

From Byzantium to Muslim-Turkish Anatolia Transformation, Frontiers, Diplomacy, and Interaction, Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries

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Abstract This article gives a survey of key factors and major stages of transformation which explain how the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire in the course of the 11th and 12th centuries developed into a highly fragmented political landscape dominated by Muslim-Turkish principalities. Apart from pointing out changing structures and political constellations during the period in question, the article focuses especially on the formation of a new frontier in Western Asia Minor, aspects of Byzantine-Turkish diplomacy, and forms of interaction between Byzantines, Anatolian Christians, and Turks.

Keywords Byzantium. Turks. Asia Minor. Borderland/Frontier. Diplomacy. Interaction.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Mechanisms and Stages of Transformation. – 3 The Byzantine-Turkish Frontier. – 4 Byzantine-Turkish Diplomacy. – 5 Interaction.

1 Introduction

The penetration of Byzantium's eastern provinces by Muslim-Turkish nomads and warriors and their gradual transformation into new politico-cultural entities constituted, from the viewpoint of Byzantine Constantinople, the first stage in a centuries-long process of encirclement, shrinkage, and absorption. The standard narrative of Byzantium's relations with the Seljuk and Ottoman Turks still widely reflects this viewpoint, although international scholarship has developed a broad range of theories, heuristic categories, and explanatory models to interpret similar violence-induced transformative processes relating to conquest, state building, and identity formation in the late Roman world and Medieval Europe in a more adequate manner. When it comes to the emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia, scholarly debates are still hampered to some extent by certain ideological barriers, anachronistic concepts of national history, or academic traditions compartmentalising historical developments into subdisciplines. Depending on one's angle, this transformation was presented as lamentable decay of Hellenism and Christianity, as appropriation of a new homeland through its Turkification and Islamisation, or as a struggle of swashbuckling knights fighting their way through hostile territories to save the Holy Land. Fortunately, younger historians have made great strides in revising many of the traditional opinions and perceptions articulated up to the 1970s. We have now a much better grasp of key aspects, such as the rise of the Great Seljuk empire (Peacock 2010), Byzantine-Turkish spheres of contact and exchange (Balivet 1994; Shukurov 2016), settlement patterns and urban structures (Özcan 2010; Blessing 2014), the impact of climatic and environmental conditions on Anatolian societies (Haldon 2007), the characteristics of Anatolian historiography (Küçükhüseyin 2011), and the literary representations of cross-cultural encounters in epics and hagiographical texts (Kitapçı Bayrı 2020). Nevertheless, most of this work focuses on the heyday of the Seljuk sultanate, the Mongol period, or the early Ottoman emirate. This is certainly understandable, as the bulk of the available source material, such as local chronicles, manuscripts, official documents, archaeological remains, monuments, coins, and inscriptions, date to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As for the formation period before 1200, archaeological remains and monuments are scarce, and narrative sources were mostly penned by external observers based in Constantinople, the Muslim heartlands, the crusader states, or the centres of Armenian and Syrian Christianity in Anatolia. Hence, despite the rich bibliography on the Komnenian dynasty and the crusader states, the developments in Asia Minor during the 170 odd years from the first arrival of Turks in the eastern borderland until the Fourth Crusade remain rather obscure. Turkish emirs and nomadic pastoralists are frequent-

ly mentioned as hostile forces populating the interior of Asia Minor, but there are only few studies scrutinising the intrinsic nature and sociopolitical structures of these entities, or their patterns of coexistence with the Byzantines and other local populations (Necipoğlu 2006; Beihammer 2017). This is in sharp contrast to the vibrant scholarly debates on the early Ottoman expansion, which in part suffer from similar clichés and preconceptions but have reached a much higher level of theorisation and analysis (Schmitt 2016). This observation applies even more to the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, which are nowadays studied under the broader conceptual umbrella of the transformation of the Roman world (Hoyland 2015).

In what follows, I will first lay out some general thoughts on the mechanisms framing sociopolitical and structural changes in Asia Minor during the transformation from Byzantine to Turkish rule. These will be discussed against the backdrop of older approaches and interpretations which still overshadow the historical debate. Thereafter, I will outline important stages and characteristics in key areas of Byzantine-Turkish relations, namely the nature of the new frontier along the western fringes of the Anatolian plateau, elite diplomacy, and forms of interaction during the period in question.

2 Mechanisms and Stages of Transformation

The notion of ‘constructive interaction’ constitutes the nub of the argument I developed in my recent monograph on Byzantium and the emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia. It tries to make the point that the process in question should not be viewed as elimination of Byzantine culture and institutions by Turkish conquerors. Rather, it was the mutual cross-fertilisation between the two spheres which was the driving force of historical change (Beihammer 2017, 387-94). If there was a loser, it was Byzantium’s power elite, the government of Constantinople with its military, administrative, and ecclesiastical institutions, as well as its mechanisms of control and exploitation. Another supra-regional power in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Fatimid caliphate of Cairo, which for almost a century between the 970s and the 1060s managed to uphold a precarious equilibrium with Byzantium regarding their spheres of influence in Syria, also entered a period of political and military decline until its ultimate downfall in 1171 (Thomson 2008). Contrarily, the new empire on the rise, the Great Seljuk sultanate founded by the brothers ʿTuġhril Beg and Chaghri Beg, temporarily imposed its overlordship on the Muslim emirates in the Syrian, Mesopotamian, and Caucasian borderlands, and in the years 1087-92 Sultan Malikshāh exerted direct control over Syria through emirs appointed by him. Yet the dynastic struggles following Malikshāh’s death brought the sultanate’s efforts to strengthen

its hold over the Turks in Anatolia to grief (Peacock 2015, 61-80; Beihammer 2017, 244-64). As regards the internal situation of Byzantine Asia Minor, no matter what the exact nature and underlying causes of the eleventh-century crisis were, large sections of the Anatolian aristocracy and regional military units undoubtedly exhibited centrifugal tendencies and the civil wars of 1056 and 1072 were catalysts in this respect. Byzantine landowners and generals, Frankish-Norman mercenaries, Armenian chiefs, local brigands, seditious townspeople, as well as Arab and Kurdish emirs loomed large in Anatolian affairs long before the Turks arrived on the scene (Cheynet 1996, 337-57, 379-85, 392-408).

