

The Battle of Manzikert: Military Disaster or Political Failure?

By Paul Markham

On the 26th of August 1071, an army under the command of the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes (1068-1071AD) was defeated on the borders of Armenia by the army of the Seljuk Turkish Sultan, Alp Arslan (1063-1072AD). Since that time, historians have identified the Battle of Manzikert as the mortal blow that led to the inevitable collapse of the Byzantine Empire. How accurate is this interpretation? Was the loss of Anatolia the result of Romanus IV Diogenes' failed military campaign against the Seljuk's or was it a political failure of his predecessors or successors? This paper examines Romanus' Manzikert campaign and the significance of his defeat, and assesses whether the Byzantine position in Anatolia was recoverable, and if so, why that recovery failed?

Before Manzikert

The Byzantine Empire in the eleventh century

The mid-eleventh century was the high water mark of the Byzantine Empire. The successive reigns of the military emperors of the Macedonian dynasty had pushed the boundaries of the Empire to their furthest geographical extent since Justinian the Great had reconquered Italy and North Africa in the sixth century. The Empire now stretched from Dalmatia in the west, incorporating the whole of the Balkans, to Antioch in Syria in the south, and all of Anatolia to Armenia in the east.

The Byzantine recovery had been a long time coming. The seventh century had seen the drastic dismemberment of the Empire. In the west, the Balkans and most of Greece had been lost to the Slavs; the Byzantines maintaining a toehold only in eastern Thrace, Thessalonica and scattered outposts on the Dalmatian coast. In the east, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Africa had been permanently lost to the Arabs. The loss of these valuable provinces triggered the rampant inflation that caused the virtual collapse of the monetary economy during the reign of Constans II (630- 662AD).[\[1\]](#) This crisis led to two permanent changes within the Empire; the old

Roman provinces were restructured into smaller administrative units called *thema*, under the administration of a military governor (*strategos*), and the assignment land grants to the soldiery in place of paying wages.[\[2\]](#)

The Empire also faced an energetic and expansionist challenger in the Umayyad Caliphate. Larger and far more prosperous than the rump Byzantine Empire, the Umayyad Caliphate had sufficient resources to envisage the complete conquest of the Empire.[\[3\]](#) The Umayyad's made two serious attempts to conquer the Empire, laying siege to Constantinople in 674-8AD and again in 717AD. Fortunately for Byzantium, the Umayyad Caliphate was overthrown in 750AD by the Abbasids, who gave up such ambitious plans, opting instead for regular military campaigns that sometimes penetrated right into the heart of Byzantine Anatolia.[\[4\]](#) These raids culminated in Caliph Mu'tasim's (833-842AD) destruction of Amorium in central western Anatolia in 838AD.[\[5\]](#)

By the end of the eighth century however, Byzantium's situation began to improve. With inflation checked and the currency stabilized the Byzantine economy slowly began recover, and after the empress Irene (780- 802AD) secured a longstanding peace with the Abbasid Caliphate in 782AD, trade between the two empires resumed, much to Byzantium's advantage.[\[6\]](#) Peace in the east allowed Irene to turn her attention to the west. There, the Slavic tribes of the interior had become increasingly integrated with the Byzantine enclaves along the coast and a short military campaign in 784AD was sufficient to recover the land route between Constantinople and Thessalonica, which until that time had been accessible only by sea.

By the reign of Michael III (842-867AD) the balance of power between the Byzantines and the Abbasid Caliphate had shifted significantly. The Abbasid economy was in decline and the government paralysed by religious and political factionalism. The Byzantines exploited Abbasid disunity to take the offensive and over the course of two centuries recovered their lost provinces of Illyricum, Greece, Bulgaria,[\[7\]](#) Northern Syria, Cilicia, and Armenia. Byzantine expansionism reached its peak with Constantine IX Monomachus' annexation of the Armenian city of Ani in 1045AD. Yet, at the same time as Constantine was celebrating Ani's annexation, a new player in international affairs arrived on the scene - the Seljuk Turks.

