of Anatolia he would have exacted territorial demands from the Byzantine emperor Romanus Diogenes. But this he did not do.<sup>49</sup> It should be emphasised that it is Kaymaz's less romantic attitude that is closer to what the medieval sources, both Muslim and Christian, actually suggest may have happened.

So the topic of Manzikert was seized on eagerly, though not immediately, by Turkish historians, although their achievements reflect varying levels of scholarly accuracy and little recourse to Western scholarship on the subject. It is certainly hard to admire scholarship which provides a continuous narrative that suppresses the variations in the accounts of the primary sources and has few or no footnotes. The example of only one such scholar's account of the battle must suffice to illustrate the trend. Köymen deals with this subject in his book, *Selçuklu devri Türk tarihi*, published in 1963.<sup>50</sup> The famous dialogue between Alp Arslan and Romanus Diogenes is related without acknowledging his sources and vague phrases such as *kaynaklara göre* (according to the sources) are deemed sufficient for the reader. In another work of his, 'The conquest of Anatolia and the pitched battle of Malazgirt', the same cavalier approach to the 'facts' is evident.<sup>51</sup>

A different but equally regrettable flaw in some Turkish scholarship on the Seljuqs is its obvious chauvinistic approach; a notorious example of this trend is the work of Turan in his examination of the theme of the Seljuqs' divine mandate to rule the world, a treatment criticised by the American Islamic historian, Stephen Humphreys.<sup>52</sup>

### **Why Manzikert particularly rather than other Seljuq victories?**

The Seljuqs' earlier glorious military success in the east in 1040 at the battle of Dandanqan, which opened the Iranian world to them, would not do: it did not happen in 'Turkey proper', as Atatürk envisaged it. So patriotic Turkish historians turned their attention to the Great Seljuqs, and especially the Seljuq sultans of Rum, whose territory broadly corresponded to that of the new Turkey brought into being by Atatürk in the 1920s.

### **Manzikert – a pivotal event**

Many countries have an awareness of a definitive event which is crucial to their history and moulded their national or religious identity, or

both.<sup>53</sup> An obvious case for England is the Battle of Hastings in 1066, a date which for generations all schoolchildren were required to know. In medieval times, it was religion that mattered. Franklin analyses this process for Russia and the Ukraine when he speaks of the year 988, the year of Vladimir I of Kiev's conversion of the Rus to Christianity, as 'the definitive event, which gave shape and sense to Russians and Ukrainians'.<sup>54</sup> When the leaders of the tribe converted, the rank and file followed suit. Thus 988 is seen as 'the kind of myth that becomes an intellectual and functional history, manufacturing a Russian identity'.<sup>55</sup>

Just as with the Rus, the period after the purported wholesale conversion of the Turkish Oghuz tribal groups to Islam under the leadership of the Seljuq family is obscure; their allegiance to Islam may well have been superficial and their adherence to their pre-Islamic Shamanistic past may very well have continued for several centuries. Those who worked with and for the Turkish military rulers of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Syria, Egypt and Iraq a century or more later were concerned for their own reasons to promote the recently acquired *Muslim* identity of their Turkish overlords and to underplay their Turkishness. This was essential in view of the role that was publicly attributed to these very Turkish overlords – that of promoters of Sunni Islam within the whole *umma* and of the guardians of the Two Holy Cities; for these purposes, ethnicity was not important. As we have seen, both these strands – Turkish ethnicity and Muslim credentials – are revealed in modern nationalist discourse in Turkey about Manzikert. Indeed, this battle has significance, in terms both of Turkey as a country and a nation, and of the specifically Islamic identity of the Turks.

### **Manzikert – the myth**

It is a characteristic of the new nation-state to revere its early heroes and leaders. Their exploits and achievements help to construct national identity in the minds and imagination of the people.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, as Strohmeier recently expressed it, the identity-makers should aim 'to construct a meaningful and persuasive image of the imagined community in order to project it as a transcendent entity'.<sup>57</sup> In this way they will ensure that the people will give their allegiance to it.

Often in the creation of a national identity the inauguration of the new regime or era is focused on the establishment of a city – such as Baghdad or Cairo. Not so with modern Turkey, which saw its

beginnings earlier than the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and its transformation into Istanbul. The modern Turks focused instead on the battle of Manzikert in 1071, not because it was necessarily a better symbol but because it was uncontaminated by Greece in a way that Istanbul could never be.<sup>58</sup>

Schöpflin has argued that ‘there has to be some factor, some event, some incident in the collective memory to which the myth makes an appeal’.<sup>59</sup> Manzikert clearly fits into Schöpflin’s taxonomy of myths. The battle – such a key building block in the edifice of Turkish national identity – is associated with Anatolia, the particular territory where the Turkish nation first discovered itself. The Manzikert myth was made to ‘resonate’, to use Schöpflin’s term,<sup>60</sup> by the official exploiting of visual material, such as stamps and coins, as we shall see shortly.

The myth of Manzikert is, however, reinforced by a real historical event. In contrast to some of the early historical theories of the Turkish Republic, which stretched the bounds of credulity, it could be proved from a vast array of medieval sources, both Muslim and Christian, that the battle of Manzikert did take place, and on Anatolian soil, and that it was a Turkish military triumph, the fame of which reached medieval Europe. Its significance may well have been embellished over the centuries but the modern myth of Manzikert in Turkey is not a fabrication or wild absurdity of the kind that has been produced in recent times in Iraq, for example, to bolster the claims of the regime of Saddam Husayn<sup>61</sup> or the 2,500th ‘anniversary’ of the Persian empire celebrated by the last Shah of Iran in 1971 and the new calendar he introduced into his country.

As has been discussed above, it is important to note the role played and the control exerted by the Turkish intellectual elite in the myth of Manzikert. This battle serves in the modern Turkish collective psyche as a foundational myth, a myth of military valour and a territorial myth. Indeed, these categories of myth, outlined by Schöpflin, all apply to Manzikert and, combined together, they exert an especially potent emotional charge.<sup>62</sup>

### **Comparisons between Alp Arslan and Atatürk**

It is noteworthy that, unlike some other Middle Eastern rulers, such as the last Shah of Iran or Saddam Husayn, Atatürk never resorted to the crude mechanism of fabricating false genealogies, or of linking himself to the ancient and medieval heroes, be they Turkic or Muslim, of his ‘nation’s’ glorious past. His military record, charismatic personality

and vision for the new Turkey sufficed. But grand claims and comparisons were made. Like Alp Arslan, Atatürk, despite his secularising agenda, was given the religious title *ghāzī* by the National Assembly; he could be a revered president but at the same time, as *ghāzī*, he preserved the ancient bonds linking the leader to the ordinary people.<sup>63</sup> As a patriotic historian, Köymen declares that Anatolia is ‘for today’s Turkey the fundamental basis of its existence’<sup>64</sup> and draws comparisons between Atatürk, who withdrew ‘onto the Anatolian steppe’, and the activities of the Seljuqs. Indeed, Köymen argues that the wars<sup>65</sup> conducted by the Turks under Atatürk can be compared to those fought by the Seljuqs. Köymen is also at pains to stress that the wars of the Ottomans, fought *outside the homeland* (my emphasis), cannot be linked to the victories of Atatürk, on the one hand, or those of the Seljuqs on the other.<sup>66</sup> According to Köymen, who defies the known historical facts of the last two years of Alp Arslan’s life – namely, that after Manzikert he rushed to Central Asia to quell unrest on his eastern border and never returned to Anatolia – the Seljuq leader ‘had begun to found a homeland for the Turks after his victory at Manzikert against the Byzantines’.<sup>67</sup>

### The Greek connection

As the Turkish scholar Karpas points out, there was a tendency in the new Turkish Republic to view the historical relationship between the Turks and the Greeks through a romantic prism inherited from Namık Kemal: the glories of the Ottoman empire could thereby be attributed to the Turks, whilst any decay or backwardness would be blamed on non-Turkish elements. The Turkish conquest and final destruction of Byzantium is the stuff of legend – David killing Goliath. Indeed, Karpas quotes from an edition of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, dated 18 May 1963, which encapsulates the popular view: ‘The Byzantine empire with its gigantic fortresses and strong armies and famous scholars disintegrated before a handful of Turkish tribesmen who had established a state in a small town around Bursa.’<sup>68</sup> In such a context the earlier victory of the Turks over the Greeks at Manzikert could also play a vital role in the building of a national identity.

It is necessary now to return briefly to a discussion of more recent historical events in Turkey and in particular to the nationalist struggle under the leadership of Atatürk. The Battle of Dumlupınar was the last battle of the Turkish War of Independence (1919–22). The battle was fought between 26 and 30 August 1922, on Turkish soil, near Afyon.

The Turkish army was under the command of Atatürk. To commemorate this victory, 30 August is celebrated as Victory Day, a national holiday in Turkey. Of this struggle Geoffrey Lewis writes: 'At dawn on 26 August the Greek positions were pulverized under an intense artillery bombardment. Then the Turkish infantry, with fixed bayonets, poured forth from their trenches. The Greek army broke and fled.'<sup>69</sup> This key episode and the subsequent demolition of the remnants of the Greek army led to the Armistice in October 1922 in which there was a complete Allied surrender to the demands of the Turkish nationalists under Atatürk. As Atatürk declared in November that year: 'The Turkish nation has called a halt; it has rebelled and taken sovereignty into its own hands.'<sup>70</sup> The following year the capital was moved to Ankara, far from the Greek atmosphere still so marked in Istanbul.

Could it be a coincidence that 26 August 1071 was chosen by Turkish historians as the day to be the definitive date for the battle of Manzikert? As has been argued earlier in this book, if it is accepted that the battle took place on a Friday, then there are two possible dates – 19 or 26 August 1071.<sup>71</sup> The short book by Dirimtekin – *Malazgirt meydan muharebesi (The field battle of Malazgirt)*<sup>72</sup> – published in 1942 is in many ways very disappointing. It is an uncritical telling of the story, a highly derivative narrative<sup>73</sup> presumably aimed at a general audience. However, the dedication at the beginning of this book is very enlightening on the question of the date of the battle:

History is repetition:  
 26 August 1071  
 (The Battle of Malazgirt)  
 26 August 1922  
 (The Great Offensive)<sup>74</sup>

Nowhere in his book does Dirimtekin tease out the implications of this rousing statement, but his Turkish readers would not need to have it explained. Another Turkish scholar, Yıldız, writing in 1966, makes the same point but more explicitly and with much greater force. He states that 26 August is a very important date in the history of the Turks and Turkey, and he places both Manzikert and Dumlupınar on the same day of the year: 'On the same day eight hundred and fifty years later they (the Turks) struck the final blow against the enemies of Turkey in order to prove that a Turkish homeland was possible.'

Then he declares that the two great victories of the Turkish nation are '26 August 1071' and '26 August Dumlupınar'.<sup>75</sup>

It is curious that the propagandistic value of this direct parallel between Manzikert on 26 August 1071 and the beginning of the 'Great Offensive' from Kocatepe on 26 August 1922 has apparently been so under-exploited in Turkey.<sup>76</sup> In the ongoing historical relationship between Turks and Greeks, between Muslims and Christians, a telling parallel could have been drawn to great effect between Alp Arslan's victory at Manzikert against the Byzantine Greeks and the success of Atatürk against the Greeks in 1922.<sup>77</sup> So two deeply significant historical moments in the history of the Turks are linked together here, both involving an epic struggle against the Greeks: one, an encounter between the mighty Christian Byzantine army and that of the Muslim Seljuqs, who conquered Anatolia for the Turks, and the other, a most decisive moment in the nationalist campaigns fought by the Turks against the Greeks.

It is also interesting to note that few modern Turkish scholars make much play of the second major victory of the Seljuqs over the Byzantines at Myriokephalon in 1176. Köymen stands out on this occasion as one who did see patriotic significance in this event. Describing the battle as an attempt by the Byzantines 'to drive the Turks out of their new homeland', Köymen classifies it emotively as 'a battle to keep the fatherland' – and Myriokephalon resulted in a total victory for the Turks.<sup>78</sup> The climax of the centuries-long Turkish/Greek confrontation – the third battle for Turkish liberation, as Köymen puts it – is Sakarya, when the Turks were victorious once again against the Greeks, this time under Atatürk's leadership. In his view, therefore, the unbroken line of effort to save the Turks and conserve their state culminates after Sakarya, which freed the Anatolian homeland from foreign intervention and also laid the foundation stone for the Turkish Republic. No battle taking place in Ottoman times shared the same characteristics as Manzikert, Myriokephalon and Sakarya<sup>79</sup> (pl. 18).

Nevertheless, it is clear that the choice of 30 August, rather than four days earlier, as the Turkish Victory Day gives priority not to Manzikert, but to the most recent of the Turkish military triumphs over the Greeks, since it led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic. However, the close proximity in the calendar between this anniversary and that of Manzikert means that both events can reinforce each other and resonate together. In recent years, the last week of August has often been the moment for Turkish presidents and prime

ministers to travel east to celebrate, and the two commemorations can go hand in hand.<sup>80</sup>

### **The build-up to the nine-hundredth anniversary of the battle of Manzikert, 1971**

Gradually, the rather broad-brush approach to Seljuq history shown in the first and second generations of twentieth-century Turkish scholars was replaced by more specialised studies on the subject of Manzikert. Two important landmarks were the establishment of a special institute in Ankara in 1966 – the *Selçuklu Tarih ve Medeniyeti Enstitüsü* (the Institute of Seljuq History and Civilisation) – and the publication of a journal devoted to Seljuq studies, with volumes appearing from 1969–72.<sup>81</sup> The proximity in timing between the setting up of the institute and the emergence of this journal, on the one hand, and the approach of the nine-hundredth anniversary of Manzikert in 1971, on the other, is not accidental. Indeed, the memory and perceived significance of the battle must have acted as a spur to those who set up the institute and the journal, and the subject of Manzikert is featured prominently on its pages.