The changing constellations and dynamics of the transformative process in Asia Minor can be roughly divided into three distinct stages, which may be subsumed under the headings of 'expansion' (c. 1030-96), 'reaction' (1096-c. 1120), and 'state formation' (c. 1120-1200). The first stage stretches from the first appearance of Turkmen warriors in the Armenian borderlands to the temporary establishment of Turkish groups in fortified towns of western Asia Minor and port cities of the Aegean coastland, such as Nicaea, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Miletus in the 1080s (Öngül 2016, 25-8; Turan [1971] 2004, 117-25). As regards the military causes for the Byzantine debacles in the east, one may point out that due to overextension, lack of coordination, and the challenges posed by nomadic warfare and raiding practices the Byzantine army failed to debar the Turks from entering the eastern access routes leading into the interior of Asia Minor and to uphold the alliances with the Muslim emirates along the frontier. This became especially evident after the abortive campaigns of Romanos IV Diogenes and his defeat in the battle of Manzikert in 1071 (Beihammer 2017, 92-168). Although this battle is usually presented as the point of no return in the fate of Asia Minor, it needs to be stressed that the Great Seljuk sultans played but a minor role in the military operations on Byzantine soil. The battle was actually not meant to happen. Rather, it resulted from the fortuitous coincidence that Romanos IV's operations in the Arsianias valley north of Lake Van intersected with Sultan Alp Arslan's route of retreat from northern Syria (Beihammer 2017, 155-61; for the battle in general cf. Hillenbrand 2007; Öngül 2016, 75-89). However, by strengthening its position in Syria, the Seljuk sultanate decisively undercut Byzantium's links with the borderland emirates (Turan [1971] 2004, 62-73; Öngül 2016, 69-72, 102-8). Moreover, the ensuing civil war in Byzantium turned Turkish warriors into esteemed allies of the warring factions (Turan [1971] 2004, 75-98; Öngül 2016, 110-15). In this way, Turkish chiefs not only gained access to well-defended provincial towns but also intensified their contacts with Byzantine elites, thus making their first acquaintance with Byzantine concepts of authority and political institutions.

The Turks in western Asia Minor underwent a process of cultural and ideological assimilation to their Byzantine environment, as becomes evident in the case of Tzachas/Çaka of Smyrna and other Turkish lords in the Aegean coastland. The notion of a Turkish threat to Constantinople, which culminated in the coalition with the Pechenegs in 1092, obfuscates the fact that Tzachas acted more like a seditious Byzantine warlord harbouring ambitions towards the ruling dynasty than a foreign conqueror. Contrarily, the Seljuk scion and founder of the emirate of Nicaea, Sulaymān b. Qutlumush, and his successors Abū l-Qāsim (1086-92) and Qilij Arslān I (1092-1107) developed a twofold outlook combining relations with Constantinople based on treaties, honorifics, and personal links (Anna Komnene, *Alexias* 3.11.1-5; 6.10.1-11 [ed. Reinsch, Kambylis 2001]) with a strategic orientation towards the old borderland, as the temporary conquests of Cilicia (1082-3) and Antioch (1084) illustrate (Turan [1971] 2004, 98-111, 113-17, 125-8). The Seljuk civil war after 1092 (Öngül 2016, 184-208) marked the definitive breakdown of any bipolar system of imperial control over the triangular landmass between the Aegean littoral, the Caucasus, and Upper Mesopotamia. Large parts of Anatolia and the entire former borderland came to be littered with rudimentary petty lordships held by Byzantine, Armenian, Turkmen, and Seljuk chiefs.

The second stage begins with the arrival of the First Crusade in Asia Minor (1096-97) and results in the crystallisation of new Christian-Muslim frontier zones along the western fringes of the Anatolian plateau, on the one hand, and in Cilicia, the Ceyhan valley, and the upper Euphrates region, on the other. The crossing of Asia Minor by the crusading hosts enabled Emperor Alexios I to restore Byzantine rule from Bithynia as far as the Gulf of Attaleia and Seleukeia while using the island of Cyprus as an advanced naval base granting access to the Syrian littoral (Roche 2009). Farther east, the nascent crusader principalities of Antioch and Edessa and adjacent Armenian lordships which drew their authority and legitimacy from a mixture of Byzantine court titles, feudal relations, and political alliances, drove a deep wedge into the Muslim-held territories (Asbridge 2000; Pryor, Jeffreys 2012). From the outset, their position was highly precarious, as they were encircled by a whole cluster of Turkish emirates and local clans based in Aleppo, Mosul, the Diyār Bakr province, the Armenian highlands, and Cappadocia. It was in this entangled contact zone that emirs of the Artuqid clan, who in the course of the Seljuk dynastic struggles had gained hold of key points, such as Mārdīn and Hiṣn Kayfā/Hasankeyf, actively engaged in conflicts with the Christian lords in their vicinity, thus reinvigorating a jihad ideology against the crusaders (Beihammer 2017, 332-4). Simultaneously, both Christian and Muslim rulers in the region elaborated mechanisms of communication, treaty making, and temporary alliances

to secure their interests and political survival or to form a common front against outside threats.

As for the situation in central Anatolia following the crossing of the First Crusade and Alexios I's 1097-98 campaign, the Turks who chose not to surrender to the Byzantine troops and to assimilate to the social environment of the western coastland retreated to the highlands east of an imaginary line running approximately from Dorylaion/Eskişehir to the central Anatolian lakes. It is impossible to reconstruct the details of this process, yet the successful repulsion of newly arriving crusader hosts in 1101 in the Pontus region and southern Cappadocia clearly shows that the Turks rapidly consolidated their hold over the Anatolian plateau and were able to defend it against major invading forces (Turan [1971] 2004, 128-35). This development resulted in the emergence of two predominant regional powers, namely the Anatolian Seljuks descending from Sulaymān b. Qutlumush, who established their base in the southwestern part of the Anatolian plateau between Konya and Aksaray, and the Dānishmendids descending from Gümüştekīn Aḥmad b. Dānishmend, who from the 1080s onwards expanded their rule in Cappadocia from Sebasteia/Sivas over strongholds in the Halys/Kızılırmak and Iris/Yeşilirmak valleys, such as Dokeia/Tokat, Amaseia/Amasya, Neokaisareia/Niksar, and Kaisareia/Kayseri (Turan 2004, 133-5; Kesik 2017, 48-80). For all their kinship relations and temporary coalitions, the two clans quickly began competing over influence and territories, especially as both sides were intent on extending their sway over the Ceyhan and Upper Euphrates region, in particular the city of Melitene/Malatya, which the Dānishmendids for the first time seized from an Armenian local lord in September 1102 (Kesik 2017, 75-7). Qilij Arslān I thus entered an alliance with the Byzantine emperor whereas Dānishmend Ghāzī released Bohemund of Antioch from prison, allying with him and other Frankish lords (Kesik 2017, 77-80). For a short time, the Seljuks outstripped their opponents with the conquests of Ablastayn (1103), Malatya (1105), and Mosul (1107), but Qilij Arslān I's death in battle at the Khābūr River once again tipped the balance of power in favour of the Dānishmendids (Turan [1971] 2004, 135-8). This pattern of incessant rivalries and frequently changing power constellations became a characteristic feature in the political culture of the fragmented landscape of post-Byzantine Anatolia.

