# Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol

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# 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

# MEDIEVAL MUSLIM INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BATTLE OF MANZIKERT

Chapter 1

# Introduction

*The Battle of Manzikert was the most decisive disaster in Byzantine history.*[1]

## 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.[2] 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*,[3] 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[4] and amongst the Arabs and Persians[5], 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.[6] 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.[7]

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.[8] 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.[9] 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,[10] I lived in constant fear of him'[11] (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.[12] 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'.[13]

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.[14] 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 Nicephoris 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.[15] 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.[16] 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.[17] Nicephorus Bryennius portrays Basilakes as intrepid but foolhardy, incapable of giving the emperor any useful advice,[18] 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,[19] 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.[20] 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-'Adim, records that around seventy thousand people of Byzantine origin were sold as slaves in the market at Aleppo.[21] 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 Isma'ili caliph in Cairo but shifted his loyalties back to Sunni Islam in 462/1070 when he perceived the rising power of Alp Arslan.[22] When the sultan crossed the Euphrates on 14 Rabi' 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.[23]

## The story of the battle itself[24]

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.[25] 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.[26] The Byzantine forces advanced in pursuit of the Turks, who retreated in accordance with their usual tactics. Hamidullah[27] divides the battle into three phases. In the first phase, the

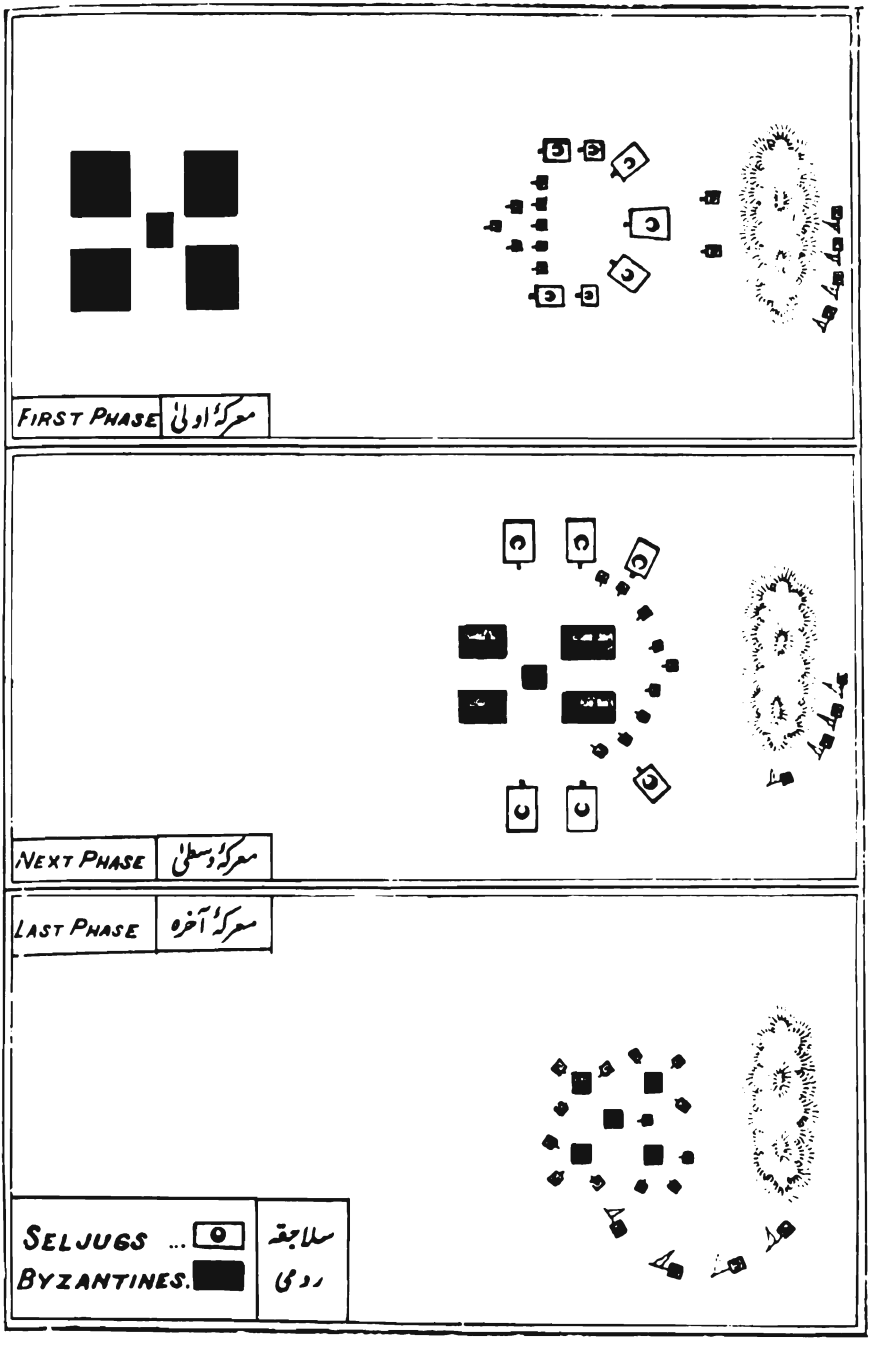


**Figure 1.1** The course of the battle of Manzikert as suggested by M. Hamidullah

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.[28] Two Arabic sources, al-Bundari[29] and Ibn al-ʿAdim,[30] 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.[31] 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.[32]

## 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.[33] 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.[34]

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,[35] 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.[36]

## 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.[37] As already mentioned,[38] 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.[39] So Romanus preferred to recruit men from within Asia Minor and he enjoyed a good relationship with the Armenians.[40] 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.[41]

Cheynet analyses the tensions within the Byzantine army as coming from two conflicting views. On the one hand, leaders such as Nicephorus Bryennius and Joseph Trachaneiotes 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.[42] This was the context in which Romanus finally made his fateful decision to fight at Manzikert.

Cheynet[43] and Kaegi[44] 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,[45] and Aristakes[46] and Michael the Syrian[47] 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.[48] So, as Vryonis argues, the Seljuq victory at Manzikert can be attributed to long-term divisive elements within the Byzantine empire.[49] 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.[50]