The Seljuk Turks

For centuries, the Caliphate had been a bulwark against the southwesterly migration of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia. Progressive waves of nomads were diverted northwards across the Russian steppes and around the Caspian and Black Seas, before emerging in the Danube basin. Nomadic migrations were monitored and reported by the Byzantine outpost in Cherson in the Crimea, which usually gave Constantinople sufficient notice to bring its powers of diplomacy to bear. As Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio* makes clear, there was no shortage of tribes around the Black Sea who could be encouraged or bribed to deny passage to the nomads.^[8] However, with the Caliphate in disarray there was no effective force to stop the migration of Central Asian nomads. In 1040AD, the first Seljuk horsemen penetrated the Caliphate's eastern border and, without encountering any effective Abbasid opposition, began plundering their way across Iran and Iraq. They soon crossed into Armenia and drove deep into Anatolia, reaching the Byzantine port city of Trebizond on the Black Sea coast in 1054AD. The following year the Abbasids bowed to the inevitable and conceded political and military authority to Tughrul, Beg of the Great Seljuks. Tughrul (1056-1067AD) was granted the title of Sultan and took Baghdad as his capital.^[9] Suddenly the Seljuks were elevated from nomadic raiders to masters of a vast and sophisticated empire.

The Byzantine Response

The annexation of Armenia was a strategic disaster for the Byzantines. In 1022AD, the emperor Basil II had forced the Armenian king, John Smbat III, to cede Ani to Basil if he died without direct heirs. When he died in 1040AD there were still plenty of claimants to the throne and Armenia quickly degenerated into chaos. John Smbat's nephew, Gagik II seized the city in 1040AD and held it against all challengers. The Armenian historian, Vardapet Aristakes Lastivertc'i relates with copious tears, "In these days Byzantine armies entered the land of Armenia four times in succession until they had rendered the whole country uninhabited through sword, fire, and captive taking."^[10] In an attempt to destabilise the Armenians, Constantine IX secretly encouraged the Seljuks to attack Ani in 1044AD. Gagik eventually agreed to abdicate and was rewarded with titles, honours and lands in Cappadocia. Unfortunately he would not have long to enjoy them. Although fractious, the Armenian princes provided a secure buffer

zone on the Byzantine's eastern border. Now the Byzantines came into direct contact with the Seljuks, whose fighting style of mobile horse archery they were unfamiliar with. Nor could the Byzantines rely on the Armenians for support. One of Constantine's first acts after the fall of Ani was to instigate a purge of the Monophysite clergy of Armenian Church. Fleeing war and persecution, a mass exodus began, including the Armenian troops the Byzantines relied on to garrison the border fortresses. Many now sought their fortune elsewhere, "some in Persia, some in Greece, some in Georgia."[\[11\]](#) Some Armenian troops joined the Seljuk bands that now began raiding across the Armenian border.

Constantine IX made no attempt to stop the Seljuk raids before he died in 1055AD. Constantine's successor, Michael VI Bringas (1056-1057AD), although portrayed as weak and elderly, attempted to rally the defence. Michael was clearly unhappy with the chaos ensuing on the Armenian frontier and during the Easter Holy Week celebrations when the empire's leading generals and public servants attended an audience with the Emperor, he berated them, saying "Either go forth in war against the Persians and prevent the land from being ruined, or else I shall pay the Persians your stipends and thus keep the land in peace."[\[12\]](#) The two leading generals of the east, Catacalon Kecaumenus and Isaac Comnenus were singled out for particular criticism. Michael's stinging rebuke did little to resolve the crisis on the Armenian front as within a month the army of the east had risen in rebellion and proclaimed Isaac Comnenus emperor.

The rebellion of the army of the east against Michael VI is often portrayed as a conflict between the military and civil factions within the Byzantine government. In fact it reveals a deeper, east versus west division within the Empire. The army of the west remained loyal to Michael and fought hard in his defence outside Nicea on 20 August 1057AD.[\[13\]](#) Contemporary historians claim the slaughter was considerable and although Michael's army was forced to withdraw, Isaac could not claim victory with certainty. Michael however, was overthrown in a palace coup and abdicated in favour of Isaac Comnenus. [\[14\]](#) Although Michael's reign is portrayed as little more than a by-line in Byzantine history, understanding why the western armies remained loyal to him is important to explaining what happened after Manzikert.