In the third stage between the 1120s and 1200, central Anatolia developed into a separate politico-cultural sphere dominated by Muslim-Turkish elites ruling with the aid of Islamic authority concepts, administrative structures, institutions, and monuments (Tekinalp 2009; Pancaroğlu 2013). Politically, the region continued to be a conglomerate of semi-independent emirates centred around a few towns with their pertinent territories. These lordships were partially connected through dynastic ideas, kinship links, and intermar-

riages, and branches or individual representatives of the Seljuk and Dānīshmendid families interacted with each other to pursue common goals. Yet the principles on which these coalitions were based were never explicit and had in each case to be renegotiated. Frequently, the relations between members of the same family or the two dynasties were strained or lapsed into open conflict: “Henceforth, hatred and intractable enmity spread among the families” (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 192]; transl. by the Author from the French).¹ As there were no well-defined hierarchies or mechanisms of conflict resolution, these rivalries were often decided by violent means. In this atmosphere of incessant feuding, power constellations were short-lived and volatile and became even more blurred by the fact that the Anatolian emirs frequently forged alliances with outside forces, be it the imperial government of Constantinople, Byzantine lords in the Pontus region, Turkish clans in the Armenian highlands and Diyār Bakr, or Frankish and Armenian lords in Cilicia, the Ceyhan region, or the Euphrates valley (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 223, 227, 230, 290, 293-4]).

The crystallisation of a kind of supreme authority in Anatolia was long in the making and never gained general acceptance. Although there are sources projecting the bestowal of the title of sultan by the Abbasid caliph and the Great Seljuk sultan back to Sulaymān b. Qutlumush (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 172]), it seems that the earliest ambitions towards this direction actually date to the time of Qilij Arslān I’s eastward expansion 1105-07 (Beihammer 2017, 346-7) and that it was not before the reigns of Mas‘ūd I (1116-55) and Qilij Arslān II (1155-92) that the Seljuks of Konya assumed the title of sultan in a formal investiture ceremony. It is noteworthy, however, that only Eastern Christian authors provide specific information about this matter (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 312]; Matthew of Edessa, *Chronicle* [transl. Dostourian 1993, 265-6]). Byzantine sources are elusive in this respect while Arabic sources never refer to the twelfth-century lords of Konya as sultans. There is one inscription dated to 551/1156, in which Qilij Arslān II presented himself as sultan in the Great Seljuk tradition (Korobeinikov 2013, 73-4), but does this claim reflect any broader acceptance? Be it as it may, both the Seljuks of Konya and their Dānīshmendid counterparts in Cappadocia laid claims to precedence among the emirs of Anatolia and were temporarily successful in imposing their will, but this could hardly be translated into generally acknowledged authority concepts, as the incessant rivalries vividly illustrate. In terms of political clout, the Dānīshmendid rul-

¹ See also Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* (transl. Chabot 1905, 194-5, 204, 219-20, 223-4, 238, 246, 253-4, 258-9, 304-5, 319, 320-1, 326, 332, 345-7, 349-50, 357).

er Gümüştekīn Ghāzī (1105-34) outstripped the Seljuk lord Mas'ūd (Turan [1971] 2004, 194-9; Kesik 2017, 103-14). It was only after the death of Gümüştekīn Ghāzī's son Malik Muḥammad (1134-43) that the Dānishmendid principality split up in three rivalling branches based in Sivas, Malatya, and Kayseri and the Seljuks of Konya regained their freedom of action (Turan [1971] 2004, 204-6; Kesik 2017, 117-19). It took three more decades that Qilij Arslān II eventually succeeded in subduing all Dānishmendid emirs by seizing Malatya on 25 October 1178 (Turan [1971] 2004, 226-31; Kesik 2017, 117-46), but as soon as Konya was about to become the uncontested centre of gravity in Anatolia, the recently unified territories once again in about 1187 split up into numerous separate dominions ruled by Qilij Arslān II's sons (Turan [1971] 2004, 250-4, 261-75).

Turkish scholars coined the term "Turkish feudalism" to describe the peculiar situation of twelfth-century Anatolia and to link it to long-established Seljuk or even old-Turkish practices (Turan [1971] 2004, 47-8, 242-5). They also emphasise the historical role of Seljuk and Dānishmendid rulers in the creation of a politically and culturally unified Anatolian sphere, which they consider the Turkish homeland in its embryonic state (Turan [1971] 2004, 254-60; Kesik 2017, 48-51). While it is certainly true that there was a new cultural and political landscape in the making, it seems more appropriate to view the principles, behavioural patterns, and strategies of the new ruling elites as a result of the preceding disintegration of imperial structures and the ensuing political regionalisation, which has many parallels in Byzantine and Frankish-held regions, as well as in Muslim territories of Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. In the Byzantine provinces of Western Asia Minor following the breakdown of Komnenian rule after 1180, for instance, disaffected aristocrats carved out short-lived local lordships defying the authority of Constantinople (Hoffmann 1974).

While the outcome of internal power struggles remained ambiguous, the Turks of Anatolia were mostly successful in fending off external threats. Apart from incessant skirmishes in the frontier zone, Byzantine emperors launched some large-scale campaigns against important strongholds, such as Sozopolis/Uluborlu at the headwaters of the Maeander River (1119), the cities of Kastamona/Kastamonu and Gangra/Çankırı (1130s), Neokaisareia/Niksar in the Pontus region (1140-41), and Dorylaion/Eskişehir in Phrygia (1160), as well as two abortive invasions targeting the capital of Konya itself in 1146 and 1176 (Turan [1971] 2004, 187-8, 199-203, 206-8; Stouraitis 2016, 22-36). The Turks repelled all these attacks and dealt the Byzantine army a major blow at Myriokephalon (Turan [1971] 2004, 231-6, 239-41). As the universal chronicler Ibn al-Athīr (*Chronicon* [ed. Tornberg 1851, 11: 271]), a native from Mosul, accurately put it:

In this year [569/1173-4] the king of the Romans [*malik al-Rūm*] crossed the straits of Constantinople to invade the land of Qilij Arslān. There was a battle between them in which the Muslims prevailed, and when the king of the Romans noticed his incapacity, he returned to his city after a great number of his soldiers were killed and taken captive.