The actual nine-hundredth anniversary of the celebrated battle of Manzikert, 26 August 1971,<sup>82</sup> was heralded by widespread jubilation in Turkey. It was seen as the true symbol of the beginnings of the Turkification and Islamisation of Anatolia.<sup>83</sup> Coins were minted and special stamps were issued in commemoration. Turkish scholars joined in the national celebration of the nine-hundredth anniversary of the battle and they produced a commemorative volume of papers purporting to deal with various aspects of Manzikert.<sup>84</sup> Its aim is proudly proclaimed in the dedication on its first page:

This work has been done in commemoration of the renown of the Great Commander Alp Arslan in connection with the nine-hundredth anniversary of the field battle of Malazgirt.<sup>85</sup>

Yet only three of the twenty articles tackle the subject of Manzikert at all and there is no biography of Alp Arslan in these articles. Although Sevim's contribution to the volume is entitled 'The pitched battle of Manzikert and its results',<sup>86</sup> it says virtually nothing about the battle. He prefers, instead, to make the grandiose but unsubstantiated statement<sup>87</sup> that the Seljuqs conquered Anatolia and made it their new Turkish homeland as part of a deliberately planned strategy.

Dirimtekin's chapter called "Two victories which ensured the establishment and development of the Seljuqs in Anatolia"<sup>88</sup> seeks to analyse why Byzantium lost the battle but he loses scholarly objectivity when he suddenly bumbles in florid tones that 'the rays of the setting sun in the evening of 26 August 1071 gilded the victory of the Seljuq army and its heroic and magnanimous commander Alp Arslan'.<sup>89</sup> Thus patriotism runs ahead of measured scholarship.

Other articles and books appeared, as well as bibliographies and conference proceedings.<sup>90</sup> A play was commissioned for the anniversary and a military exercise designed to reconstruct the battle itself took place.<sup>91</sup> In his opening speech to a conference on the battle of Manzikert, the President of the Institute for Seljuq History and Civilisation, as he put it 'on the eve of the nine-hundredth anniversary of the great Malazgirt victory', drew the powerful parallel between the names of two great Turks in the history of the Turkish fatherland – Alp Arslan and Atatürk.<sup>92</sup>

### Public monuments to the battle

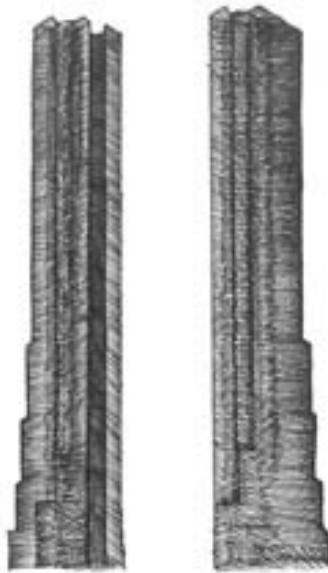


**Figure 7.1** Modern equestrian statue of Alp Arslan at Manzikert (drawn by Margaret Graves)



### *The statue of Alp Arslan at Manzikert*

High-profile plans for the anniversary included in 1967 the launching of an initiative by the Institute of Seljuq History and Civilisation (*Selçuklu Tarih ve Medeniyeti Enstitüsü*) to memorialise the event by the erection of a statue in Manzikert. The then President of Turkey, Cevdet Sunay, made the long journey to lay the foundation stone there.<sup>93</sup> The statue, depicting Alp Arslan on a ‘rearing stallion’, now stands at the western entrance to Manzikert (known in modern Turkey as Malazgirt). The inscription on the pedestal plaque states that Alp Arslan had only fifteen thousand men and the enemy had two hundred and ten thousand.<sup>94</sup>



**Figure 7.2** Modern Turkish victory monument outside Manzikert (drawn by Margaret Graves)

### *The commemorative monument built on the site of the battle of Manzikert*

To the east of Manzikert, near the alleged site of the battle, two white monoliths – called the ‘Gateway to Anatolia’ – rise up triumphantly forty-two metres into the sky. Each year in August, to commemorate the anniversary, the battle of Manzikert is re-enacted in a celebratory performance by Boy Scouts in costume. In 2003 the Prime Minister of Turkey came to watch.<sup>95</sup>

### A commemorative poem about Manzikert

A panegyric poem, entitled *A torch burns in Malazgirt*, was written by Ahmet Yüzendag for the celebrations in 1971 and published six years later.<sup>96</sup> This poem may be translated as follows:

A torch burns in Malazgirt

One night I parted that golden curtain<sup>97</sup>  
 Which is called history  
 And I silently descended all the way down to 1071  
 In the middle of the night, on the plain of Malazgirt,  
 I saw a great ruler like a mountain<sup>98</sup>  
 He, that great ruler, the famous Seljuq sultan,  
 Saw the world as too narrow for him  
 And he said ‘Anatolia is the second motherland for the Turk’.  
 He roared like a lion against outdated Byzantium.  
 Then on an August morning  
 A wind was blowing differently in Malazgirt.  
 Then one August morning  
 Hands were in prayer, eyes on victory.  
 Alp Arslan, wearing a white robe,<sup>99</sup>  
 Greeted the chiefs and commanders  
 Who were waiting (to give) the order to attack to 50,000 horsemen.  
 On the opposite side, the army of Romanus Diogenes, more than  
 200,000.  
 On the near side, courageous young men, with rearing horses,  
 Wait to receive the order to strike the enemy,  
 Commanders-in-chief,  
 And after that the great ruler.  
 Prayers were said to God,  
 Prayers for victory.  
 The commander-in-chief then gave the order to attack.  
 Like a storm the enemy lines are entered  
 Now arrows are shot, swords are brandished.  
 A deadly fight. Byzantium is being crushed.  
 As if the plain becomes the scene of the Last Judgement,  
 Every place is shaking.  
 The skies ring out with the cries of ‘Allah! Allah!’  
 The plain of Malazgirt – in chaos. Blood, blood.  
 Diogenes is done for, totally done for.<sup>100</sup>  
 Could any enemy confront the Turk?

The struggle has ended in victory again.  
 Since 1071 a torch has been burning in Malazgirt  
 In the hand of Alp Arslan  
 In the hand of heroic Turks.<sup>101</sup>

This poem follows the broad lines of the battle narrative found in the medieval Islamic sources. Two major motifs, already present in the Muslim historiography of the battle of Manzikert, are intertwined in this poem: Alp Arslan's Turkish identity and his religious credentials as a pious Muslim ruler. Indeed, the theme of Anatolia, portrayed here as 'the second motherland for the Turk', is smoothly juxtaposed with the depiction of Alp Arslan as a *jihād* warrior preparing himself and his soldiers for the struggle in the path of God, culminating, if it is God's will, in the prize of martyrdom and Paradise. For, drawing on some of the medieval accounts of the battle, the poet alludes to the symbol of the white shroud donned by Alp Arslan before the battle. There is also an allusion to the prayers which he led in front of his commanders and soldiers.

The poem is given a powerfully cosmic dimension, as befits what is viewed here as a titanic battle, not just between two rulers, two armies and two territorial entities, but between Islam and Christianity. Byzantium is an outmoded, decrepit empire and Christianity a superseded faith. With the inevitable victory of Islam proclaimed in the line – 'The skies ring out with the cries of "Allah! Allah!" – the grassy plain of Manzikert may be seen to foretell the cataclysmic phenomenon of the Last Judgement so forcefully evoked in the Qur'an:

When the heaven is cleft asunder,  
 When the planets are dispersed,  
 When the seas are poured forth,  
 And the sepulchres are overturned,  
 A soul will know what it hath sent before it and what left behind!<sup>102</sup>

At the same time, the Turkish dimension is exploited to the full. Alp Arslan is called *bakan*, an ancient Turkish term attested as early as in the Orkhon inscriptions of the eighth century, and he is also given the Muslim title *sultan*. Much play with the second element of the Seljuq sultan's name is made in the first part of the poem. Arslan, meaning 'lion', denoting the king of the animal kingdom – fierce, majestic and indomitable – is in origin a totemistic Turkish name stemming from the pre-Islamic past on the steppes of Central Asia. Its iconography has been studied by the French scholar Jean-Paul Roux, who points out

the special emphasis placed on the lion in the animal art of the steppes.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the poem ends with the pun of the last two lines:

*Alparslan'in elinde* (in the hand of Alp Arslan ('Hero lion'))

*Alparslanların elinde* (in the hand of the hero lions – i.e. the Turkish army)

The burning torch, epitomising the eternal memory of this glorious battle, is a fitting symbol to be used in the title of this poem.

There remains an interesting point about the poem's possible propagandistic role in the political arena of Turkey in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>104</sup> Does this poem allude indirectly to Alparslan Türkeş?<sup>105</sup> If so, this demonstrates the multi-valent power of the battle of Manzikert to different sections of Turkish society right into modern times. If this were true, it was in this case the far right of Turkish politics that exploited the potential of the imminent Manzikert anniversary in the build-up to the general election of 1969. It was around this time that the leader of the *Milleyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP) (Nationalist Movement Party) adopted the new name Alparslan Türkeş; his notoriously extreme right views, labelled 'fascist' by his opponents, involved belief in the superiority of the Turks over all other nations:

Turks do not have any friend or ally other than other Turks. Turks! Turn to your roots. Our words are to those that have Turkish ancestry and are Turks . . .<sup>106</sup>

### Medallions and coins commemorating Alp Arslan at the battle of Manzikert



**Figure 7.3** Medallion of 1975 commemorating the battle of Manzikert. Obverse with profile bust of Alp Arslan, reverse with horseman (drawn by Margaret Graves)

Gold, silver and bronze Alp Arslan medallions and rosettes were made as souvenirs to commemorate the battle of Manzikert. One such medallion is illustrated in the *Selçuklu araştırmaları dergisi* for 1975. On the obverse is the image of Alp Arslan, side view, with a long, sweeping gorget protecting his neck and a waxed moustache. His pickelhauber helmet has a three-stage finial. The obverse bears the legend 'Selçuklu sultanı Alp Arslan' ('the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan') and on the reverse are the words '*Malazgirt zaferi* (sic: for *zaferi*) 900 yıl' ('the triumph of Malazgirt 900 years') and a scene of horsemen in a flying gallop against a backdrop of a huge mountain, perhaps intended to represent Ararat. The emphasis on cavalry in contradistinction to infantry is a constant of the way that Manzikert is conceived in the modern Turkish imagination. While the three horsemen in front carry spears and ride to the right, the rider behind is discharging a Parthian shot, a well-known Turkish manoeuvre, in the opposite direction.<sup>107</sup>



**Figure 7.4** Fifty-lira silver coin of 1971 commemorating the battle of Manzikert. Obverse with portrait of Alp Arslan, reverse with arrows superimposed on map of Turkey

A fifty-lira silver coin was issued in 1971, depicting Alp Arslan, moustachioed and wearing a helmet and chain mail; the inscription bears the words: *Türkiye cumhuriyeti: Alp Arslan* ('The Republic of Turkey: Alp Arslan'). The obverse shows the words: *elli lira. 26 Ağustos 1071-1971* ('Fifty lira. 26 August 1071-1971'). It also has a design of arrows superimposed on a map of Turkey. These arrows have no feathered end and radiate outwards from a crescent (the Muslim symbol *par excellence*) strategically placed over Lake Van. They fan out across the whole of Turkey (also showing Cyprus).

The details depicted on the coin are a mixture of historical verisimilitude and crashing anachronisms. Arrows without feathered ends would not reach their target. There is no evidence that a chain-mail gorget of this kind, reaching from the base of the helmet to cascade over the shoulders, was used by Muslims in the eleventh century. The aigrette affixed to the front of his helmet above his nose corresponds to a sixteenth-century rather than an eleventh-century fashion, nor are imbricated helmets known in the Muslim world in this period. It is, however, mentioned in the medieval Muslim sources that Alp Arslan was famed for his archery skills and his side-whiskers were much talked about, as Rashid al-Din records:<sup>108</sup>

Alp Arslan Muhammad b. Chaghri Beg was a very awe-inspiring, dominating and alert ruler, and an opponent-upsetter, an enemy-breaker, a world-conquering, earth-seizing, great-formed one, elegant of stature. He had long, thin whiskers, which he used to knot up when shooting arrows. And they say that his arrow never went astray. On days of audience he was extremely awe-inspiring and splendid. From the top button of his hat to the end of his moustaches it was two yards.

### Stamps commemorating Manzikert



Figure 7.5 Turkish stamp of 1971 depicting Alp Arslan and horsemen

From the same year of 1971 comes a Turkish postage stamp depicting Alp Arslan and horsemen. The predominant colour in the background of this stamp is red. It is appropriate as the colour of the blood of the battlefield and is also an echo of the prominence of the colour red in the Turkish national flag.<sup>109</sup> However, there are historical inaccuracies on the stamp. The helmet which Alp Arslan is wearing shows, like the fifty-lira medal, an aigrette, a device belonging to a turban, not a helmet, and denoting a mark of rank in the Safavid, not the Seljuq, period. But what is most striking about the stamp is the image of Alp Arslan himself, larger than any other figure and powerfully dominating the scene. Here again, his moustache is anachronistic, reflecting as it does male fashions in modern rather than medieval Turkey. The chain-mail gorget is a further anachronism.



**Figure 7.6** Turkish stamp of 1971 depicting Alp Arslan and mounted archers

Another commemorative stamp, predominantly orange-red in colour, interspersed with white and yellow, depicts a mounted archer, presumably Alp Arslan, in the foreground; in the top right of the stamp is another, significantly smaller, horseman in an identical pose. The words on the stamp read: *Türkiye cumhuriyeti posta. 250 kuruş. Malazgirt zaferinin 900 yılı.* ('The post of the Turkish Republic. 250 kuruş. 900 years of the victory of Malazgirt'.)

What matters with this stamp is not whether or not it is an authentic historical portrayal of the medieval hero and his steed. What counts is the powerful mythical message it emits. Great symbolic emphasis is placed on the bow, which is disproportionately large. The rider is mistakenly shown without stirrups, a lack which would have made accurate archery difficult. The heavy horse is shown with all four legs variously extended. No horse in motion would have its two back legs together in this way. Indeed, its front legs are realistically drawn, whilst its back legs are an abstraction. In other words, this horse would not be able to move in this stance. An opportunity has been missed here: the artist who devised this stamp could have drawn on the well-established tradition of medieval Islamic painting in which horses are normally shown in the 'flying gallop' position, beautifully conveying the dynamism and immediacy of battle. Instead, Alp Arslan is shown on horseback on the battlefield in an intermediate ceremonial pose, although we are to assume that he is in the midst of the battle, since in the top right corner of the stamp there is a further, if tiny, horseman, whose bow is bent in the same direction as that of Alp Arslan. It is interesting to note that he is shown in yellow, the colour of flight and cowardice, long associated in the medieval Muslim sources with Byzantines and the Crusaders, who were known as the Yellow Tribe (*Banu'l-Asfar*).<sup>110</sup> Zengi, the conqueror of Edessa from the Franks in 1144, according to poetic lines found in two medieval sources, is reported to have declared: 'I have rid myself of the Yellow Tribe (*Banu'l-Asfar*)'.<sup>111</sup> So perhaps this diminutive figure represents the Byzantine enemy in flight.