Irene's reconquest of Hellas and Thrace in 784AD had been a simple affair largely because the bubonic plague and the Slavic invasion of the seventh century had left the provinces largely depopulated.^[15] Nicephorus I (802-808AD), attempted to solidify the Byzantine hold on these territories by offering subsidies and tax incentives to encourage their resettlement.^[16] The military aristocracy's financial interests were centred on Anatolia and showed little interest in *Rumelia*.^[17] The newly ascendant civil bureaucracy, however, were largely excluded from investing in Anatolia, and began buying up estates in the west, effectively splitting the Empire into an 'old money', Anatolian party and a 'new money', western bureaucratic party. As a career civil servant it is likely that Michael Bringas was amongst the many courtly investors who established estates in the west, which may explain both the reason the courtier faction selected Michael as their candidate, and for the support he seems to have enjoyed in the west.

The unravelling of the Byzantine's eastern policy

The Byzantine civil war was a disaster. "[As] soon as the [Seljuks] realized that [the Byzantine nobles] were fighting and opposing one another, they boldly arose and came against us, ceaselessly raiding, destructively ravaging."^[18] Although an energetic general, Isaac Comnenus proved equally unable to stop the Seljuk raiders who, in 1075AD, destroyed city of Melitene on the Mesopotamian frontier. Isaac realised that a complete overhaul of both the army and the administration was required, but he had few allies in Constantinople and his attempts at reform came to nothing.^[19] When Isaac died in 1059AD, the courtier faction secured the election of their candidate, Constantine X Ducas. Although a member of the Anatolian military aristocracy, Constantine dedicated his reign to internal legal reform while neglecting the defence of the Empire. As the Byzantine economy began to flounder, Constantine cut costs by cashiering thousands of native troops, which only accelerated the Byzantine collapse in the east. In 1064AD the Seljuk's captured and sacked Ani.

Byzantine Defensive Strategy

Ani was critical to the Byzantine's eastern defence strategy. Byzantine defensive strategy was based on the possession of key fortified positions, which, in the event of invasion were expected to hold out until relieved, or the enemy withdrew. It was a strategy of calculated risk; sometimes

with disastrous results. After the Arab victory at the Battle of Yarmuk in 636AD, the emperor Heraclius ordered what remained of the Byzantine forces in Syria to withdraw to fortified positions and hold until relieved. The promised relief never eventuated however, and the isolated garrisons were progressively forced to surrender. The Byzantines defence of Syria and Egypt had been hamstrung by overextended lines of supply and communication and a lack of defensible fallback positions. Within the Anatolian plateau however, the situation was quite different as the Byzantines had a network of carefully prepared defensive positions, and because the cold, windswept steppes of the plateau were largely unsuitable for settled agriculture it was very difficult for an invading army, which relied on plunder for its supply, to sustain itself in the field.[\[20\]](#) Nevertheless, while static defence may have been effective against the Abbasid field armies of the eighth century, it was ineffectual against mobile Turkish raiders who, finding Anatolia's steppe almost indistinguishable from their Central Asian homeland, were able to rove at will and live off the meagre resources of the land.[\[21\]](#)