During the crossing of the Second and Third Crusade, the Turks in 1147 seriously harassed the armies of the German emperor Conrad III and the French king Louis VII and in 1190 were still able to avert major setbacks while facing the army of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa despite the internal divisions of the Seljuk forces at that time (Eickhoff 1977; Turan [1971] 2004, 208-12, 245-49). Moreover, Qilij Arslān II successfully handled all challenges posed by the new strong men in the Muslim heartlands, Nūr al-Dīn Zengī (1146-74) and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (1174-93), who allied with both the Byzantine emperor and internal opponents in Anatolia and claimed places in the Ceyhan and Euphrates region (Turan [1971] 2004, 225-6, 229-31, 236-9). Again, Ibn al-Athīr (*Chronicon* [ed. Tornberg 1853, 12: 62]) aptly epitomises the situation in words which were purportedly exchanged between Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his son al-Afḍal shortly after Qilij Arslān's death in 589/1193:

And his son al-Afḍal hinted at invading the land of Rūm which was in the hand of the sons of Qilij Arslān and he said: "It is a land with a great many soldiers and huge wealth and it can quickly be seized. It also forms the route of the Franks when they go on campaign by land, so if we take hold of it, we will prevent them from crossing through it".

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the report continues, was actually ready to attack while his brother al-ʿĀdil was to take Khilāṭ on the northern shores of Lake Van.

Hence, the Ayyūbids' grand strategy at the time went far beyond the aims of the Great Seljuk sultans a century earlier and envisioned the incorporation of Anatolia while expanding into Azerbaijan. The land of Rūm, i.e. Anatolia, had become, in Muslim eyes, an inseparable part of the abode of Islam boasting outstanding geostrategic significance for defending the Muslim heartlands against western expansionism and a springboard for invading the Armenian highlands and western Iran. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death just a few months after Qilij Arslān's put paid to Ayyūbid imperialist dreams and the planned campaigns never materialised. Be it by strategic planning, military power, or sheer luck, the Seljuk rulers of Anatolia proved their resilience against Byzantine, Muslim, and Frankish aggression. They came to be accepted as players to be reckoned with in a crossroads area linking Europe and the Middle East. By the end of the twelfth

century, the Anatolian Seljuks for all internal divisions had built up a widely ramified cluster of diplomatic relations including Constantinople, the Hohenstaufen empire, the crusader states, Armenian Cilicia, Baghdad, the Ayyūbids, and numerous petty lordships in Asia Minor.

3 The Byzantine-Turkish Frontier

For the Byzantine imperial government, the emergence of Turkish principalities in Asia Minor certainly meant a huge loss of territories, subject populations, and revenues. Moreover, the Byzantine-Muslim frontier with all its perils had shifted some 500-600 miles closer to the empire's core areas near Constantinople. Bithynia's eastern border lay within a few days march from the Propontis shores and the Byzantine army's major rallying points (e.g. Lopadion, see Foss 1982, 159-61). The imperial government had to come to grips with multiple challenges at practical, strategic, and ideological levels. It had to adjust its concepts of territorial control and defence to the new situation by limiting its radius of efficient control to the littoral, the inland towns, and the agricultural areas in the fertile riverine lands of western Asia Minor while reducing its presence along the fringes of the Anatolian plateau to some advanced outposts and occasional forays (Roche 2010, 253-4). There never was a hermetically sealed borderline but rather a soft transition zone, where spheres of influence were fluctuating according to changing constellations. Allegiances were shifting, borderland populations were wavering between obedience and defiance, and newly arriving groups and individuals had to be accommodated and integrated into Byzantine administrative and hierarchical structures. In the realm of power politics, the Byzantine elites were pivoting between accepting the status quo and conceding territorial rights in exchange for alliances, on the one hand, or seeking to regain the old territories by military means, on the other. Claims to restore Byzantine rule in the East, as had been articulated during the negotiations with the chiefs of the First Crusade, resonated strongly in the language of court rhetoricians praising the ambitions of their emperors, whose campaigns were depicted against the foil of the Roman-Persian wars of antiquity (Stone 2004).

Modern accounts of the Byzantine-Turkish wars still echo traces of these literary representations. The discussion becomes even more obfuscated because of the uncritical use of rather ill-defined borderland concepts conjuring up notions of a primitive, yet vigorous, Byzantine-Turkish frontier culture, which a century later was to become the cradle of the Ottoman state. According to older scholarly opinions, this frontier was dominated by warlike nomads, Greek border soldiers (*akritai*), and a sedentary population exposed to the rapacity of both sides. More recent scholarship counters that the border-

land was actually well-integrated into the Seljuk realm, as monuments of elite patronage and administrative structures demonstrate, and thus could hardly have been a permanent home for fractious nomads (Peacock 2014). In order to grasp the particularities of the Byzantine-Turkish frontier more accurately, it seems expedient to distinguish between distinct sections of the borderland, each of which has its own landscape characteristics, road networks, riverine systems, and settlement patterns. The degree of Byzantine presence as well as the local administrative and military structures altered from one area to another according to its strategic significance and its connectivity with the sea and the city of Constantinople.

The Bithynian section bounded by the western banks of the lower Sangarios River was closely linked with Thrace and the Propontis coastland and included all major rallying points of the Byzantine army between Nicomedia and Lopadion in the Rhyndakos valley. Accordingly, the region had a strong military presence and enjoyed a high degree of safety after the last Turkish raids during the final years of Alexios I. The central section straddling the Aegean coastland and the lower courses of the Kaikos, Hermos, and Kaystros Rivers formed the core area of Byzantine Asia Minor. In contrast to Bithynia, however, the region had no well-defended frontier. The outermost contact zone ran approximately from the old military base of Dorylaion/Eskişehir across Polybotos/Bolvadin and Philomelion/Akşehir as far as the central Anatolian lakes and highlands north of Konya. This region was highly permeable, constellations were permanently shifting, and local strongholds frequently changed hands. The Byzantine defensive structures, therefore, centred primarily along the ports of the Aegean coastland and on some slightly advanced outposts overlooking the east-west connections along the river valleys. Adramyttion, Pergamon, and Chliara, which were the main strongholds of the Neokastra theme after its establishment between 1163-72, Smyrna, Magnesia, Nymphaion, Philadelpheia, and the Kelbianon area, i.e. the Upper Kaystros valley, in the Thrakesion theme are but some of the nodal points on which the Byzantine defensive system was based (Foss 1979, 306-14; 1982, 161-81; Roche 2010, 254-7).