## 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.[51] 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.[52] Cheynet further argues that the battle of Manzikert was not the military disaster it is claimed to have been.[53] 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.[54]

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 polities 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.[55] 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[56] and Skylitzes.[57] Amongst the Byzantine authors hostile to Romanus IV Diogenes is Psellus,[58] 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'.[59] Vryonis concludes that 'Attaleiates remains our most reliable source, and it is his account that deserves the greatest degree of credence'.[60]

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.[61]

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

languages – Syriac and Armenian respectively – by established scholars in that field.[63] The translation of the Copt al-Makin who wrote in Arabic is that of the present author.[64] The remaining translations – those of the Byzantine Nicephorus Bryennius,[65] the Armenian Aristakès of Lastiverd,[66] 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,[67] 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;[68] 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.[69]

Three of the passages selected for inclusion and translation in this book have already been translated into English – those of Ibn al-Athir,[70] al-Husayni[71] and Rashid al-Din.[72] A fourth passage – that of al-Turtushi[73] – exists in a Spanish translation. The text of the Persian Mirkhwand[74] 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,[75] 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 (utruk 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 Myriocephalum (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 Milennium (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-'Adim, *Zubdat al-ḥalab fi ta'rīkh 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 seldjoucides 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 Milennium (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 chronographia 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'iwn*, 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'iwn*, 1858, 163–70; A. E. Dostourian, tr., 133–5.
64. Al-Makin, Ibn al-'Amid, *Historia saracenica*, 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-mu'arrikhīn al-'arab*, Damascus and Beirut, 1970.

68. F. Sümer and A. Sevim, *Islâm 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'rīkh*, 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, *Akhbār 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 Akhbār 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-tawārīkh*, 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-tawārīkh. An Ilkhanid adaptation of the Saljūq-nāma of Ẓahīr 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' fī 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-'uṣra*; Turkish translation by K. Burslan as *Irak ve Horasan Selçuklulari tarihi*, Istanbul, 1943, 37–41; Sümer and Sevim, 18–22.

Chapter 2

# The twelfth-century accounts of the battle of Manzikert

*Alp Arslan was the first of the kings of the Turks to cross the Euphrates.*[1]

## 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.[2] 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,[3] 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.[4]

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 Sumer. Perhaps the course 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*,[5] completed in Fustat in 512/1122 and dedicated to the Fatimid vizier al-Ma'mun b. al-Bata'ihi. 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.[6]

## *The translation*

By this strategy,[7] 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