### What next?

The memory of Manzikert remains evergreen. The anniversary of the battle is remembered each year, both nationally and locally in the area of Manzikert. In 1998 the then President of Turkey, Suleyman Demirel, travelled east for the nine hundredth anniversary of the battle; his programme on that occasion included a tour of the aptly named Alp Arslan dam under construction at Muş and a visit to the celebrations taking place in Manzikert itself. In 2004 the then Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, went to Muş to celebrate the victory at Manzikert. His speech drew on the resonances of the battle to make political capital: 'Nine hundred and thirty three years after this battle, we are striving for unity and peace in Turkey . . . There is a national will to invigorate the country'.<sup>112</sup>



Now in 2007, as Turkey stands on the brink of momentous, far-reaching decisions, horizons are changing yet again and widening in both new and ancient directions. Once again, the heritage of the Turks, both inside and outside the boundaries of the modern state of Turkey, is being re-emphasised. In a recent, three-volumed, magnificently illustrated work produced by the Turkish Cultural Service Foundation and entitled *Türk dünyası kültür atlası*, the then Minister of Culture, İsmail Kahraman, in his opening peroration, reveals that there has been a clear shift again towards inclusion of Turks outside Turkey: 'The cultural geography of our nation is its spiritual homeland. Every place in which we have ever left a work of ours behind bears a trace – a reminder – of us, whether or not it lies within the boundaries of the Turkish republic today'.<sup>113</sup> Kahraman goes on to speak of the 'splendid family tree of the Turkish people' – a 'magnificent panorama' – 'across the vast region extending from the remotest parts of Asia to Europe and from Africa to Siberia'.<sup>114</sup> The same universalist dimension of 'Turkishness', stretching from the Bosphorus to China, was embraced in the recent exhibition of Turkish art held in London in 2005 – '*Turks*' – which attracted a record number of visitors. But, no matter how Turkey develops in the future, it seems likely that the memory and glory of Manzikert will continue to resonate in Turkish hearts and minds.

## Notes

1. Atatürk, 'Yurttaşlık bilgileri', *Yenigün haber ajansı*, June 1997, 18.
2. Leiser pleads for more people to read what modern Turkish academics have written and for more medieval Islamicists in the West to learn Turkish; cf. his introduction to M. F. Köprülü, *The Seljuks of Anatolia. Their history and culture according to local Muslim sources*, tr. and ed. by G. Leiser, Salt Lake City, 1992, x. His numerous translations of the works of modern Turkish historians have rendered this task much easier.
3. B. Lewis, *The emergence of modern Turkey*, London, 1968, 332, 345.
4. *Ibid.*, 338.
5. B. Lewis, 'History-writing and national revival in Turkey', *Middle Eastern Affairs* 4 (1953), 223.
6. K. Karpat, 'Die Geschichte der ideologischen Strömungen seit der Begründung der türkischen Republik', *Bustan* 1/2 (1962), 19, quoting H. Melzig, *Atatürk'ün Baslıca Nutukları*, Istanbul, 1942, 114–15.
7. M. A. Köymen, 'Einige Bemerkungen zur Geburt der neuen Türkei', *Cultura Turcica* 8–10 (1971–3), 10.

8. F. Tachau, 'The search for national identity among the Turks', *Die Welt des Islams* 8/3 (1963), 165–6.
9. *Ibid.*, 167.
10. B. Lewis, *The emergence of modern Turkey*, London, 1968, 359.
11. G. Lewis, *Turkey*, London, 1955, 99.
12. R. Mantran, 'L'orientation des études historiques en Turquie', *Revue historique* 234 (1962), 311–22.
13. *Ibid.*
14. An American ambassador to Turkey, Charles Sherrill, who talked to Atatürk about his views on history, wrote that Atatürk considered the 'new Turkish history' as 'his greatest contribution to his beloved fatherland'; cf. C. S. Sherrill, *A year's embassy to Mustafa Kemal*, New York and London, 1934, 17. For a recent discussion of Atatürk and history, cf. S. Akşin, *Turkey from Empire to Revolutionary Republic*, London, 2006, 211–12.
15. *Ibid.*, 360.
16. Mantran, 'L'orientation des études historiques', 317.
17. A. K. Germanus, 'Causes of the decline of the Islamic peoples', *The Islamic literature* 5 (1953), 37–8.
18. The plan was to give eastern Thrace to the Greeks and parts of eastern Anatolia to the Armenians; cf. Akşin, 211.
19. Akşin, 211, citing Enver Kiya Karal, one of the most famous historians of this period.
20. E. Rossi, 'Lo storico Fuad Köprülü, Ministro degli Esteri di Turchia', *Oriente moderno* 31 (1951), 98.
21. Leiser, *Seljuks*, ix.
22. For an excellent introduction to Köprülü's life and work, cf. Leiser's introduction in M. F. Köprülü, *Some observations on the influence of Byzantine institutions on Ottoman institutions*, tr. and ed. G. Leiser, Ankara, 1999, 1–13.
23. *Ibid.*, 99.
24. *Ibid.*
25. M. F. Köprülü, *Hayat* (1927), no. 7, 123: cited by Leiser in his introduction in Köprülü, *Some observations*, 5.
26. Lewis, 'History-writing', 223–4. This journal saw only five issues during 1915.
27. Leiser, *A history of the Seljuks – Ibrahim Kafesoğlu's interpretation and the resulting controversy*, Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1988, 10.
28. *Ibid.*
29. I. Kafesoğlu, 'Seljuk historiography in Turkey', *International Journal for Turkish Studies* 3 (1985–6), 136.
30. S. K. Yetkin, 'Discours d'ouverture du Professeur Ordinarius Suut Kemal Yetkin, Recteur de l'Université d'Ankara et Président du 1er

- Congrès International des Arts Turcs', in *First International Congress of Turkish Arts; Communications presented to the Congress*, Ankara, 1961, 1–3. It is worth noting that no comparable sequence of Arab or Persian arts congresses has matched the Turkish one.
31. *Ibid.*, 8.
  32. Cf. J. de Jong and M. Strohmeier, 'Geschichte und Integration. Ein Vergleich der in türkischen, griechischen und deutschen Schulbüchern vermittelten Geschichtsbilder und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Integrationsbemühungen', *Die Welt des Islams im Geschichtsunterricht der Europäer*, Dortmund, 1984, 160–72. De Jong and Strohmeier point out similarities of approach in the teaching of history in Greece.
  33. *Ibid.*, 161.
  34. G. Lewis, *Turkey*, 99.
  35. *Ibid.*, citing T. C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Tebliğler Dergisi (*Gazette of the National Ministry of Education of the Turkish Republic*), no. 1931 (25.4.1977), 4–9.
  36. M. Strohmeier, *Seldschukische Geschichte und türkische Geschichtswissenschaft. Die Seldschuken im Urteil moderner türkischer Historiker*, Berlin 1984, 198.
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. Leiser, *Seljuks*, 10. This assertion would not be valid in more recent times when Turkish scholars, notably Inalcık and Kefadar, have focused with distinction on the Ottoman empire.
  39. For other Middle Eastern examples, cf. W. Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte*, Beirut, 1977, 291.
  40. G. Lewis, *Turkey*, 82.
  41. *Ibid.*, 197.
  42. B. Lewis, *Emergence*, 329.
  43. Strohmeier, *Seldschukische Geschichte*, 201.
  44. Turan, 200.
  45. *Ibid.*, 142–3.
  46. *Ibid.*, 199–200. It should be noted that, despite the Muslim focus of this interpretation, God here is Tanrı rather than Allah. Even at a time when Turkish was being deliberately purged of Arabic elements, this is a startling usage.
  47. Kaymaz, 'Malazgirt savaşı', 295. It is, incidentally, fortunate that Kaymaz did not have the opportunity to read Alfred Duggan's fanciful account in his novel, *The lady for ransom*, published in 1953. This was the only Western novel, it would appear, which was written against a backcloth of Manzikert.
  48. *Armağanı*, 259–68.

49. Strohmeier, *Seldschukische Geschichte*, 202. This stance of Alp Arslan is criticised as bad strategy by some Turkish scholars such as M. A. Köymen, *Selçuklu devri Türk tarihi*, Ankara, 1963, 278.
50. Köymen, *Selçuklu devri*, 264–80. He gives a bibliography at the end of the book but there are no references to the individual sources used on each page. It is therefore impossible to distinguish between quotation, paraphrase and modern interpretation in his simplified, ironed-out narrative.
51. Köymen, ‘Anadolu’nun fethi ve Malazgirt meydan muharebesi’, in *Malazgirt zaferi ve Alp Arslan (The victory of Malazgirt and Alp Arslan)*, 26 Ağustos 1071, 67–142. The account of the battle begins on page 115. The alleged conversation between Romanus Diogenes and Alp Arslan is again recorded without nuance or comment by the author and instead of precise references to particular primary sources, he resorts to the blanket phrase *kaynaklarda* (‘according to the sources’); *ibid.*, 136. Koca’s book is also a great disappointment and it does not mention one single Islamic primary source, although fifteen pages are devoted to the battle of Manzikert; cf. S. Koca, *Dandankandan Malazgirt*, Giresun, 1997, 139–54.
52. R. S. Humphreys, *Islamic history; a framework for inquiry*, Princeton, 1991, 166.
53. S. Franklin, ‘Borrowed time: perceptions of the past in twelfth-century Rus’, in *The perception of the past in twelfth-century Europe*, ed. P. Magdalino, London, 1992, 157.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. M. Strohmeier, *Crucial images in the presentation of a Kurdish national identity, heroes and patriots, traitors and foes*, Leiden. 2003,1.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Cf. the general argument in H. V. White, ‘Historicism, history and the figurative imagination’, *History and theory*, 14/4 (1975), 51.
59. G. Schöpflin, ‘The functions of myth and the taxonomy of myths’, *Myths and nationhood*, eds G. Hosking and G. Schöpflin, London, 1997, 26.
60. *Ibid.*, 25.
61. Ideas, for example, linking Saddam Husayn to Saladin.
62. Schöpflin, 28–33.
63. K. H. Karpat, ‘The military and politics in Turkey, 1960–4: a socio-cultural analysis of a revolution’, *American Historical Review*, LXXV/6 (1970), 1659. For a fine recent study of Atatürk, cf. A. Mango, *Atatürk*, London, 1999.
64. Köymen, ‘Bemerkungen’, 11.
65. *Ibid.*, 12.
66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*
68. Karpas, 'The military and politics', 1668, n.36.
69. G. Lewis, *Turkey*, 68.
70. *Ibid.*, 69.
71. Vryonis points out that 'an almost contemporary Byzantine source sets clearly the date as August 26'; cf. 'A personal history', 232.
72. F. Dirimtekin, *Malazgirt – meydan muharebesi*, Ankara, 1942.
73. It is riddled with errors in the spelling of foreign words and is uncritical in its use of secondary European sources.
74. *Ibid.*, 4.
75. H. D. Yıldız, 'Malazgirt'ten Dumlupınar'a', *Türk kültürü* 46 (1966), 854–6.
76. Strohmeier also points out the parallel, but he remains silent about its implications; *Seldschukische Geschichte*, 197.
77. Atatürk convened the first Great National Assembly in Ankara in 1920 and launched campaigns in the next two years against the Greeks.
78. 'vaterlandserhaltende Schlacht'; cf. Köymen, 'Bemerkungen', 12.
79. *Ibid.*, 12. For Atatürk's stirring words pronounced at Sakarya, cf. Akşin, *Turkey from Empire to Revolutionary Republic*, 166–7.
80. Other Turkish military triumphs could also have been invoked, such as the stand against Russia at Plevna in 1877. But they were not.
81. Leiser, *Seljuks*, 12.
82. The date of the battle generally accepted in Turkey is 26 August 1071, although it may actually have happened a week earlier.
83. Strohmeier, *Seldschukische Geschichte*, 197.
84. *Malazgirt armağanı*, Ankara, 1972.
85. *Ibid.*, unnumbered first page.
86. 'Malazgirt meydan savası ve sonuçları', *Malazgirt armağanı*, 219–29.
87. The article has no footnotes at all.
88. 'Selçukların Anadolu'da yerleşmelerini ve gelişmelerini sağlayan iki zafer', *Malazgirt armağanı*, 231–58.
89. *Ibid.*, 247.
90. As has already been mentioned, in 1971 Sümer and Sevim published their collection of the medieval Arabic and Persian narratives (nine Arabic and four Persian) dealing with the battle of Manzikert, together with Turkish translations and an introduction. This was, at the time of the nine-hundredth anniversary of the battle, a very useful contribution to scholarship about Manzikert. Cf. Turan's book, also published in 1971: O. Turan, *Selçuklular zamanında Türkiye*, Istanbul, 1971, 27–32. In this book Turan devoted five pages to Manzikert but does not provide a single footnote to support his statements.
91. Cf. a paper delivered by Professor S. Vryonis in 1988.

92. *Selçuklu Araştırmaları Dergisi* IV (1975), v.
93. *Ibid.*
94. O'Shea, *Sea of faith*, 104.
95. *Ibid.*
96. Included in an article of M. A. Köymen, 'Malazgirt meydan muharebesinde rol oynayan unsurlar', *Milli kültür* 8 (August 1977), 6–11. The poem itself is to be found on page 9. I am extremely grateful to my colleague, Dr Sebnem Susam-Sarajeva, for discussing the translation of this poem with me.
97. Literally: 'ribbon'.
98. *Hakan*.
99. *hurman*, meaning also 'shroud', is perhaps an echo of some narratives of the battle found in the medieval sources; e.g. Chapter 3, p. 65.
100. Literally: 'the state of Diogenes is bad, very bad'.
101. Literally: 'in the hand of Alp Arslan ('heroic lion'); in the hands of heroic lions'.
102. Qur'an 82:1–5.
103. Cf. J.-P. Roux, *La religion des Turcs et des Mongols*, Paris, 1984, 180.
104. I am very grateful once again to Dr Sebnem Susam-Sarajeva for suggesting this possibility.
105. Alparslan Türkeş had headed one of the military groups – the nationalists – who were vying for power in 1961–3. His views had considerable appeal for the arch-nationalists; cf. Karpat, 'The military and politics in Turkey', 1663, n. 22 and 1680, n. 72; cf. also [www.mhp.org.tr](http://www.mhp.org.tr)
106. [www.mhp.org.tr](http://www.mhp.org.tr)
107. 'Enstitüden haberler', *Selçuklu Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4 (1975), 312–13.
108. Tr. Luther, 47. The same sentiments about Alp Arslan are expressed by his vizier, Nizam al-Mulk; cf. *Siyasetname*, tr. Darke, 96.
109. There are a number of legends associated with the emergence of the Turkish flag. One such legend tells of a reflection of the moon, occulting a star, appearing in pools of blood, after the battle of Kosovo in 1448. Thereafter this arresting image was adopted as the design for the Turkish flag by Sultan Murad II.
110. Cf. the discussion in Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic perspectives*, 240 and 255.
111. Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubda*, in *RHC* III, 686. The chronicler makes a word play between *şifr* meaning 'zero' and *aşfar* meaning 'yellow' – *asbahtu şifran min Bani'l-Aşfar*.
112. <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/yayınlarımız/chr/ing2004/08/04x08x27.htm>, which also gives information about these journeys.
113. Volume entitled *İslam öncesi dönem*, Istanbul, 1997, v–vi.
114. *Ibid.*, vi.

# Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this book to tease out the tension between ‘fact’ and ideology in the Muslim historiographical tradition about the battle of Manzikert and to analyse the way in which the Islamic sources in their accounts of the battle construct an image of Seljuq Turkish rule.

Medieval chroniclers, Muslim and Byzantine alike, correctly perceived this battle as a pivotal event in the perennial conflict between Christianity and Islam. This awe-inspiring context of salvation history lent an extra charge of, so to speak, eternal significance to the Turkish role in this seminal victory, a victory which delivered Anatolia into the ‘House of Islam’. Much could be forgiven the architects of that victory and so, despite the depredations and alien ways of the Turks as invading nomads, Manzikert became an instrument for their rehabilitation – and even glorification – in the Arab and Persian consciousness.

Manzikert is the principal set piece in Seljuq historiography; and it is conveniently close to the chronological starting point of the dynasty. The other important military achievement of the Seljuqs in the early period after their entry into Islamic lands – their victory at the key battle of Dandanqan in Central Asia against the Ghaznavids in 1040 which opened up the Iranian plateau to them – does not receive anything like the same kind of treatment from the pens of Muslim historians. Why is this? The most likely reason is that at Dandanqan the Seljuqs were fighting fellow-Muslims. With Manzikert, Anatolia, and with it the territorial core of the Christian empire of Byzantium, lay waiting. This was the grand prize which had eluded the Umayyads and the Abbasids. The battle of Manzikert and what it promised – this battle which accomplished the capture of the Christian Byzantine emperor himself – put the Turkish Seljuqs on the same level of prestige as their Arab predecessors. Violent, random marauding acts perpetrated by the

Seljuqs are ignored or pushed aside by the chroniclers in the interests of giving these 'aliens' an acceptably Islamic image – as pious Muslim rulers, as leaders of *jihād* against the infidel and (especially in the Persian historiographical tradition) as God's representatives on earth. In following that ideological agenda, the terrible experiences which the Seljuq conquests in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Anatolia inflicted on their victims are – with rare exceptions – minimised.

The process of mythologising Manzikert is a linchpin in the creation of the carefully crafted image of the Seljuq sultans. But this creation does not occur *ex nihilo*, for 'there is no legend without a foundation in history'. And indeed it is important to note that the key elements of the Manzikert legend are already present in the earliest non-Muslim accounts of the battle, and especially that of the Byzantine historian Attaleiates, who was at the battle itself. But these elements are elaborated, dramatised and exaggerated by successive Muslim chroniclers. Indeed, their narratives contain many theatrical features and in this respect they are helped by the fact that the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslan and his enemy the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes both took the field in person at the battle. Moreover, much may be made of their actual encounter during the emperor's brief captivity.

In the hands of medieval Muslim chroniclers, the battle of Manzikert is hardly a military event at all. It is an occasion for reflection and for scoring ideological points. The time lapse between the date of the battle and the period of maximum Muslim historiographical interest in the battle – the thirteenth century – allows the battle to be seen in a context very different from that of its own time. That context is the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders in 1099, which allows Manzikert to be interpreted on a broader canvas of eventual Muslim victory over another Christian enemy with Saladin's re-capture of the Holy City in 1187. The degree of guilt and discomfort felt by the Muslims at the loss of Jerusalem did not produce self-confident historiography, but 1187 loosened the tongue and the pen alike. And Manzikert – a victory over one Christian enemy, the Byzantine emperor – can be adroitly linked with subsequent Muslim victories over another Christian enemy, namely the Crusaders in Outremer. Nor does its relevance end here. It can be identified as the first step in the grand process by which Turkish-led dynasties definitively defeated the Christians and proclaimed the triumph of Islam. Within the inexorable march of history, within the divinely ordained pattern of events, God in His wisdom selects whom He wishes to carry out His will. The members of the cultivated Arab and Persian milieux who produced the



Muslim accounts of Manzikert may have had their own private reservations about the 'uncultured' Turks, but it was these same Turks who had been, and continued to be, God's chosen instruments.

The accounts of Manzikert by thirteenth-century Muslim writers living in Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Egypt under Turkish military dynasties are concerned to focus on Manzikert in the context of the Turks' recently acquired Muslim identity. The battle brought with it vast prestige in east and west and was a perfect focus for the preoccupations and aims of thirteenth-century chroniclers. Territorial and religious legitimacy alike were embodied in this great victory of the Turks. The shrinking borders of the Byzantine empire were now even more open to Turkish expansion and conquest.

For scholars nowadays Manzikert can seem like 1453 *avant la lettre*. Other battles in Islamic history resonate down the centuries. Those such as the battle of Badr fought by the Prophet Muhammad himself in his struggle against his pagan Meccan contemporaries hold pride of place. Other victories such as Yarmuk and Qadisiyya were key stepping-stones in the creation of the great Muslim empire in the seventh century. Much later, in the twelfth century, the battle of Hattin in 1187 saw Saladin defeat the Crusaders and thus pave the way for the Muslim reconquest of Jerusalem in that same year.

But for the many millions of Turks today it is above all the battle of Manzikert which shaped their history. At the height of medieval Muslim historical writing under Turkish rule from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, their Hero Lion, Alp Arslan, could be seen on the Day of Manzikert to combine the titles of Turkish tribal chief (*khan*), the sultan of the Sunni Muslim world, the supreme model of the *mujāhid*, and the conqueror of Caesar, the Byzantine emperor. The way to world domination lay in the concept of Alp Arslan as the prototype for the future Ottoman sultans after 1453, in an ideal blend of Turkish, Islamic and Byzantine traditions. The mantle of this complex heritage descended onto the shoulders of successive later rulers, whose victories over their Christian enemies were vaunted in polished literary language that owed much to the hyperbole, pietistic fervour and rhetoric that had been developed in the accounts of Manzikert.

As for the new country of Turkey created by Atatürk, it too was to find a hallowed place for its founding myth: Manzikert.

## The account of the battle of Manzikert by Michael Attaleiates

Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1853)  
151.8–166.8; ed. I. Pérez Martín, *Miguel Atalíates*  
*Historia* (Madrid 2002) 113.5–123.16  
Translation by Ruth Macrides

When the emperor came to Manzikert he ordered that the encampment with all its equipment be set up nearby and an entrenchment be made in the accustomed manner, while he, taking with him the elite of the army, went around the town, spying out where it was suitable to make attacks on the walls and to bring up the siege engines. He had constructed the latter with all kinds of beams of great size and had them transported by not fewer than a thousand wagons. He also drove herds of cattle numbering tens of thousands for the consumption of the army. While the enemy within were shouting the war cry and baring their swords and using far-shooting weapons, the emperor made the circuit of the wall with his shield [as protection] and returned to the encampment.

The Armenian infantry, having attacked the wall outside the acropolis and made many assaults, took it without a blow as the sun was departing towards the west. When the emperor had learned of the event, ambassadors from the enemy arrived, asking to be granted clemency and to be allowed to keep their own property and [agreeing] to hand the city over to the emperor on such conditions. He consented to this and honoured the ambassadors with gifts, dispatching someone to take control of the fortress immediately. But since those within did not agree to admit the garrison at such a time for fear that some evil might be wrought by the enemy by night, they seemed to be disregarding and betraying the treaty. For this reason the emperor quickly sounded the trumpet for battle and with the entire army issued

forth from the encampment, making for the walls. Then the Turks, panic-stricken and repentant, having asked for more assurance of their release and received it, came out of the city with their household effects and knelt before the emperor, not however with empty hands: all were armed with a sword, the throng approaching the emperor who was completely unarmed. I who was present did not approve of the simplicity of the emperor who mingled without body armour among murderous men who pass their lives in recklessness and madness.

Something else happened which, on the one hand, made visible the emperor's zeal for justice but, on the other, constituted an immoderate and impious punishment. For when one of the soldiers was accused of having stolen a Turkish ass, he was brought in full view, bound, before the emperor but a punishment was decreed which surpassed the crime: the penalty was not set in money but in the cutting of the nose. Although the man pleaded a great deal and offered to give up all his property and although he put forward as a mediator the most holy icon of the All-Hymned Lady the Blachernitissa Theotokos which it was the custom for pious emperors to take on campaigns as an invincible weapon,<sup>1</sup> the emperor did not feel pity nor even respect for the asylum granted by the holy icon. But with me and everyone looking on and with the icon itself being held, the wretch screeching loudly and groaning deeply had his nose cut off. It was indeed then that I had forebodings that great would be the nemesis which would befall us from God.

When he [the emperor] had transferred a large number of Romans<sup>2</sup> to the town and established a commander, he returned to the encampment and was hailed with paeans, acclamations and proclamations of victory. The next day he was about to fortify the fortress at the expense of those within, with their written agreement, and to leave for Chliat immediately, when a rumour spread announcing that from some quarter the enemy were attacking the servants of the soldiers as they were coming out for booty and were throwing them into confusion and wearing them down. As the rumours came thick and fast, the emperor suspected that a commander of the sultan had arrived with a detachment and was terrifying the scattered servants of the Roman army, and he sent to repel them the *magistros* Nikephoros Bryennios with a sufficient force. Standing at the front line, he [Bryennios] fought with discharges of missiles and cavalry actions which were not effective, for they fought one another a few at a time. In these uncertain circumstances, as the Turks were attaining their aim, many of the Romans were injured, and others also fell (for they are braver than the other Turks of whom we have had experience, dashing more boldly and

opposing their assailants in hand to hand combat), until the aforementioned general, overcome by fear, asked the emperor for another force. Accusing him of cowardice (for he [the emperor] failed to understand the truth), he gave him no additional men; rather he called together an assembly and harangued about the war in an unaccustomed way, and he used harsh language besides. During this the priest announced the reading of the Gospel. Some assumed in their hearts that what was about to be uttered would be the clue to the matters in hand. Whether I was one of those, I need not say. The Gospel said – to pass over the other things – ‘If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.’<sup>3</sup> ‘But all these things will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me.’ ‘Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.’<sup>4</sup> Straightway then those of us who had predicted this began to be anxious and we recognised that what had been uttered through the sign was unerring.

Since the war was heating up, the emperor despatched the *magistros* Basilakes, *katepano* of Theodosioupolis, with some local soldiers, the rest being with Trachaneiotas at Chliat. Joining Bryennios, he [Basilakes] also bore the fire for a while. The soldiers agreed to follow behind him, while he undertook to take the lead and, immediately salying forth, he was pursuing the enemy who had turned their backs. Bryennios followed him with the main body, then, unknown to Basilakes, he urged those around him by a signal to pull back their reins, leaving him [Basilakes] only with those who were under his command to charge on unrestrained for a long way. As he [Basilakes] approached the enemy line, his horse was pierced and he fell to the ground under the weight of the arms he was carrying, so the enemy swooped down on him and took him captive.

When this message reached the emperor and the army, cowardice and expectation of danger afflicted the Romans, since, also, the injured were being brought in litters and were groaning from the pain of their wounds. The emperor was compelled to come out with the rest of the mass to see what had happened and to fight if battle should confront him. He stood until the evening on some high ridges but since he did not see any of the enemy (for the Turks pass their lives in trickery and deepest design, accomplishing everything through contrivance and unabashed fabrication), he returned to the encampment just as the sun was abandoning the upper hemisphere. Thereupon, the Turks, as if from nowhere, swooped down on the Scyths<sup>5</sup> who were outside the encampment, striking furiously against those who were selling goods,

and bringing upon them not a little fear and danger with unintelligible howling and bow shots and galloping around; whence those who were under attack were forced to go within the entrenchment. Then together in a body, pell-mell, they forced the entrance as if under pursuit, filling those within with great confusion, for they thought that the enemy had also rushed in and that the entire encampment with all its equipment had been captured. For the night was moonless and there was no distinguishing pursued from pursuers or who was of the opposite side. Since the mercenary contingent of the Scyths resembled the Turks in everything, it made the present circumstances uncertain. And then there was an extraordinary fear and ill-omened utterances and a mixed cry and unintelligible noise and everything was filled with noise and danger. And everyone wished to die rather than experience such times. Not to behold this was considered a blessing and one pronounced blessed those who did not see such a thing.

But although the Romans were in such a state of suffering, the enemy was not able to breach the entrenchment, since they also were wary of the unsuitability of the time and shared similar thoughts among themselves. They did not however retreat but the whole night they kept up a din riding round and about the Romans' encampment, striking with arrows and vexations and buzzing around on every side and terrifying them, so that all passed the night with open and sleepless eyes; for who could have fallen asleep with the danger foreshowing the sword all but drawn?

But neither on the following day did the enemy cease from riding around and trying to provoke battle; they also took control of the river which flowed by, striving to make the Romans surrender through thirst. On that day a portion of the Scyths which had as a commander a certain Tamin by name, went over to the enemy. This threw the Romans into no small anguish for they suspected that from then on the rest of the nation also would be like an enemy living among them and fighting beside them. But some of the infantry issuing forth killed many of the Turks with bows and obliged them to retire from the encampment.

Although the emperor wanted to bring the war to an end immediately with close fighting and confrontation of battle ranks he was waiting for the soldiers who were at Chliat: they were a number not easily calculable and were usually always the first to fight and exceedingly practised in the war dance; so he put off this battle. But since he despaired of help from them and suspected that something serious had prevented them from coming, he planned then on the following day to

fight the enemy spiritedly with those men who were with him. Then again he hoped that they would not fail to come shortly, for he did not know that when their commander learned of the attack of the sultan against the emperor himself he took all the men around him and fled ignobly through Mesopotamia to the land of the Romans, giving no thought to his lord nor to what is seemly, the coward.