A chink in the armour of the Byzantine defensive system was the southernmost section of the borderland stretching from the Maeander Valley to Caria and the Lycian coastland. Due to its rugged and mountainous character, the Byzantines were unable to exert efficient control over the inland of Caria and Lycia and confined their military presence to the coastal areas with Attaleia, being the central nodal point of maritime communication on the southwestern coast of Asia Minor (Hellenkemper, Hild 2004, 300-8). Turkmen nomads thus spread widely unhindered over the mountainous hinterland (Odo, *De profectioe* [ed. Berry 1948, 122-9]). The proximity of the Seljuk capital of Konya to the major east-west connections of central Ana-

tolia accounts for the fact that there was constant Turkish presence in the region between Philomelion/Akşehir and the headwaters of the Maeander River near Apameia/Dinar in southern Phrygia (Belke, Mersich 1990, 149-54, 188-9, 359-60). The Maeander valley thus constituted a major invasion route for Turkish westward advances but also one of the preferred march routes Byzantine troops used during their campaigns on Seljuk territory. In 1119-20, Emperor John II seized Laodikeia on the Lykos (near Denizli) and the advanced outpost of Sozopolis/Uluborlu from the Turks and thereafter established the theme of Mylasa and Melanoudion in the lower Maeander valley (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 5-7]; Ragia 2005). Turkish nomads and Seljuk troops, however, continued to roam about the region so that Byzantine control hardly reached beyond Laodikeia and Philadelpheia/Alaşehir, which were connected through a road running through the Kogamos valley (Belke, Mersich 1990, 150-2). Byzantine historians and the French monk Odo of Deuil illustrate the situation in the Byzantine-Turkish borderland during the 1140s with numerous noteworthy details. Strongholds in the outermost frontier zone, such as Melangeia and Dorylaion, were temporarily destroyed and deserted or formed the targets of Turkish attacks, such as Pithekas in Bithynia (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 36, 38, 81-2, 191-2, 294-5]). The imperial government made efforts to restore some of these fortifications, but these attempts never resulted in firmly entrenched defensive structures or fixed borderlines. When Manuel I in 1146 mounted an attack on Konya, he met the first Turkish resistance at Akroinon/Afyonkarahisar while Philomelion/Akşehir was held by a Turkish garrison and served as the sultan's base of operations. Upon the sultan's withdrawal, Manuel seized it and burned it down (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 40-1]).

While retreating after an abortive siege of Konya towards Beyşehir Lake, Byzantine troops engaged in combat with Turkish hosts at a site which John Kinnamos (*Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 47]) designates by its Turkish toponym as *Tzibrelitzemani*. Recently, this place-name has been identified with *Tzibritze* mentioned in Niketas Choniates' account on the battle of Myriokephalon and located at the pass of Bağırsak west of Kızılören (Ceylan 2016, 69-94). Regarding this location, Kinnamos (*Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 58, 59-62]) puts the following words into the emperor's mouth: "we are still in the midst of enemy country, and we have wandered far from the bounds of Romania". Upon reaching the headwaters of the Maeander River, the emperor according to the same author thought that "he was already outside enemy territories", yet the Byzantine army faced new enemies headed by a certain Raman, who were conducting raids in the region. Kinnamos' report thus evokes the notion of a gradual transition from a Turkish core area with Turkish toponyms to a fluid in-between region where no clear boundary existed and both sides claimed control.

This situation goes a long way towards explaining the perils the crusading hosts of Conrad III and Louis VII were facing while marching through western Asia Minor. Numerous sources accuse the Byzantines of treacherous acts and collusion with the Seljuk Turks in a bid to destroy the Frankish armies (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 66-7]; Odo, *De profectone* [ed. Berry 1948, 112-17, 126-9, 132-5]). Undoubtedly, there were tensions, fears, and distrust between the Byzantine government and the crusaders. Large numbers of Frankish soldiers travelling through unknown and hostile territory fell victim to profiteering and heinous deception. However, Seljuk hostility and the lack of central control make it extremely improbable that there could have been any high-level conspiracy at work. Most likely, the Franks had to struggle with the very nature of the borderland and the challenges posed by the geography of western Asia Minor with its rugged landscape, steep mountains, and impassable rivers. While the first part of the French crusaders' advance via Adramyttion and Smyrna to Ephesus was mostly physically exhausting, it was the section from Ephesus to Laodikeia where the Turks were able to attack the crusaders by occupying the southern banks of the Maeander River and the adjacent mountain crags (Odo, *De profectone* [ed. Berry 1948, 104-15]). Even more demanding was the final section through the mountainous inland of Caria and Lycia to Attaleia, where physical exhaustion, shortage of supplies, and incessant assaults constituted a deadly mixture (Odo, *De profectone* [ed. Berry 1948, 115-29]). The permeability of the southern part of the frontier zone allowed the Turks to deeply penetrate the Maeander valley and to establish links with the local population. Odo of Deuil insists that Greeks and Turks formed a common front, which may well be true but does not prove that the emperor acted treacherously. It rather shows that the local Christians maintained much closer links with the Turks frequenting the region than the invading Franks, who must have been perceived as an outside threat.

4 Byzantine-Turkish Diplomacy

Byzantines and Turks communicated with each other from the time of their first appearance in the eastern borderland at informal local and official diplomatic levels. Early encounters were often described within the conceptual framework of a cultural clash between the Roman-Christian world and belligerent nomadic barbarians, who were identified with the aid of ideas and clichés stemming from Greek-Roman ethnography. Byzantine authors subsumed the Oghuz Turks forming the backbone of the Seljuk Empire under the ethnic category of Huns and Scythians but were also aware of their cultural assimilation to the Muslim-Persian world (Beihammer 2009). The earliest of-

ficial contacts were diplomatic exchanges with the Seljuk sultanate and the Abbasid court of Baghdad, which once again outpaced the Fatimid court of Egypt as the principal interlocutor of Constantinople in eastern affairs (Beihammer 2017, 92-102). The growing presence of Turkish groups in the interior of Asia Minor caused the imperial government and local rebels to forge relations with Turkish chieftains, something that during the civil wars of the 1070s developed into full-blown alliances (Beihammer 2017, 204-24).