Romanus IV and the legacy of Basil II

Constantine X died in 1067AD leaving the administration in the hands of his wife Eudocia as regent for their son, Michael Ducas. Eudocia Makrembolitissa was a strong and intelligent woman and in stark contrast to her husband, she recognised the loss of Ani a massive gap had opened up in the chain of fortifications running from Kars to Edessa[\[22\]](#) through which Seljuk raiders could penetrate right into the heart of Anatolia. Decisive military action was required. Eudocia's ability to direct government policy however, was severely restricted by the influence of the powerful Ducas clan, dominated by Constantine's brother, John Ducas. Discreetly, Eudocia cast about for an ally to counterbalance the Ducas and eventually settled on Romanus Diogenes. Romanus was in his mid thirties, a member of a Cappadocian military family, and currently under sentence of death for his part in a rebellion against Constantine X. His lack of connections in Constantinople was probably a factor in Eudocia's choice, for it ensured that Romanus had no independent constituency to threaten Eudocia's interests.[\[23\]](#) Romanus for his part swore to be her servant in all things and uphold the rights of the legitimate heir, Michael Ducas. To the horror of the Ducas faction, Eudocia and Romanus were married and Romanus immediately set about revitalizing an army largely neglected since the death of Basil II in 1025AD.[\[24\]](#)

Romanus' immediate predecessors cannot be held entirely to blame for the mediocre state of the Byzantine army in the mid-eleventh century; the policies of the military emperors of the tenth century were also a contributing factor in Byzantium's military decline. Historically, Byzantium had relied on defence in depth, rather than stationing large garrisons of troops along Byzantium's borders. Three professional armies, called *tagmata*, were stationed in western Anatolia, Constantinople and Thrace where they could be quickly mobilised in response to an invasion.^[25] Every city in the Empire also had a garrison of local troops for defence and policing actions. These *thematic* troops were not full time soldiers, but were farmer-soldiers who received a grant of land in return for periodic service.

In order to meet the needs of Byzantium's aggressive foreign policy, Nicephorus II, John Tzimisce and Basil II changed the *tagmata* from a rapid response, primarily defensive, citizen army into a professional, campaigning army, increasingly manned by mercenaries. Mercenaries however, were expensive and as the threat of invasion receded in the tenth century, so did the need for maintaining large garrisons and expensive fortifications. In order save money to finance his Syrian campaigns, Nicephorus II Phocas (963-969AD) cashiered many thousands of garrison troops and allowed the fortifications of many Anatolian cities to fall into disrepair.^[26] All Nicephorus' successors, up to Constantine X continued this policy.

Basil II's spent most of his 50-year reign on campaign and conquered a massive amount of territory, and although he left a burgeoning treasury upon his death, he did so at the expense of neglecting domestic affairs and ignoring the cost of incorporating his conquests into the Byzantine *eokoimene*.^[27] He also failed to plan for his succession and left the Empire to his worthless brother and co-emperor, Constantine VIII. None of Basil's immediate successors had any particular military or political talent and the governing of the Empire increasingly fell into the hands of the civil service. Their efforts to spend the Byzantine economy back into prosperity only resulted in burgeoning inflation and a debased gold coinage.^[28] In an effort to balance the increasingly unstable budget, Basil's large standing army was seen as both an unnecessary expense and a political threat, as under employed troops became the focus of sedition. Native troops were cashiered and replaced by foreign mercenaries on specific contract.

The Manzikert Campaign

Romanus did not immediately confront the Turks in Armenia, choosing instead to personally lead the army on a campaign in Syria in 1068AD. The next year he led a campaign into Armenia, but the Turkish forces were simply too illusive to be drawn into a pitched battle. The historian and courtier, Michael Psellus, whose plotting on behalf of the Ducas clan led to his being forced to join the campaign, unfairly slanders Romanus by accusing him of “not knowing where he was marching nor what he was going to do.” Nevertheless this campaign provided a valuable opportunity to improve the operational efficiency of the army. [\[29\]](#)

Romanus’ failure to crush the Turks led to open plotting by the Ducas faction and by 1070AD Romanus’ position in Constantinople was so precarious that he was unable to leave the capital. Romanus entrusted that year’s campaign to Manuel Comnenus, elder brother of the future emperor, Alexius Comnenus. Unfortunately, the campaign ended in a debacle when Manuel was defeated and captured by a band of Turks. Surprisingly, Manuel convinced his captors to release him and defect to the Byzantines. Romanus rewarded the Turks with honours and titles and enlisted into his army. [\[30\]](#) Manuel’s coup allowed Romanus to regain some political capital, but it wasn’t enough. Romanus needed a decisive victory not only to protect Armenia but also his throne.