At all events, when the emperor had made preparations for the war on the morrow, as had been agreed, he settled his own affairs. He was still standing in the imperial tent when I, wishing to free him from suspicion of the Scyths, gave the emperor the advice of putting them under oath. Indeed, he accepted the advice, putting me forward at once as executor and determiner of the deed. Then I made them swear in accordance with their ancestral custom, that they would in truth maintain their loyalty, without intrigue, in the emperor and the Romans. In this way I made them strict guardians of the agreement and, at any rate, I did not fail from the aim, for not one of them was added to the enemy in this battle.

While these things were being carried out and the soldiers were sitting, armed, on their horses in rank and company, ambassadors came from the sultan proposing peace for both sides. The emperor received them and communicated with them according to the custom of ambassadors but he did not receive them very generously. However he nodded assent with them and gave them the sign which is worshipped,<sup>6</sup> so that by showing this they could return to him unharmed, conveying messages which they had brought from the sultan. He declared – inflated by the unexpectedness of the message – that the sultan should leave the area of the encampment and should take up a position far beyond. The emperor himself would make an entrenchment at the place where the Turkish forces had previously been and would then proceed to an agreement with him. But, unawares, the emperor sent victory to the enemy through the victorious sign, as those who minutely examine such things conclude: for he should not have transferred such a symbol from himself to the enemy when a battle was about to begin.

From this point on the narrative is disagreeable to me because of the troublesome and very shameful nature of the misfortunes and the most cruel bad luck which afflicted the Romans.

The arrival of the ambassadors had not yet taken place nor even been delayed when some of those closest to the emperor persuaded him to reject the peace as making a mockery of the affair and a deception rather than an expedient solution. They said that the sultan was

afraid because he did not have a substantial force and was waiting for those marching behind him; with the pretext of peace he was stalling for time so that he might make up for the delay of the force. This having been said, they roused the emperor to war. While the Turks were working out the terms of peace among themselves, the emperor, sounding the battle cry, inexplicably decided on battle. When the report reached the enemy, it astounded them. In the meantime, however, they armed themselves and drove the useless multitude ahead of them in retreat, while in the rear they gave the appearance of battle array. But on the whole they were inclined to flight when they saw the Roman phalanxes in rank and order and war-like disposition. And they proceeded to withdraw, while the emperor pursued with the whole army until late afternoon. Since the emperor did not have anyone opposing and fighting against him and knew his camp to be stripped bare of soldiers and foot guards and since he did not have a sufficient number to leave a detachment behind there, for most had already been depleted, as was explained earlier, he knew he could not extend the chase any longer, lest the Turks, having set an ambush, overrun the unguarded camp. At the same time he considered that if he were to distance himself further, night would overtake him on the return and, in this case, the Turks turning back would give chase, being bowmen. For these reasons, he turned round the imperial standard, ordering a return. The soldiers who were far from the front line, seeing the reversal of the imperial standard, thought that the emperor had suffered a defeat. But most people give the information that one of those who had it in for him [the emperor], a cousin of the emperor's stepson Michael,<sup>7</sup> had hatched a plot against him in advance: he [Andronikos Doukas] spread this report to the soldiers and, taking his own men quickly (for not a small portion had been entrusted to him by the goodness of the emperor), he returned to the encampment in flight. One by one the companies closest to him imitated him, one after the other succeeding to flight without giving battle. And so the emperor, seeing the inexplicable flight from battle, stood with those around him, recalling his men from flight in the usual way. But no one obeyed him. Those of the enemy who were standing on ridges saw the sudden misfortune of the Romans, reported the fact to the sultan and urged him to return. He [the sultan] returned straightway and battle all at once beat against the emperor. Ordering those around him not to give in or soften, he [the emperor] defended himself vigorously for a long time.

Meanwhile, as the others in their flight flooded over the entrenchment outside, there was a mixed cry from all and disorderly flight and

no informed statement was made. Some said that the emperor had vigorously stood in array with the men remaining with him and had routed the barbarians, others announced his slaughter or capture and yet others made other assertions, recounting that victory changed back from one side to the other until many of the Cappadocians with him began to depart there in groups. As to whether I, confronting those who fled, gave a good account of myself against many, urging the reversal of defeat, let others say. After this many of the imperial cavalry returning with their horses were asked what had happened and answered they had not seen the emperor. And there was such a commotion and lamentation and pain and inexorable fear and distrust in the air and, finally the Turks surrounded us on all sides. Then each entrusted his salvation to flight with as much impetus, haste or strength as he had. Thereupon the enemy pursued, killing some, taking others captive, trampling yet others. The affair was very painful, surpassing any lament or dirge. For what could be more piteous than for the entire imperial army to be driven away in flight and defeat by savage and relentless barbarians and the emperor, helpless, to be surrounded by barbarian weapons, and for the tents of the emperor, the commanders, and soldiers also to be possessed by men such as these and for the whole Roman state to be seen as ruined, and the empire as all but collapsing?

And this was the way it was for the rest. As for the emperor, the enemy surrounded him but did not find him immediately easy to overcome: as he was a soldier experienced in war and conversant with many dangers he warded off his assailants and killed many, but he was finally wounded in the hand by a sword and, since his horse had been shot down with arrows, he stood fighting on foot. But when he became weary towards the evening, he was – alas, what misfortune – taken captive under truce. And that very night still, just like common soldiers, he slept on the ground, dishonourably and painfully, buffeted on all sides by a thousand unbearable waves of thoughts and grievous sights. The next day, when the emperor's captivity was announced to the sultan, he was full of immense joy and disbelief at the same time, thinking that it was truly a great and exceedingly great thing in addition to the defeat of the emperor to take the man himself captive and servant. In this manner, humanely and sensibly, did the Turks accept the success of victory, neither boasting as is wont to occur for the most part in cases of good luck, nor ascribing the deed to their own strength but attributing everything to God, as they had accomplished a greater monument of victory than they could have under their own strength. Because of this, when the emperor was brought before the sultan in the



shabby clothing of a soldier, he was again in doubt and sought evidence concerning him. But when he was informed by other [captives] and also by those ambassadors who had once come to him, that the person before him was the emperor of the Romans, he stood up at once and, embracing him, said, 'Do not be afraid, O emperor, but be optimistic before all, since you will encounter no bodily harm but will be honoured in a manner worthy of the pre-eminence of your power. For foolish is he who is not cautious before the unexpected reversal of luck.' Then he ordered a tent to be prepared and an attendance appropriate to him [the emperor] and he immediately made him a companion at table and invited guest, not seating him apart but on the same seat on a par with those of eminent rank and equal in honour.

So he met with him twice a day and spoke with him, consoling him with many soothing statements referring to the vicissitudes of life and for eight days he shared similar thoughts and his hospitality, never once offending him by the slightest word nor so much as mentioning any seeming error in the expedition of the army, whence God's judgment appeared here, as in the other things, to be just and unwavering. For not only the others, but the captured emperor himself declared him [the sultan] to be worthy of victory, since he did not possess a law to love his enemies, yet he imperceptibly made a holy law from his natural good disposition. The all-seeing Eye does not confer victory on the haughty but on the humble and compassionate for, according to Saint Paul, 'There is no respect of persons with God.'<sup>8</sup> When, on one of their meetings, the sultan asked the emperor, 'What would you have done if you had me in your power?', he answered without hypocrisy or flattery, 'You should know that I would have consumed your body with many blows.' The other replied, 'But I will not imitate your harshness', and when they had both waited in this way until the agreed number of days [had passed], and had made truces and peace treaties, and then also agreed on a marriage alliance for their own children, the emperor promising him in addition only a lavish reception [when they should meet again], they took leave of each other there, the sultan releasing him to go to his own empire, with elaborate farewell honours, giving him in addition as many Romans as he asked for and ambassadors drawn from his close associates.

## Notes

1. An icon of the Virgin Mary (usually referred to by the Byzantines as the Theotokos, or Mother of God), depicting her with her hands raised and

with the Christ child inside a medallion on her breast. It was called the Blachernitissa after the Blachernae church, one of two major sanctuaries in Constantinople dedicated to the Virgin, who was regarded as the city's patron saint.

2. Constantinople being the New Rome, the Byzantines thought of their empire as the Roman Empire and called themselves Romans (in Greek *Romaioi*).
3. John 15.20–21.
4. John 16.2, 3.
5. Byzantine authors use the name 'Scyth' to describe various peoples from beyond the Danube, Pechenegs, Cumans and, here, Uz or Oghuz Turks. Elsewhere in his *History* Attaleiates relates that the Uz had been installed on Byzantine territory in the reign of Constantine X and were 'allies' of the Byzantines. His description here of the Uz as mercenaries should be considered in this context. On 'mercenaries' see J. Shepard, 'The uses of the Franks in eleventh-century Byzantium', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 15 (1993), 275–305.
6. I.e., a cross.
7. The reference is to Andronikos Doukas, son of the Caesar John, and father-in-law of Alexios I. Attaleiates does not name him; his name has been inserted by the translator of the text.
8. Romans 2.11.
9. That the emperor had suffered a defeat.

## **Translations of some other<sup>1</sup> medieval Christian accounts of the battle of Manzikert**

### **Translation of the French translation of the Armenian account of Aristakes Lastivertc'i (d. late eleventh century)<sup>2</sup>**

It was not appropriate to relate facts of which we do not have direct knowledge and to describe events, when we did not have at our disposal any work of another person narrating them, when nobody asked us to do it, and when this went beyond what was possible for us. That is the reason why we have passed over in silence many important events which have happened at this time, leaving the care of talking about them to people more skilful and competent. Perhaps someone will ask them to do it. In this way I will stimulate those who will have the strength to write such a work. Nonetheless, we would be guilty if we passed over in silence the battle in which two kings took part: that is why we will relate in few words these great events.

Starting with Constantine the Great, Diogenes<sup>3</sup> was the sixtieth emperor, or thereabouts. He saw that the king of Persia had conquered a great part of his empire, had expelled the Byzantine governors and had thereafter returned to his country with considerable booty and prisoners. After ten years, in a bout of anger and as he was of courageous temperament, the Byzantine emperor decided on war, in order not to appear cowardly and so as not to leave a bad remembrance after him. Full of boastfulness and anger, he crossed the sea as if it were terra firma, occupied the province of Bithynia and collected around him a large quantity of troops, for the vast territories of the empire, from the valleys of Phoenicia, where Antioch the Great is situated, to the fortress of Van and the land of Rstunik<sup>4</sup>, opposite Her, were until that time under his control. At the sight of such a quantity of troops assembled in one and the same place, he was seized by a feeling of insolent pride and thought that the kings of the earth could not defeat him. He

did not remember the words of the prophet saying that it is not the large number of his troops that will save a king, nor his strength which will save a giant, but the right hand of the Almighty.<sup>5</sup> An absurd idea came into his head: he sent a great quantity of his troops with his generals by a different route from his own, and he himself, with an important military force, took the eastern route. He arrived at the great city of Theodosiopolis<sup>6</sup> and there he proceeded to line up the cavalry. Great is the error if the one who commits it forgets that he is a son of God and if he acts without thought. But even worse is the unbounded pride which governs rulers and kings forgetful of the errors of the ancients. The same evil strikes all those who are afflicted with the same vice. Nobody can oppose the proud, except God, as the parable says.

It is in this state of mind that the emperor did not allow the troops to stop and take some rest while waiting for the arrival and the concentration of other troops around him. They would have encouraged each other to perform courageous feats of arms, and thus a great army, inspiring terror in the enemy, would have been formed. But Diogenes wanted to gain success only thanks to the troops which he had with him. He advanced towards the district of Manzikert, where the king of Persia had established his camp. There he set up his own opposite that of the Persians; he gave orders that fortifications should be raised all around and he fixed the day of the battle.

The Persian sultan was anxious; he wanted to engage in battle immediately, for he was afraid that dispersed troops would come to reinforce the emperor's army, and he would not succeed in penetrating the enemy's lines. He preferred to embark on fighting two forces instead of three. He therefore organised the taking up of arms by his men, in such a way that the Greeks were unwillingly forced to prepare for battle with the Persians. The two sides attacked each other furiously and fought with great warlike zeal, but neither one side nor the other could prevail. Soon, however, an important detachment, whose men were not from amongst those who shared in the worship of God, betrayed the emperor and crossed over to the enemy side. That caused a stir in the ranks of the Greeks, whose troops began to fight weakly and timorously at the moment when the Persians, full of vigour, threw themselves courageously and with an indomitable zeal into the battle. Without real reason and not knowing exactly what the situation was, the emperor became irritated with the Armenian contingent, and with the whole Armenian nation, viewing them with contempt. But his attention was then attracted by the warlike bravery and the exploits of the valiant knights who did not lose their presence of mind in the face

of the powerful Persian archers but who confronted them courageously and did not turn their backs, and who, although many of them were stirred up with hostile feelings towards the emperor, nevertheless did not act treacherously and they accepted death, wanting that after their death there should remain a good memory of their devotion and valour; the emperor then expressed his affection for them and promised them great rewards.

The emperor, from the place where he had installed himself, having lifted his eyes and looked at the enemy, saw that a section of his own troops had hastily beat a retreat. Then he immediately dressed in his military uniform, put on his weapons and, quick as a flash, he launched himself into the thick of the battle. He knocked down several valiant Persian fighters and caused disarray in their ranks. But he did not know that the chief of the legions of the Lord who appeared to Joshua and gave him the victory (Joshua 5, 13–15) was not with him. The Lord did not go forward with us with sword and buckler. He did not draw the sword and stop the enemy. The Lord of the armies did not appear in the midst of the troops of the emperor and did not sound safety and hope for us with the horn, but he deprived us of our strength, abandoned us into the hands of our enemies and to the outrages of our neighbours and handed us over to be sacrificed like sheep. Our bows were rendered into pieces, our weapons were broken, the fighters became weakened and lost courage, for the Lord had deprived our warriors and our leaders of power and courage. In order to punish them for their dissolute ways, he had removed the sword and strength from them and had delivered them to their enemies.