The treaty Alexios I concluded with Sulaymān ibn Qutlumush shortly after his rise to power in 1081 was a watershed moment in that a ruling emperor for the first time acknowledged a Turkish lord's territorial rule and the existence of a boundary in the Gulf of Nicomedia/Izmit region (Turan [1971] 2004, 90-2). Byzantium continued its contacts with the court of Sultan Malikshāh, and there was a brief phase of Great Seljuk intervention in Asia Minor in the years 1087-92 aiming at a kind of imperial restoration based on a shared suzerainty with Constantinople (Anna Komnene, *Alexias* 6.11.1-6.12.8). Simultaneously, however, the imperial court sought to draw the Seljuks of Nicaea and other Turkish rulers in Asia Minor into its orbit by lavishing gifts and titles on them. Invitations to the imperial city further deepened these relations and made Turkish guests susceptible to the luxuries and amenities of Byzantine court life (Turan [1971] 2004, 114-15). In this respect, the Constantinopolitan elite resumed practices it had successfully applied to emirs and tribal chiefs in the eastern borderland, especially the Mirdāsids of Aleppo. The intra-dynastic and Seljuk-Dānishmendid power struggles of the twelfth century enabled the Byzantines to extend this strategy to numerous refugees who sought sanctuary and support at the imperial court. The visits of Qilij Arslān II in 1161-62 and Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw in 1196 are especially well-documented, but there were many other Turkish lords who found shelter in Constantinople (Turan [1971] 2004, 227-8; Korobeinikov 2007).

Likewise, the institutional consolidation of Turkish principalities generates regular diplomatic exchanges between Constantinople and the respective courts in Anatolia. While Byzantine authors continue to depict these contacts in the language of abiding Byzantine superiority, it becomes apparent from their results that the Byzantines adapted to the new realities and treated their interlocutors in Asia Minor with a great amount of respect and, if need be, even intimacy. A case in point is the meeting between Emperor Alexios I and Sultan Shāhinshāh in the plain of Akroinon in 1116 on the occasion of peace negotiations. Anna Komnene (*Alexias* 15.6.5-6) fails to relate the clauses agreed upon, but she extensively describes the ceremonial setting in which Shāhinshāh manifested his readiness to accept Byzantine superiority in exchange for being presented as the emperor's intimate being allowed to sit on horseback and wearing a cape

from Alexios' attire. In the negotiations, the Byzantines may have voiced claims to their old territories, but the final outcome was a standstill agreement asserting the existing status quo.

Over the following decades, John II pursued a two-pronged strategy combining negotiations over individual strongholds he attempted to seize militarily with alliances he forged with the Dānishmendids against the Seljuks (Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1308a-b, 1332c). In this way, he apparently hoped to take advantage of internal divisions and, on the long run, to prepare the ground for a pincer movement against the sultanate of Konya. In a letter to Sultan Mas'ūd, Manuel I evokes his alliance with the Dānishmendid emir as a justification for his attack on Konya in 1146 (Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1343; Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 39]). Hence, these alliances had become an important means for advancing the goals of Byzantine power politics in Asia Minor. The failure of this campaign and the defeats the crusaders suffered in the following year forced Byzantium to readjust its strategy towards the Turks. During the final years of Sultan Mas'ūd and the early reign of Qilij Arslān II, the Seljuk sultanate significantly gained in prestige and power. The imperial government thus shifted from its support of the Dānishmendids towards backing the Seljuks of Konya, as the treaties Manuel concluded with both Mas'ūd and later Qilij Arslān II clearly illustrate (Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1393, 1441a). This move not only bolstered the personal relationship between the emperor and the sultan, who as a result of his visit was elevated to the position of the emperor's spiritual son (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 123]), but also secured Seljuk military support in crucial areas of Byzantine interest in Asia Minor. A similar strategy of establishing diplomatic contacts and amicable relations was applied to Nūr al-Dīn Zengī, who in 1154 annexed Damascus to his realm in northern Syria and Iraq and thus became the most powerful ruler in the Islamic heartlands (Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1432). This relationship was vital for Byzantium's interventionist policy in Cilicia and the crusader states.

In about 1173 the imperial court realised that its alliance policy had failed to rein in Qilij Arslān's ambitions and switched to an overtly aggressive stance towards Konya, but the defeat at Myriokephalon and the ensuing peace treaty marked the irreversible end of Byzantine expansionist attempts (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 123-5, 175-98]). Despite Emperor Manuel's verbose claims to the opposite (Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1524b), henceforth, Constantinople negotiated with the Seljuks on an equal footing and was often forced to make concessions. The Komnenian dynasty's downfall after 1180 and the Seljuk realm's new division among Qilij Arslān II's sons ushered in a new phase of disintegration in both spheres (Savvides 2003, 96-111; Turan [1971] 2004, 261-90; Korobeinikov 2007, 96-8). Byzantium's eastern provinces saw numerous rebellions head-