In the summer of 1071AD, Romanus decided to gamble everything on a massive eastern campaign that would draw the Seljuk’s into a general engagement with the Byzantine army. All contemporary historians commented on the size of the army; Matthew of Edessa absurdly claims the Byzantine army exceeded one million men,[\[31\]](#) while Vadarpet describes a “countless host.” The army itself consisted of the eastern and western tagmatas, mercenary units, Armenian conscripts and the private levies of the Anatolian landholders, along with the siege engines, sappers, engineers and Romanus would need to recover the Armenian fortresses recently lost to the Turks. All told, the army probably amounted to about forty thousand effective fighting men; however, with the presence of the thousands of non-combatants, servants, baggage handlers and camp followers that always travelled with medieval armies the army would undoubtedly have appeared larger.[\[32\]](#)

Despite the failure of Manuel Comnenus' 1069AD campaign, the Sultan of the Great Seljuks Alp Arslan had been quick to seek a peace treaty with the Byzantines. Alp Arslan had inherited the Abbasid's wary respect for Byzantium's military power and at any rate regarded the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt as his main enemy; he had no desire to engage the Byzantines in unnecessary hostilities. Under the terms of the treaty, Alp Arslan had committed to preventing Seljuk raiding on Byzantine territory. Unfortunately, despite his grand title, Alp Arslan was in no position to control the Seljuk raiders. Most of the Seljuk clans still lived according to their Central Asian nomadic traditions and tended to acknowledge the Sultan's authority only when they were forced to, or it suited their interests. Their raiding and constant feuding made them as much a nuisance to the Great Seljuks as to their neighbours, so to preserve order the most unruly Turcoman clans were pushed to the borders of the Sultanate where they could be encouraged to raid and plunder infidel territory.[\[33\]](#) Consequently Seljuk raiding into Anatolia continued unabated.

In February 1071AD, Romanus sent an embassy to Alp Arslan to renew the treaty of 1069AD. Romanus' envoys reached the Sultan outside Edessa, which he was besieging.[\[34\]](#) Keen to secure his northern flank against Byzantine attack, Alp Arslan happily agreed to the terms, abandoned the siege and immediately led his army south to attack Aleppo in Fatimid Syria. The offer to renew the peace treaty was a key element of Romanus plan, distracting the Sultan long enough to allow Romanus to lead an army into Armenia and recover the lost fortresses before the Seljuks had time to respond. Then, with his eastern border secure and his rear protected, Romanus would be in a perfect position to either attack the Seljuk army if it attempted enter Anatolia through the Taurus Mountains to intercept him, or strike deep into the heartland of the Sultanate down the Euphrates river valley, as the emperor Heraclius had done in the seventh century.[\[35\]](#) Either way, Romanus would hold the tactical advantage while Alp Arslan would be out of position and vulnerable. By our standards, Romanus' offer to renew the treaty while at the same time preparing for a war was deceptive, but the use of deception in warfare was a skill the Byzantines prized very highly. Byzantine tactical manuals regularly recommended using ploys, deception and negotiation and to either avoid battle or gain advantage.[\[36\]](#) Romanus' envoys would undoubtedly have been charged to assess the strength of the Sultan's army, the mood of the camp and the Sultan's enthusiasm for war.

Satisfied that his ploy was successful, Romanus mustered his army outside Constantinople in March 1071. Romanus' army included contingents of Normans, Cumans, Turks, Bulgarians, Germans, Pechenegs, Byzantines, Armenians, Syrians, Varangians, Uz, and Russians. There was nothing unusual in the heterogenous composition of the army. The Byzantine army was a prestige service and drew professional soldiers from all around the medieval world.[\[37\]](#) As the army marched east it continued to gather recruits, bands of Turks who were happy enough to contract their services to the Byzantines. Unfortunately, it was not with the soldiery that the problems within Romanus' army lay. The loyalty of many of Romanus' officers was highly questionable, especially as there were members of the Ducas clan and their allies occupying key positions within the army.[\[38\]](#) There appear to have been incidences of sabotage during the march, such as the destruction of his personal baggage train, which led Romanus to camp separately from the main army. By the time the army reached Armenia, tensions were running high.