Then they took prisoner that powerful possessor of the imperial throne like a wretched and guilty slave, and they took him before the Persian king. However, the Lord punishes but He also alleviates pain: the gentleness of His love for humanity is infinite, and He does not completely topple the one whom He condemns, but after some trials, He forgives, in order that we may be aware of our own weakness. And He pardoned too the possessor of His throne and showed Himself to be very kind to him. He inspired in the ferocious Persian king the love and care which one feels for a beloved brother, and the king gladly showed mercy to Diogenes and set him free.

But freed by God and snatched from the hands of the foreigner, he was the victim of the hateful outrages of his subjects, who blinded and killed him, and splashed the imperial throne with inextinguishable blood. From those moments on, the chiefs and the soldiers lost their courage. And victory no longer came back to the empire. Treachery

and hatred divided the powerful who trampled justice under foot; they did nothing but ruin the country and did not help its wellbeing. The Lord was angry and called on numerous nations, from the Mountains of the Moon<sup>7</sup> to the great river which flows from the north side of India,<sup>8</sup> to exact vengeance, so that these wicked peoples, of foreign tongue, would overwhelm many lands, would establish themselves on the shores of the Oceanic Sea and would set up their tents opposite the Great City, to fill the whole world with blood and corpses and to put an end to order and to the faith of Christians.

Meanwhile, the great sultan Alp Arslan saw how important were the victories that he had won. He acknowledged the happy outcome of three wars – (at the time of the first campaign, it is true, Manzikert had not been taken, but he had ravaged several provinces with the sword and the taking of captives; on the second occasion he had (rendered Ani a desert by massacres and fire) – and with bold self-confidence he had marched to meet the Byzantine emperor. He had taken a vow in his mind that, if he (Romanus) made an act of submission, he would send him back to his own country with kindness and signs of honour and that he would conclude by (the taking of an) oath a pact establishing peace between the Persian and Byzantine kingdoms. Having emerged as victor from this war, when everything that he had planned had succeeded for him and when he who had inspired dread and fear stood before him in irons like a slave, he remembered the promise made to God, he stood up and sat Diogenes on his right. He honoured him like a brother and concluded a pact with him in the following terms: ‘The hostilities between us shall henceforth be terminated. Possess your kingdom in peace, and I (will possess) the kingdom of Persia. What I have conquered in war will remain mine, but we will not make any more incursions into your country’. And he freed him with great honours. But when he saw that Diogenes had been arrested treacherously by his officials and blinded, and that he had died in pain, without being able to remount the imperial throne, he (Alp Arslan) was full of anger and fury. He wanted to avenge his friend but death struck him (too). He left this world, following the path of other mortals, and he reached the place where kings and poor devils are reunited on an equal basis.

### **Translation of the Armenian account of Matthew of Edessa (date of death unknown but probably not after 1136)<sup>9</sup>**

Going forth with a tremendous number of troops, Diogenes went to the East, to Armenia, and, descending upon the town of Manzikert,

captured it. The forces of the sultan who were in the town fled, and when the emperor captured them, he slaughtered them. The news of all this reached Alp Arslan, who was before the city of Aleppo; and so he started back for the East, since he was told that the Byzantine emperor was marching in the direction of Persia at the head of a very formidable army. The sultan had been besieging Aleppo during the winter, but had not been able to capture it because of the great number of the city's forces. He had broken through the walls at a number of places, yet he could not take over the city. So during the spring, when Alp Arslan learned of the coming of the emperor Diogenes, he left Aleppo and in haste arrived at Edessa. The dux, who resided in the city, provided him with horses, mules and victuals. Taking these, the sultan passed through the confines of Edessa, unharmed, and went in an easterly direction towards the mountain called Lesun. A countless number of horses and camels perished because a forced march had been maintained by the sultan; for he drove his troops as if they were in flight, wishing to reach Persia as soon as possible. As he was returning, a letter written by the perfidious Byzantines from Diogenes' army reached Alp Arslan, and it read as follows: 'Do not flee, for the greater part of our forces is with you'. Hearing this, the sultan immediately stopped. Then he wrote a very amiable letter to the emperor Diogenes concerning the establishment of peace and harmony between both sides. Each side was to remain in peace with the other, neither one ever harming the other; moreover, the Christians would be looked upon as friends, and thus there would be a perpetual peace and alliance between the Persians and the Romans.

When Diogenes heard these things, not only did he become arrogant and refuse to accept the sultan's offer, but he became more bellicose than ever. Then the aforementioned malicious and perfidious men approached Diogenes and said: 'O emperor, no one is able to stand against your innumerable forces. Your troops are going forth from the camp to procure victuals; send them away regiment by regiment [to forage for themselves], so that they might not go hungry before the day of battle.' So the emperor had the amir Ktrich' return to Constantinople and had Tarkhaniat go against Akhlat with thirty thousand men; moreover, he sent twelve thousand men to the Abkhazes, and thus because of the emperor all the Byzantine forces became scattered. Now Alp Arslan was informed of all these treacherous machinations. So, when the sultan saw Diogenes' inflexible and stubborn attitude, he went into battle against the Byzantine forces, leading on the whole army of Khurasan with the fervor of a lion cub.

When Diogenes learned of the advance of the Persian army against him, he ordered the battle trumpet sounded and had all the Byzantine forces drawn up in orderly fashion. He appointed as commanders of his troops Khatap and Vasilak, Armenian nobles who were brave and were regarded as great warriors. A very violent battle took place the greater part of the day, and the Byzantine forces were defeated. Katap and Vasilak were killed. And all the Byzantine troops were put to flight, being forced to fall back on the imperial camp. When Diogenes saw this, he ordered all his forces to regroup, but there was no one to heed his summons, for Tarkhaniat and the other Byzantine magnates had returned to Constantinople with their troops. When the emperor learned of this, he realised the treachery of his own Byzantine troops. So the battle continued the next day. In the morning hours the battle trumpet was sounded, and heralds went forth and proclaimed the wishes of the emperor Diogenes; he promised honours, high positions, and jurisdiction over the towns and districts to all those who would courageously fight against the Persian forces. Soon the sultan, very well organized, advanced into battle against the Byzantine troops. At that point the emperor Diogenes went forth and reached a place of battle near Manzikert, called Toghotap. There he placed the Uz and Pecheneg mercenaries on his right and left flanks and the other troops on his van and rear. When the battle grew intense, the Uzes and Pechenegs went over to the side of the sultan.

At that point all the Byzantine troops were defeated and turned in complete flight. Countless Byzantine troops were slaughtered and many captives were taken. The emperor Diogenes himself was taken prisoner and brought into the presence of the sultan in chains, together with countless and innumerable captives. After a short while the sultan made an alliance of peace and friendship with the Byzantine emperor. Then the sultan adopted Diogenes as his blood brother and took an oath to God as a guarantee of his sincerity; moreover, with a solemn oath he pledged that there would be perpetual friendship and harmony between the Persians and the Byzantines. After all this, with great pomp Alp Arslan sent the emperor back to Constantinople, to his imperial throne.

When Diogenes reached Sebastia, news came to him that Michael, the son of Ducas, occupied the imperial throne. At this all the emperor's troops abandoned him and fled, and so he was forced to take refuge in the city of Adana. The emperor Michael's forces gathered against him. Diogenes, in turn, because of the danger in which he found himself, put on the garments of an *abeghay* and, going to the



Byzantine general who was the brother of Ducas, said: ‘You no longer need to worry about me, for henceforth I intend to live in a monastery; let Michael be emperor and may God be with him.’ Notwithstanding all this, on that same day the Byzantine nation once again crucified God as had the Jews, for they tore out the eyes of Diogenes, their very own sovereign, who then died from the intense pain [caused by the blinding]. When Alp Arslan heard this, he wept bitterly and regretted the death of Diogenes. Then the sultan said: ‘The Byzantine nation has no God, so this day the oath of peace and friendship taken by both the Persians and Byzantines is nullified; henceforth I shall consume with the sword all those people who venerate the cross, and all the lands of the Christians shall be enslaved.’ Whenever the sultan brought Diogenes to mind, he sighed heavily and lamented exceedingly, likewise all the Persians. Speaking to the Khurasanians, the sultan said: ‘Henceforth all of you be like lion cubs and eagle young, racing through the countryside day and night, slaying the Christians and not sparing any mercy on the Byzantine nation.’ After this speech Alp Arslan victoriously returned to the country of the Persians.

### **Translation of the French translation of the original Greek narrative of Nicephorus Bryennius (d. 1137)<sup>10</sup>**

Having arrived in Cappodocia, he (Romanus) held a meeting with the elite of his generals and consulted them about the conduct of war, asking them whether he should continue the march towards Persia and to give battle to the Turks, or remain in Byzantine territory and await their arrival, for there was already a rumour circulating that the sultan had left Persia and was advancing slowly and steadily against the Byzantines. Some – it was those who were at the same time the boldest and the most flattering – were of the opinion that he should not wait but should proceed again and meet the sultan when he entered the area of Vatana in Media. However, the *magistros* Joseph Trachaneiotēs who was then in command of a large section of the troops, and the Duke of all the West, Nicephorus Bryennius, judged that this plan was completely wrong and they begged the Basileus to wait, if it were possible, and to draw the enemy towards himself. He should fortify the neighbouring towns and burn the countryside so that the enemy would be short of foodstuffs. Failing this tactic, he should reach Theodosioupolis, make camp there and wait there for the enemy, because lacking foodstuffs, the sultan would be obliged to attack the Byzantines on a terrain on which it would be favourable for them to

engage in battle. But they had the impression that they were speaking to deaf ears. The faction of flatterers prevailed, and, whilst it would have been necessary to heed those men who possessed their own personal value, he lent his ear to the flatterers rather than wise counselors, intoxicated as he was by earlier successes which he rated highly. For he had taken the fortress of Mempet and had put to flight some detachments of marauding Turks that he had encountered, killing a large number of them and taking many prisoners. Puffed up with these successes, and more self-confident than was reasonable, because the allied forces and the army which he was leading were numerically superior to the earlier army, he broke camp with all his men, took the road to Persia and marched on the enemy.

When the emperor had reached Manzikert, Basilakes arrived at the head of substantial reinforcements from Syria and Armenia; he was a robust and valiant man, but fiery and quick-tempered, and, since he tended to flatter the emperor, he gave him nothing but foolish replies to his questions. When the *vestarchos* Leo Diabatenos sent the emperor a letter in which he reported that the sultan, being aware of his expedition and fearing his strength, had left Persia and fled to Babylon, the emperor – trusting in this report – divided his army into two. He stayed where he was with one part of his troops and sent the other to Akhlat under the command of the *magistros* Joseph Trachaneiotos, a man well acquainted with military plans and manoeuvres but who at that time was completely discouraged. He advised the emperor to keep all his men in the camp and not to divide the army while the enemy was encamped nearby. Since his counsels were in vain, he led his troops in the direction of Akhlat. Akhlat was a town under Turkish rule and was defended by a fairly strong Turkish garrison. But from the third day onwards, the Turks attacked the soldiers who had gone out foraging, killing some of them and taking others prisoner. The emperor, on learning of this incident, quickly summoned Basilakes and interrogated him at length about the Turks, eager to find out who was responsible for this stratagem and to learn about their base of operations. Trachaneiotos, displaying his accustomed impetuosity, declared that they had come from Akhlat to pillage. In this way the emperor remained in the dark about the march of the sultan, who was not far from the camp and who was preparing his plan of attack. Intending to take the emperor by surprise in the depths of the countryside and to trap him, he despatched some horsemen who galloped right up to the Byzantine camp but then wrenched their bridles round and pretended to flee, a tactic which they repeated and which enabled

them to take in several generals, of whom Basilakes was the first. Indeed, in his eagerness to convince the emperor that those responsible for the stratagem were not part of the Persian army, but came from the people of Akhlat, he asked permission to sally forth from the camp. Brandishing his sabre and spurring his horse on, he charged the enemy with no order of battle. His soldiers followed him at random, not keeping their ranks. Naturally, the Turks who had witnessed this disordered attack pretended to flee, but when they saw that the Byzantines were some distance from the camp, they spun round and charged the scattered enemy, routing them completely. Many soldiers perished, to the point that, as they say, there was not a single messenger to report the disaster, and Basilakes was also captured.

When the emperor heard that Basilakes, leaving camp without maintaining battle order, was charging the enemy, he ordered the Duke of all the West, Nicephorus Bryennius, who was then commanding the left wing, to depart with his troops and hasten to aid Basilakes if he was in danger, and to protect his retreat. For he was beginning to realise the danger. The duke thereupon departed and ordered his contingents to leave camp. Once he had got outside, he saw at first neither friend nor foe; but looking further afield he quickly saw as he marched along that the enemy occupied the hills. A little further on he came upon some corpses and asked himself what had happened to Basilakes. Encountering a soldier who was still breathing, he asked him where Basilakes was and what had happened to them. The man told him what had occurred, and the Turks, rushing in on all sides, tried to encircle his men. The duke, realising this, exhorted his men to show themselves to be brave and not to do anything cowardly or unworthy of Byzantine courage. He then ordered his army to wheel round and led it in good order back to the camp, taking no notice of those who were assailing them. When he had got close to the camp, he took a body of troops, ordering the others to stay where they were, and suddenly attacked the enemy, easily putting them to flight. But when he saw all the others massing together and charging, he regrouped all his men and led them back to his army. Attacked and enveloped by the Turks, he was wounded in the chest by a lance-thrust and in the back by two arrows. After a heroic struggle, he got back to his army and returned to camp with it. Once he had returned and was with the emperor, he gave him a complete report and was asked to go back to his tent and to lick his wounds. So he remained in his tent.

But when the day gave its first smile and the sun came over the horizon, he was yet again summoned by the emperor. He turned up

without giving a second thought to his wounds. When it was debated in council whether it would be better to give battle or to keep the troops in camp, some proposed very sensibly to remain in the camp and to recall the troops that had been sent to Akhlat. But the flatterers advocated the opposite. I would not like to say whether they were sincere, but then they fended him off [??], and once again bad advice swept him away. The troops were ordered forth. The Turks returned, ever stronger and more numerous. They attacked and, in the course of the fighting, a mass of Turks perished – but the Romans also suffered huge losses. Bryennius himself was wounded in several parts of his body. But thanks to his talent as a strategist, he managed to keep most of his army intact. The emperor, seeing that the Turks were attacking, also ordered the troops out to fight and ranged them in battle order in front of the camp. The right wing was commanded by Alyates, a Cappadocian and close friend of the emperor, the left wing by Bryennius, and the centre by the emperor. The rearguard had been entrusted to the son of the Caesar, the *proedros* Andronicus, the commander of the foreign troops and of those of the archons. He was a man of illustrious descent and garbed with every merit. Indeed, for good reason he was pre-eminent among those of his own age. He was brave and was versed in studies of military strategy, but he was ill-disposed towards the emperor.