ed by local aristocrats or spurious claimants to the Komnenian legacy, such as Isaak Angelos and Theodore Kantakouzenos in Nicaea, Theodore Mankaphas in Philadelpheia, Michael Doukas in Mylassa, Pseudo-Alexios of Harmala, and another Pseudo-Alexios from Cilicia. They all sought military support from Seljuk scions or Turkmen chiefs in the borderland, be it for defensive purposes or for raids on Byzantine territory. Some rebels found temporary sanctuary at Turkish courts, and Theodore Angelos, upon being blinded and chased away on an ass's back, was rescued by nomads. The Seljuk rulers took advantage of the situation by raiding places in the Kaystros and Maeander valleys, seizing towns, extorting tributes, or extraditing rebels against huge sums of money (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 280-5, 286-9, 367-8, 399-401, 412-16, 420-3, 461-3, 474-5, 493-6, 520-2, 528-9]). However, the infighting among Qilij Arslân's sons seriously weakened the sultanate's internal cohesion and defensive abilities, as became manifest during the advance of the German crusading host and the conquest of Konya in 1190 (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 412-15]). This may explain why Byzantium did not suffer significant territorial losses during this period. At the diplomatic level, the imperial government's weakness manifested itself in an increasingly erratic behaviour. It still welcomed Seljuk refugees and asked for auxiliary forces, but the balanced strategy of previous decades gave way to ill-advised acts of aggression. The results were usually unfavourable for the Byzantine side. Attacks on Muḥyī al-Dīn of Ankara, for instance, ended with even higher demands of tribute (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 461, 475]; Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1637a). In retaliation for intercepting horses sent from Ayyūbid Egypt, Alexios III arrested merchants from Konya and confiscated their goods, which in turn caused new attacks. The same emperor abetted acts of piracy against Seljuk merchant ships in the Black Sea. In response, Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Suleymān-shāh demanded high compensations in exchange for the impending renewal of a peace treaty (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 493-4]). The court of Konya even discovered a Byzantine attempt on the sultan's life (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 528-9]). These occurrences appear like desperate attempts of the Byzantine ruling elite to reverse an unstoppable decay of power and influence in Asia Minor. If we believe Muslim reports about a Byzantine request for help sent to Konya in the days before the crusaders' final assault in 1204, Byzantium still believed in the possibility of an efficient Byzantine-Seljuk alliance (Dölger, Wirth 1995, 1668a).

5 Interaction

Much has been said about Byzantine and Seljuk elite members who upon surrendering or being captured became part of the other side's military or court hierarchy or defected because of internal political struggles (Brand 1989, 1-25; Necipoğlu 2006, 255-8). These incidents happened frequently enough to form a constant pattern of mutual interpenetration and resulted in various types of acculturation, ranging from simple interpersonal relationships and bestowals of ranks and titles to the adoption of ideological attitudes or full cultural and religious assimilation. Interestingly, the available reports betray a collective awareness of these people's otherness and their association with their original background. Depending upon circumstances, such cultural links could be harnessed as an efficient tool of communication, as happened in the case of envoys and mediators who took on the role of cultural brokers, but they could also cause friction, as is exemplified by the Byzantine commander Alexios Axouch and his alleged allegiance to the Seljuk sultan (Necipoğlu 2006, 256-7). In his recent monograph on the Byzantine Turk, Rustam Shukurov (2016, 157-254) has shown that the Turkish element formed a substantial portion of the late Byzantine social fabric with ramifications for its demographic, cultural, and linguistic character. A glance into earlier sources suffices to see that this development was well underway in twelfth-century Asia Minor. The often-cited case of the inhabitants of Beyşehir Lake, whom John II in 1142 had troubles to force into collaboration because "by long time and usage they were united in their views with the Turks" (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 22]; see also the parallel report in Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 37-8]) is but one of many telling incidents pointing to Byzantine-Turkish assimilation patterns dating back to the first half of the twelfth century.

This is not to say that these phenomena were the result of harmonious *convivencia* or a spirit of tolerance. To be sure, policy making in the Byzantine-Turkish contact zones was rampantly violent-driven. All parties involved were keen to use force and coercion in their efforts to achieve their goals, accumulate wealth, and resolve their rivalries. Looting, enslaving, killing, starving people out, or destroying crops and agricultural zones formed part of the harrowing day-to-day realities in Anatolia (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 12-13, 18-21, 33, 34-5, 37-8, 52-3, 116-18, 121-5, 150, 175-98]). Nevertheless, it is important to avoid any black-and-white painting, as both Christian and Muslim actors were ready to resort to violence if this served their interests.

At times, local church leaders voiced their preference for Muslim-Turkish rulers over the paternalism of the Church of Constantinople: "The Turks who have occupied most lands in which Christians live",

Michael the Syrian (*Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 222]; Author's translation from the French) says:

who have no notion of the sacred mysteries and therefore consider Christianity an error, do not have the habit to inform themselves about confessions of faith nor do they persecute someone for his faith, as the dishonest and heretical Greeks do.

The same author (*Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 248-9]) talks about a raid which Turks from Malatya in October 1141 mounted against monasteries in the region. In the following spring, Franks from the adjacent crusader principalities came to take vengeance, yet they could not find any Turks and thus looted the estates of the Christians. Before long, the Turks came back and looted them again. "Thus, the Christians were pillaged by both sides". Unsurprisingly, Byzantine troops exhibited a very similar conduct, as is amply documented by the sources. For instance, John II conquered the town of Kastamonu peacefully upon the garrison's capitulation, yet he destroyed two fortresses in the vicinity which put up more adamant resistance. The Dānīshmendīd emir Gümüştekīn Ghāzī set the Byzantine fortress of Albara on fire and enslaved the population. Before long, he took Kastamonu back, killing the Greek population (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 233-4). Referring to the dismal situation of Asia Minor in 1200, Niketas Choniates (*Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 529]) briefly relates the misdeeds of Michael Doukas, a tax collector in the theme of Mylassa, who upon taking refuge with Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Sulaymān-shāh relentlessly ravaged the towns in the Maeander Valley with the support of Seljuk troops:

If there is a major cause for the fact that the state of the Romans fell to its knees, suffered the subjugation of provinces and cities, and eventually vanished, it is the members of the Komnenian family who rose up and vied for the imperial office. Those who stayed with foreigners who had no friendly feelings for the Romans were the ruin of their homeland. (Author's transl.)

In the light of the catastrophe of 1204, Choniates puts the blame for the devastations in Asia Minor on members of the ruling elite and their willingness to collude with the Turks for selfish reasons. He was too much steeped in traditional concepts of benevolent imperial rule to understand the regional dynamics in the eastern provinces, but his diagnosis that Byzantine rule was primarily eroded from within is certainly remarkable.

Conquests of towns and fortresses did not only result in killing and ransacking but were also opportunities to regain control over population groups or to absorb groups of newcomers. For instance, John

II while attacking Neokaisareia/Niksar in 1139 “restored to the Romans’ land a crowd of men who had been enslaved to the Turks for a long time”, and in 1146 Manuel I transferred people held captive in Philomelion to Bithynia, where he settled them on estates taken from a local monastery and built a fortress called Pylai (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 21, 63]). An intriguing case is the surrender of Gangra/Çankırı, where Turkish troops despite being given the choice to leave unharmed preferred to enter the emperor’s service “and formed no ignoble supplement to the Romans’ power” (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 15]). There is no way of knowing the background of this decision, but Turkish contingents were apparently considered a welcome and reputable reinforcement of the imperial army’s fighting force.

A new pattern emerged during the post-1180 disintegration period. In 1196 the inhabitants of the Paphlagonian city of Dadibra (Belke 1996, 186-7) surrendered to the Turks and were forced to leave. Yet they preferred to stay in makeshift huts in the city’s vicinity under Seljuk rule (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 475]) over heading to an uncertain fate on Byzantine territory. In the same period, the Seljuk sultan gave peasants from the Upper Maeander region and the Phrygian city of Lampê (Belke, Mersich 1990, 321-2) strong incentives to stay in new settlements near Turkish-held Philomelion. They were all registered, their property was restored to them, enslaved family members were released, and they were granted land including a five-year period of tax exemption (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 494-5]). Apparently, these measures aimed at increasing the population and economic productivity in this frontier region while strengthening the sultanate’s centralising control.

Apart from the likes of John Axouch, who stood at the highest echelons of the Komnenian elite (Niketas Choniates, *Historia* [ed. van Dieten 1975, 9-10]), there was a substantial number of subaltern officers of Turkish descent, such as Isach, “a man of barbarian descent who was a particular favorite of the emperor”, or Poupakes, “a Turk by birth” (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 48, 129]). These examples show that the troops in Asia Minor were ethnically mixed and the distinction between Byzantines and Turks was frequently blurred. Instances of high-ranking captives occasionally prompted witnesses to make comparisons between the two elites. For example, a certain Pharkousas, “an outstanding man among the Turks, who with his own hands offered the cup to the sultan” was equated with the Byzantine office of *pinkernes* (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 56]). However, Seljuk dignitaries of Byzantine pedigree could be especially exposed to the soldiers’ urge for revenge. A member of the Gabras family, “who was related to the Romans by birth, but as he had been nurtured and reared among the Turks, held a satrapy

among them", was slain in battle, and the soldiers paraded his head in triumph (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 56]). While such outbursts did occur, there was also an unwritten code of honour between the two sides. When during the siege of Konya in 1146 Byzantine soldiers despoiled Turkish tombs outside the city, the emperor gave order to preserve the tomb of the sultan's mother undisturbed, for "wise men must rather be ashamed at distressed nobility" (Kinnamos, *Epitome* [ed. Meineke 1836, 45-6]). Even in times of war, abusing an enemy's corpse was considered an abomination.

Everyday living conditions are less documented, but incidental references show that Turkish authorities provided a framework of legal protection. A telling incident reported by Michael the Syrian (*Chronicle* 235) is that of a "Persian" in Melitene, who in 1132-33 had the audacity to snatch a cross from a Christian's hands and to place it irreverently on his belly. When the local notables presented the case to the prefect, he arrested the perpetrator and handed him over to the Christians. They punished him in a show of public humiliation, being paraded through the town on an ass's back and with his face painted black. Thereafter, Emir Gümüştekīn Ghāzī ordered the Persian to be flogged and his estates to be confiscated. The episode illustrates not only the Muslim authorities' respect for Christian worship but also the cooperation between different levels of legal authority with the Christian representatives imposing a ritual punishment and the Muslim emir much severer corporal and monetary punishments.

Both Christians and Turkish conquerors knew that agreements based on guarantees of safety and privileges were mutually beneficial and laid the ground for a harmonious coexistence. Basil, the Syrian bishop of Edessa, purportedly told 'Imād al-Dīn Zengī after the city's conquest in 1144 that his achievement was good for both sides, as he had won a splendid victory whereas the Christians had gained his esteem. Just as they had never breached their oaths towards the Franks, they would likewise abide by their sworn obedience towards him. Zengī reportedly marvelled the bishops' bravery and appreciated his ability to speak Arabic and thus ordered him to wear his official attire and consult with him about the city's restoration. Survivors were allowed to return, and the Turks spared the lives of Greeks and Armenians, killing only the Franks. During his stay, Zengī harangued the Syrians, assuring them of his mercy and benevolence (Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* 262).

As Turkish rule gained more stability, Christian observers made more accurate assessments of individual rulers' character and behaviour. These vignettes reflected the transformation of Turkish chiefs from conquerors to statesmen. A case in point is Michael the Syrian's (*Chronicle* [transl. Chabot 1905, 237]) characterisation of the Dānishmendid rulers Gümüştekīn Ghāzī and his son Malik Muḥammad. Michael depicts the former as bloodthirsty, murderous,

and licentious, but also as brave, forceful, and astute. By killing “the Turkish rebels” in “the land of the Romans” (*bayt Rhōmāyē*), an expression apparently referring to his Seljuk opponents, he established profound peace in his lands. His son Muḥammad observed Islamic law, abstained from drinking wine, treated Muslims honourably, made judgments according to justice, and was prudent and vigilant. He is praised for restoring the city of Kayseri, which had been in ruins for a long time. His building programme is depicted as an ambitious attempt to turn a worn-down place into a sumptuous residence adorned with buildings built of marble stone gathered from ancient sites in the area. However, Michael did not consider him a friend of the Christians, for he destroyed churches and upon entering Melitene in October 1135 he refused to lift any of the tributes imposed by his fathers and took hostages from among the people of Melitene. Overall, both rulers had their flaws, but each of them was praised for improving the living conditions of their subjects and restoring peace and justice. Specific attitudes towards the Christians were secondary to the overall picture.

To sum up, the transformation of Asia Minor in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was only from the viewpoint of Constantinople and with respect to the impact on Byzantine power elites a struggle between two hostile spheres. Constantinople’s institutional, cultural, and ideological predominance was certainly much diminished with the loss of its material and economic resources, but there was no pre-modern form of ethnic cleansing substituting Turks and Islam for indigenous populations and Christianity. This is not to say that there was no violence, but it needs to be stressed that all parties involved made equal use of it and the local population endured raids and atrocities from all sides irrespective of their ethnic or religious identity. To better understand this process, it seems expedient to distinguish between imperial centres and local forces operating in Asia Minor. Many phenomena can be aptly epitomised as regionalisation of political processes in which imperial powers retreated towards the fringes of the Anatolian Peninsula while regional forces centred around Turkish-Muslim leaders and military groups, through arrangements with local populations and alliances with their competitors, gradually crystallised into dynasties and lordships and ultimately formed a loosely knit supra-regional sultanate based in Konya, which combined Seljuk and Perso-Islamic traditions, Byzantine substrates, and numerous elements related to Anatolia/*bilād al-Rūm* with its manifold historical, cultural, and ethnic layers.

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