The Turks, seeing the emperor range his army in battle order, deployed themselves neither in phalanxes nor in units, for they did not wish to engage in hand-to-hand combat with the Byzantines, and they did not budge. But the sultan, who was in front, was preparing his plan of attack. He entrusted the command of most of his troops to a eunuch by the name of Taranges, whose influence on him was considerable, and appointed him his chief of staff. This man divided his army into several groups, set traps and organised ambushes, and ordered his men to surround the Byzantines and to riddle them with arrows. The Byzantines, seeing their cavalry under attack, were obliged to follow it, which they did, while the enemy pretended to flee. But, falling victim to the traps and ambushes, they suffered great losses. While the emperor, determined to risk all, was advancing slowly, expecting to encounter the Turkish host, engage them in close combat, and thus bring matters to a head, the Turks scattered in all directions – and then they spun round, hurling themselves fiercely upon the Byzantines with terrifying cries and routing the right wing. Immediately the rearguard began to retreat, and the Turks surrounded the emperor and assailed him on all sides. When the left wing tried to

come to his aid, the Turks prevented it, for having fallen on it from behind and surrounding it, they forced them to flee. The emperor, abandoned and completely cut off from help, unsheathed his sword and charged at his enemies, killing many of them and putting others to flight. But he was surrounded by a crowd of adversaries and was wounded in the hand. They recognised him and he was completely encircled; an arrow wounded his horse, which slipped and fell, dragging its rider down with it. Thus the emperor of the Byzantines was captured and led in chains to the sultan. Divine Providence had ordained this outcome for reasons which I know not. A large number of officers were also captured. As for the rest, some fell to the sword while others escaped. The entire camp was seized along with the imperial tent, the treasure and the most beautiful of the imperial jewels, among them the famous pearl known as The Orphan. The survivors of the battle dispersed in all directions, each one hastening to return to his own country.

This tempest had not yet run its course before the rumble of another broke out. For the ruler of the Persians, seeing the emperor of the Byzantines taken prisoner, did not become drunk with his victory; on the contrary, he restrained his pride in his success and in his hour of triumph showed a moderation of which nobody would have thought him capable. He comforted the prisoner, invited him to his table, freed all the prisoners that he wanted and finally granted him his own freedom. When he had concluded a marriage alliance with him, and had received from him under oath promises which were in no way shameful to the Byzantines – for the emperor would rather have died than come to agreements that were incompatible with his honour – he sent him back to his own empire with a retinue and a considerable escort. This turned out to be a source of ill hap and the principal cause of many calamities. For the emperor, having obtained as if by a miracle an outcome he could not have hoped for, thought that he would be able to regain the Byzantine empire without difficulty; and, seeing himself as a kind of herald of good fortune after this great disaster, he informed the empress, in a letter in his own hand, of what had happened to him. General agitation was the immediate result, and people flocked to the palace, some of them astonished at what had happened, and others refusing to believe it. The empress herself was in a difficult position and wondered what to do. Summoning her supporters, she devised various plans.

The emperor Diogenes, once he had been set free, realised that he would be in a difficult situation if he did not regain power. So, thanks

to the messengers whom he sent to all the towns and villages, he began to assemble an army and collect money. When a crowd of soldiers had flocked to him, he marched with his entire army to a city whose name is in every mouth, namely Amasya. On hearing this news, the entourage of the emperor and of the Caesar wondered what adversary they could field against him. The decision was made to entrust the Byzantine army to the youngest son of the Caesar, a valiant man of acute intelligence and an admirable prince.

[There follows a detailed account of the battle between him and Diogenes, the subsequent help extended to Diogenes by the Armenian Chatatourios, further negotiations with Diogenes, court intrigues at Constantinople against Anna Dalassena, the defeat and capture of Chatatourios, and the betrayal of Diogenes by his own men, and his blinding – despite the protests of Andronicus Ducas – and subsequent death. No mention is made of Alp Arslan’s reaction to these events.]

### **Translation of the French translation of the Syriac narrative of Michael the Syrian (d. 1199)<sup>11</sup>**

In the year 1386 there reigned over the Byzantines the emperor Romanus, known as Diogenes. He reigned for three years and eight months.

He was very harsh and violent in his judgements. He launched an expedition that got as far as Mahboug, which is Hierapolis. He organised a violent attack against it, captured it and chased the Taiyaye away from it.

In the same year, the first king of the Turks died, [and] the imperial throne of Khurasan passed to Alp Arslan, who was of the same family. The latter sent ahead of himself his relative Sulayman, in order to pillage; the sultan himself departed in his turn and conquered the land of the Armenians.

When the emperor Romanus, known as Diogenes, learned of this, he assembled all the troops of the Romans, marched to Greater Armenia, and prepared to attack the Turks. The emperor Diogenes boasted that he would triumph over the Turks, capture their king, and have him burned [to death]. The king of the Turks promised himself that if he were to beat the Romans and to capture Diogenes, he would show mercy to him and would send him back to his own country in peace. And later on these things actually came to pass as if by a miracle.

Disagreements now developed between the Byzantine notables and their emperor. The Armenian troops, whom they wanted to force into adopting their heresy, were the first to take flight and to turn their backs in the battle. Then the Turks, thanks to the good understanding between them, defeated the Byzantines. And in this battle something else worth remembering took place. Just as the two sides were ready to begin fighting, Sulayman, the cousin of the sultan, begged him to entrust the [conduct of the] battle to him, while he himself should remain on his throne on the summit of the hill. When the sultan had consented to this, Sulayman deployed his sons – twelve seasoned men – and gave each of them a thousand horsemen. They armed themselves and rode down to attack the Byzantines. When the two sides were embroiled in close combat, a certain nephew of the sultan, who was in close attendance on the sultan, asked whether he might go down to join in the battle; but the sultan did not permit him to do so. After he had asked and begged several times, [however,] he obtained permission and went down. He [then] encountered the emperor; for Diogenes was strong and courageous, and although most of the grandees and all the Armenians who had accompanied him had abandoned him and taken to their heels, he himself continued to fight. When the man who had just come down met the emperor, he struck him and brought him down, and just as he was preparing to finish him off, the emperor revealed his identity. The Turk was overjoyed and took him prisoner. He was just leading him to their king when – another soldier having seen him and questioned him – he informed him that this was the emperor of the Romans. This caitiff, wishing to claim this victory for himself, struck with his sword the man who had captured the emperor, brought him down, and himself took the emperor, who was in chains, and led him to the sultan. Towards evening, the sultan, realising that his nephew had not returned, sent some men to look for him. They found him prostrate, but not yet dead. They took him up and Diogenes, having recognised him, explained what had happened. Then the sultan gave orders that the crafty man should be crucified and gave his possessions to the man who had been struck [so] iniquitously.

Then the sultan asked Diogenes what he had planned to do with him in the event that he himself had captured him [the sultan]. Diogenes confessed that he had wanted to have him burnt [to death]. And the sultan replied: 'For my part, I had promised myself to treat you with mercy if you were captured. Know therefore that God hears him who plans to do good.' Then he sent him with an escort to the Byzantine frontier and left him there.

It is said that the sultan Alp Arslan was just, and many good deeds are reported of him.

When the Byzantines learned that Diogenes had been captured, they appointed Michael, son of Constantine, as emperor, who [in turn] appointed as Caesar a certain Iwannis. This man, on learning that Diogenes had been set free, shrewdly swore an oath to him. Diogenes placed his trust in his oaths, but once he had arrived, they put out both his eyes, and he died the next day. Atheists always behave like that at all times.

### **Translation of the Arabic narrative of the Egyptian Coptic chronicler al-Makin (d. 658/1259–60)<sup>12</sup>**

In the year 463 the sultan Alp Arslan went towards Akhlat with forty thousand cavalry to meet the Byzantines. A commander went out to him with large forces and the sultan was victorious over them. He imprisoned their leader and cut off his nose. Then the king of Byzantium himself arrived and the sultan met him in a place called al-Zahra with five days remaining of (the month of) Dhu'l-Qa'da. The sultan fought then on a Friday and defeated them. The Muslims killed countless numbers of them throughout the day and night. The king of Byzantium was captured. Then the sultan released him on condition that he should bring him one and a half million *dīnārs* and he fixed for him an annual subsidy of three hundred and sixty thousand *dīnārs* and [stipulated] that he should release all Muslim prisoners in Byzantium.

When the Byzantine emperor arrived in his country, he found that Byzantium had appointed someone else as king. So he embraced asceticism and wore wool. He sent the sultan two hundred thousand *dīnārs* and jewels worth ninety thousand *dīnārs* and he swore that he could do no more than that. He made for the king of Armenia seeking hospitality with him, so the king of the Armenians and gave him refuge. He [Romanus] stayed with him<sup>13</sup> and he sent a message to the sultan and informed him of that.

### **Translation of the Syriac narrative of Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)<sup>14</sup>**

Then king DIOGENES collected a numerous force, and went forth from the quarter of ARMENIA with great splendour, and he came against MĪNÂZGERD. And he drove the Sūltān's men out from it, but he did not kill them, and he took possession of the city. When the



Sûltân heard of [this] he turned his gaze to the territory of the RHÔMÂÏË. And because the TURKES were few in number the Sûltân 'ALB 'ARSLÂN was afraid, and he sent an envoy to DIOGENES, a certain noble whose name was SÂWTAKÎN, that they might make peace and say to each other, 'we will go back each to his own country'. Now DIOGENES boasted himself, and said, 'Now that I have brought out my treasures, and collected all these troops, and the victory was mine, shall I go back? For you there is nothing with me except the sword.' Then God, praise be to His goodness! Who bringeth low the arrogant, gave strength to the Sûltân. And he made ready his troops, and he addressed to them words of encouragement. And he cast the bow and the arrows from his hands, and he put on his armour, and took his shield and spear in his hand, and tied up the tail of his horse, and mounted [it]. And all the TURKS did likewise. And they charged the RHÔMÂÏË on the sixth day of the week (Friday) at noon, at a place between KHÂLÂT and MÎNÂZGERD. And they cried out a mighty battle-cry, and rushed in among them. And terror fell on the RHÔMÂÏË, and after many of them had been killed they began to flee, and others were taken prisoners.

And at the time of evening a eunuch, whose name was KAHÂRYÂ, came from the Turkish nobles and said to the Sûltân, 'One of my slaves hath said that he hath made prisoner the king of the RHÔMÂÏË, and that he is with him'. And when the horsemen were being counted the Amîr who was counting was contemptuous of that slave, and did not write down pay for him. And laughing at him the Amîr said, 'Yes, this slave hath made the king of the RHÔMÂÏË prisoner for us!' And by the nod of God, the word which was laughed at turned out to be an actual fact. Now although the Sûltân did not believe it, he did not persist in saying so, but he sent one of the young men whose name was 'SHÂDÎ', and who had often been with the envoys to the king of the RHÔMÂÏË, to go and look at him (i.e. the prisoner). And when SHÂDÎ went and saw DIOGENES, he bowed himself down to the ground, and did homage to the king; and then he ran back to the Sûltân and reported that the prisoner was the king. And the Sûltân gave orders quickly, and they pitched a great royal tent for DIOGENES and took him there. And they put iron fetters on his hands and round his neck, and set one hundred TURKS to keep guard over him.

And in the morning the Sûltân commanded and they brought DIOGENES before him, and with his own hands he smote him four buffets, and said unto him, 'How came it that thou didst not listen when I entreated thee for peace?' Then DIOGENES, because he was

a wise and understanding man, spake words carefully chosen and arranged, and said, 'In all these things which are possible for a man, and which kings are bound to do, I have fallen short in nothing. But God hath fulfilled His Will. And now, do what thou wishest, and abandon recriminations.' Then the Sûltân said unto him, 'Inform me now forthwith what was thy intention (or, object) to do with me if I have fallen into thy hands?' And DIOGENES replied, 'Every evil thing [possible], for enemy doth not encounter an enemy except to do evil to him'. And the Sûltân said, 'Thou hast spoken the truth. If thou hadst answered in any way different from this I should not have believed thee. Now tell me further, What dost thou think I shall do with thee?' And the king replied, 'One of three things, Firstly, that thou mayest kill me. And secondly, that thou mayest make a show of me and haul me round about through thy dominions, so that every man may know and see thy victory. And thirdly, it is unnecessary for me to say it, for it is an imagination (or, expectation) due to delirium, and remote from anything which thou art likely to do.' And the Sûltân said, 'And why dost thou restrain thyself from saying it?' And DIOGENES replied, 'That thou shouldst send me back again to my royal city. And I would be to thee as one of thy Patricians, and when thou didst call me I would come, and when thou didst say unto me, "Do this", I would do it.' And the Sûltân replied, 'I had no intention of doing anything except this third thing, for thou wast in despair.'

And the Sûltân demanded from him ten thousand thousand *dînârs* so that he might ransom himself. And DIOGENES said, 'If I had the whole kingdom of the RHÔMÂYÊ to give, it would have been a little thing in comparison to that wherewith I myself shall profit. But from the time when I became king I have scattered freely the treasures of the kingdom of the RHÔMÂYÊ on the armies which I have commanded.' And DIOGENES was released, on the condition that he paid a thousand thousand *dînârs* for his ransom, and gave an annual tribute of three hundred and sixty thousand *dînârs*. And the Sûltân commanded, and they removed the iron fetters from him, and they seated him on his throne which had been carried off from him. And DIOGENES and the Sûltân ate and drank together. And the Sûltân demanded from him ANTIOCH, EDESSA, MABBÛGH and MÎNÂZGERD which the RHÔMÂYÊ had taken from the ARABS. And DIOGENES replied, 'When I return to my kingdom do thou send an army and fight for them, and I will send to them [a message] that they must surrender. If I were to send now they would not hearken to me.' And DIOGENES said unto the Sûltân, 'If now thou art going to send me away, send me

quickly, before the RHÔMÂYÊ can appoint [another] king, and do so immediately, even though I cannot fulfil one of these [stipulations].’ And this actually took place.

And the Sûltân commanded, and he appointed to ride with him one hundred slaves and two Amîrs, and they were to go with him to CONSTANTINOPLE. And the Sûltân himself accompanied him for a distance of one parasang. And when he wished to go back DIOGENES wanted to alight, but the Sûltân adjured him not to alight. And thus riding side by side they kissed each other and separated.

Now I have found this history in two manuscripts, [one] Arabic and [one] Persian. But the blessed MÂR MICHAEL wrote, ‘The son of the sister of the Sûltân captured the king, and another TURK came and killed the Sûltân’s nephew, and took the king, so that the merit of the capture might be his.’ And when the Sûltân asked DIOGENES, ‘What didst thou intend to do with me if I fell into thy hands?’ DIOGENES replied, ‘I should have wished to burn you in the fire’. Now it is evident that such a vulgar thing as this would never be said by one king to another. Moreover, it would have been impossible for the TURK to have killed the Sûltân’s nephew and to pluck the king from his hands. For he would have been afraid that he would be discovered, even by the king himself.

Now when the YÂWNÂYÊ (GREEKS) heard that DIOGENES had been captured, they appointed as their king MICHAEL, the son of CONSTANTINE. And this king took his mother, now she was the wife of DIOGENES, and forced her to live in a nunnery. And ÎWANÎ, his uncle, became his Kisarios (Caesarius, i.e. Deputy or second in command). Now when DIOGENES entered the territory of the RHÔMÂYÊ and heard what had taken place, he went up to the fortress of DÛKÎÂ, and found therein two hundred thousand *dînârs*, and he sent them to the Sûltân with those two Amîrs who had escorted him, and informed him about the matter. And he attired himself in the garb of monkhood, and sat down in DÛKÎÂ. And he sent to MICHAEL and said, ‘Up to the present I have fought a triumphant fight on behalf of the Faith of the Christians, and it is sufficient for me. As for thee, blessed be thy kingdom. And thou hast done well in that thou art king (or, dost reign), for it was right for thee. But as regards the Faith (or, Belief), I advise thee not to dissolve the peace which I have made with the Sûltân, and if thou dost not [accept my advice] there will be no rest, neither for thee nor for the Christians.’ And MICHAEL thanked him and said, ‘I shall not depart from thy advice’.

Now after some days certain men worked upon him, and he sent [a letter] to DIOGENES and said to him, 'If thou art in truth a monk, why hast thou a dwelling-place which is in a fortress? It is right for thee to go down to one of the monasteries, so that we may send guards (i.e. a garrison) into the fortress.' Then was DIOGENES wroth, and he said, 'Of all the kingdom of the RHÔMÂÏË there is not even one fortress which he would leave me!' And he rose up and stripped off the woollen garments [of a monk] and borrowed some apparel from the merchants of DÛKÎÂ, and collected an army. And when BAR SANHIRÎB, the Patrician of LESSER ARMENIA, came to him, he seized him and gouged out his eyes, and took from him eighty gold centenarii. And he increased in power greatly and he came to MELITENE. And he sent to the Sûltân 'ALB 'ARSLÂN and asked him for help. And the Sûltân promised him that he would go in person and help him wherever there was cause for it.

And after these things DIOGENES departed from MELITENE to CILICIA. And ÎWANÎ (JOANNES) attacked him, and captured him in the city of 'ADÂNÂ. And having taken him he sent and informed MICHAEL the king. Then MICHAEL commanded, saying, 'Thou shalt not harm him, but with care bring him here to us, so that we may make him settle in a monastery. When DIOGENES came near to CONSTANTINOPLE, ÎWANÎ (JOANNES) treated his eyes with *kohl* and blinded him, and DIOGENES hit his head against a wall until he died. And the king and the nobles were offended with ÎWANÎ (JOANNES) because he had done this without the command of the king.

## Notes

1. Other than the key work of Attaleiates translated by Ruth Macrides in Appendix A.
2. Aristakes of Lastiverd, *Aristakès de Lastivert. Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*, tr. M. Canard and H. Berbérian, Brussels, 1973, 124–8.
3. 1067–71. The translator points out that Romanus Diogenes was actually the sixtieth Byzantine emperor (p. 124, n.1).
4. In the province of Vaspurakan on the southern shore of Lake Van; cf. French translation, 125, n.1.
5. Psalm 33, v.16.
6. Erzurum.
7. Usually identified by medieval geographers as positioned near the sources of the Nile.

8. The translator notes (p. 127, n.2) that Prud'homme, p. 146, n.1, thinks that 'HNDKAC' does not denote India but Ethiopia; therefore it means the Nile. That is why the Ocean mentioned below is the Mediterranean and the 'great city' is Constantinople.
9. Matthew of Edessa, *Patmut'awn*, tr. A. E. Dostourian as *Armenia and the Crusades. Tenth to Twelfth centuries. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, Lanham, New York and London, 1993, 133–6; cf. also Matthew of Edessa, *Patmut'awn*, tr. E. Dulaurier as *Chronique de Matthieu d'Edesse (962–1136) avec la continuation de Grégoire le Prêtre jusqu'en 1162*, Paris, 1858, 163–70.
10. Nicephorus Bryennius, *Historia*, tr. P. Gautier as *Nicéphore Bryennios. Histoire*, Brussels, 1975, 104–20.
11. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacob d'Antioche*, facsimile ed. and French tr. by J.-B. Chabot as *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, Paris, 3 vols, 1899–1924, III, 168–70.
12. *Tar'ikh al-muslimin*, ed. Zakkar, *Mukhtārāt*, 152. Cf. also the first edition of this text; – al-Makin, Ibn al-'Amid, *Historia saracenicā*, ed. T. Erpenius, Leiden, 1625, 555–6. This source was known very early in Europe. Vryonis points out that the Latin translation of this work was in Gibbon's library: cf. Vryonis, 'A personal history', 226.
13. Erpenius' edition states that the king of Armenia blinded Romanus; *Historia saracenicā*, 556.
14. Bar Hebraeus, *The chronography of Gregory Abu'l Faraj, the Hebrew physician, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus*, facsimile ed. and tr. by E. A. W. Budge, London, 1932, 220–3. Budge's capitalisations have been retained here.

## Other medieval Muslim accounts of the battle of Manzikert

### Introduction

Apart from the most important medieval Muslim accounts of the battle of Manzikert which have been discussed at length in the main body of this book, there are a number of other extant Muslim narratives about this event; they are mostly in Arabic, but there also a few in Persian.

These little-known additional sources have little or no originality, either in points of detail or in underlying attitudes. Indeed, it is clear that the broad sweep and the anecdotal material of the Muslim historiographical tradition about Manzikert had become firmly fixed by the end of the thirteenth century and that later writers kept conservatively to that tradition. Some chroniclers paid only scant attention to the battle; others accord it lengthy but entirely derivative accounts. Nevertheless, even these are not without interest as examples of the techniques of Muslim historiography.

In order to give a comprehensive coverage of the sources, this appendix will present a few translated examples of this supplementary material, as well as giving a list of further Muslim accounts of the battle. These come from a range of countries – Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and Iran.

### **The fragmentary accounts of Ibn al-‘Adim in the *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta’rikh Ḥalab***

#### *Introduction to the text*

As well as his long account of Manzikert situated in his local history of Aleppo,<sup>1</sup> Ibn al-‘Adim wrote a monumental Arabic biographical dictionary,<sup>2</sup> providing full coverage of the lives of the great people associated with Aleppo.<sup>3</sup> As a prominent public figure in his home city,

Ibn al-‘Adim was interested in recording Alp Arslan’s visit there and the *Bughya* contains copious information about the year 463/1071, the year in which the battle of Manzikert took place.

Under his biographical notice for Alp Arslan, Ibn al-‘Adim includes a number of short excerpts about the battle of Manzikert which come from unknown or lost sources. Two of these are included below because of their rarity value. One is from an anonymous source; the other is allegedly taken from a lost history written by ‘Ali b. Munqidh, the brother of the more famous Usama b. Munqidh, the author of racy memoirs at the time of the crusades in the twelfth century.

### *Translations of the texts*

#### The account of an unknown writer

He [Alp Arslan] besieged Aleppo in which was Mahmud b. Nasr. b. Salih b. Mirdas in 463.<sup>4</sup> He then went to meet Diogenes [Romanus] who had left Constantinople. He encountered him and imprisoned him. Then he was kind to him and released him.<sup>5</sup>

#### The account of ‘Ali b. Munqidh (d. 544 /1150)

The sultan went back, withdrawing to his own country by way of Iraq, turning from there towards Armenia making for the king of Rum. He moved fast. The two sides met on a Friday. The sultan refrained from<sup>6</sup> fighting him, waiting for the time of prayer on the pulpits of Islam and for the answer [to the prayer] in the victory of the Muslims. When he had prayed at noon, he waged war on them.<sup>7</sup>

### *Commentary on the texts*

The basic elements of the standard Manzikert narrative are to be found in these two short, staccato accounts. It is interesting to note that the importance of Friday is mentioned even in the very short narrative of ‘Ali b. Munqidh.

### **The account of Rawandi (d. early thirteenth century?) in *Rahāt al-ṣudūr wa’l-ayāt al-surūr dar ta’rīkh-i āl-i Saljūq*<sup>8</sup>**

#### *Introduction to the text*

This is a dynastic history of the Seljuqs, with strong *Mirror for Princes* overtones, written in Persian, in a simple style, interspersed with

proverbs and Qur'anic and literary quotations in Arabic and Persian. After the collapse of the Seljuq dynasty in Iran at the end of the twelfth century, Rawandi dedicated this work to the Seljuq sultan of Anatolia, Kaykhusraw I.

### *Translation of the text*

The sultan went to wage war on Romanus the king of Byzantium. He [Romanus] came from Byzantium with six hundred horsemen and he made for [the lands] of Byzantium. Alp Arslan came to him in Manzikert with twelve thousand men. He defeated them and Romanus was captured at the hand of a slave.

It has been reported that, at the time when the sultan Alp Arslan was going to wage war on Romanus the king of Byzantium, he [Alp Arslan] wanted the army to be inspected in front of him in Baghdad. The commander Sa'd al-Dawla Gawhara'in was in [his] service and he performed the inspection. An extremely puny Byzantine slave from his retinue came in the inspection. The inspector did not write down his name. Sa'd al-Dawla said: 'Do not make difficulties. It may be that he will capture the king of Byzantium himself.' It so happened that during the rout [of the Byzantine army] this slave recognised the king of Byzantium because he had seen him [before]. He seized him and brought him before the sultan. The sultan kept him prisoner for a few days. After that he put a ring in both his ears and he gave him security for his life. Then he established that Romanus the king of Byzantium should send one thousand *dīnārs* every day as poll tax.

### *Commentary on the text*

This short account already contains a number of the core ingredients of the standard Persian version of the battle of Manzikert but there is no explicit mention of Romanus' honourable release.

## **The account of Rashid al-Din (d. 717/1318) in *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*<sup>9</sup>**

### *Introduction to the text*

In addition to the Persian text of his monumental work *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, Rashid al-Din (or members of his circle) produced Arabic versions of it. One such version is contained in the beautifully



illustrated manuscript in the Edinburgh University Library. Because of its rarity value, its account of Manzikert is translated here, although it contains very little new material.

### *Translation of the text*

The events of the year 463/1070–1

In this year Romanus, the Byzantine emperor, left with one hundred thousand cavalry [composed of] Byzantines, Franks and Christian Bedouin. When they reached Manzikert in the district of Akhlat, Alp Arslan was in Khoy in Adharbayjan. He set off to attack them [at the head of] a detachment of cavalry, and he sent his women, baggage and cargo with Nizam al-Mulk to Hamadhan. He had fifteen thousand horsemen with him and he collected them and charged them with good commands. Then he came across the Byzantines and attacked the Byzantine army with his troops. It was only an hour before the Byzantines were overcome. Their troops were dispersed, and the Muslims seized the sultan of the Europeans and took him before the sultan who flogged him three times with his own hand. He said: 'Do not ransom him unless it be for one and a half million *dīnārs*, and on the condition that if I ask him for reinforcements, he will help me and he will release the Muslim prisoners who are in Byzantium and its lands.' He accepted this absolutely, so they released him on that basis.

### **A list of other Manzikert accounts**

#### *Arabic*

Ibn Abi'l-Damm (d. 642/1244),<sup>10</sup> *Ta'rikh Ibn Abī Damm*

Ibn Muyassar (d. 676/1278), *Akhhbār Miṣr*<sup>11</sup>

Ibn al-Dawadari (d. after 735/1335), *Kanz al-durar wa- jāmi' al-ghurar*<sup>12</sup>

Al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1442), *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā'*<sup>13</sup>

Al-Dhahabi (d. 748/1348 or 753/1352–3), *Kitāb ta'rikh duwal al-Islām*<sup>14</sup>

#### *Persian*

Yazdi (d. 743/1342), *Al-urāda fi'l hikāyat al-saljūqiyya*<sup>15</sup>

Anavī, Burhān al-Dīn (flourished early thirteenth century), *Anīs al-qulūb*<sup>16</sup>

## Notes

1. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 74–7.
2. Even in its present extant state, which represents only a quarter of the original text, the work is enormous.
3. Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī ta’rīkh Ḥalab*, partial edition by A. Sevim as *Biyografilerle Selçukular Tarihi Ibnu’l-Adim Bügyetu’t-taleb fi Tarihi Haleb*, Ankara, 1982, 16–39. In this work Ibn al-‘Adīm draws on a very broad range of sources, both oral accounts, including the testimony of his own father, and written narratives, extant and lost, named and anonymous. On occasion he is honest enough to say that he cannot remember where he found his information.
4. 1071.
5. *Bughya*, ed. Sevim, 17.
6. Literally: ‘stopped’.
7. *Bughya*, ed. Sevim, 25.
8. Rawandi, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa’l-ayāt al-surūr dar ta’rīkh-i āl-i Saljūq*, ed. M. Iqbal, London, 1921, 119–20.
9. Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh*, Edinburgh University Library MS. Arab 20, f. 1296.
10. Ed. Zakkar, 143.
11. Ed. Zakkar, 145.
12. Ed. Zakkar, 158–60.
13. Ed. Zakkar, 157.
14. French tr. by A. Nègre, as *Kitāb ta’rīkh duwal al-Islām*, Damascus, 1979, 17–19.
15. Ed. K. Süsshelm, Leiden, 1909.
16. Ed. M. F. Köprülü, in *Bellesten* 7 (1943), 503–4.

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## Abbreviations

*EI1* *Encyclopedia of Islam*, first edition

*EI2* *Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition

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- Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl ta'riḫ Dimashq*, ed. H. P. Amedroz, Leiden, 1908, 99.
- Ibn Muyassar, *Akhhbār Miṣr*, ed. Zakkar, 145.
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