The Battle of Manzikert

When the Byzantine army reached Theodosiopolis in July, Romanus received reports that the news of his campaign had led the Sultan to abandon the siege of Aleppo and was withdrawing in some disorder towards the Euphrates. It appeared many of the Sultan's troops had deserted and he was now commanding a much-reduced army of between ten and fifteen thousand men. Romanus rejected the advice of some of his generals to await the Seljuks at Theodosiopolis and ordered the army to advance on Manzikert in Seljuk held territory. Romanus expected the Seljuks would advance from the south, so when he reached Lake Van in late August, Romanus split his army, sending the tagmata under general Joseph Tarchaneiotes to secure the southern road to Khilat and protect against a Seljuk attack, while he headed east to besiege Manzikert.[\[39\]](#) At the sight of the Byzantine army, Manzikert's Turkish garrison immediately surrendered and the Romanus settled down to await news from Tarchaneiotes.

Romanus' intelligence about Arslan's flight from Aleppo had been correct. The Sultan had learned of Romanus' campaign from Romanus' own envoys and the news had its desired effect.[\[40\]](#) The Sultan immediately recognised the danger, raised the siege and hurried towards Armenia. Because Aleppo was a wealthy city offering attractive opportunities for plunder the

Sultan had been able to raise a large army, but a campaign against the Byzantine army in Armenia offered no such incentive, and as he advanced towards Armenia his army began to melt away. By the time he reached the Euphrates River he was left with only about ten thousand men. By forced marches, Arslan reached Armenia in late August. He had managed to recruit additional troops on the way but his army was probably only half the size of Romanus'. The Seljuks did have one advantage over the Byzantines though – they had good intelligence. Roving Seljuk horsemen fed the Sultan a constant stream of reports of the Byzantine army's progress. Unlike Romanus, Arslan knew exactly where his enemy was and he planned his response accordingly.

While Romanus was busy besieging Manzikert, Tarchaneiotes' army encountered a strong Seljuk force advancing from the south. Without advising Romanus, Tarchaneiotes chose not to engage and withdrew his forces to the west. His troops took no part in the subsequent battle and returned to Constantinople. Unaware of the desertion of half his army, Romanus encountered the main Seljuk army on 24 August 1071 and immediately joined battle. The battle was to last two days. The first day involved a hard fought battle between Seljuk forces and a column of the western tagmata under Nicephorus Bryennius. Bryennius managed to extricate his forces and withdraw in order, but a relief column under the *Doux* of Theodosiopolis, Nicephorus Basilakes was ambushed and Basilakes was captured. Determined to draw the Seljuk's into a general engagement, Romanus drew up all his forces for battle on the second day. Romanus followed textbook strategic planning; he commanded the centre with the Varangian guard and a large body of mercenaries. Bryennius commanded the left wing; Theodore Alyates commanded the right wing. Turkish and Uz auxiliaries provided a light cavalry screened on each wing. A reserve force under Andronicus Ducas followed a discrete distance behind the main column.

The Seljuk army formed a broad crescent in front of the Byzantine position. Alp Arslan commanded from a nearby hilltop where he could survey the field of battle.

Romanus initiated the battle by beginning a slow advance. The Seljuks poured arrows into the Byzantine ranks and retired as they advanced. Skirmishing occurred between the wings of both armies but neither side gained any advantage. Towards dusk, Romanus called a halt to the advance and began an orderly withdrawal back to the camp. As the Byzantines began to reverse

direction the Seljuks launched a fierce attack against the wings. The Byzantine right wing, which had been particularly hard pressed during the advance, broke in confusion. At this point the reserve force, under Andronicus Ducas, should have come to the aid of the emperor but instead turned and withdrew from the field, sparking a general rout. The left wing under Nicephorus Bryennius fought its way clear, but the centre, including Romanus was overwhelmed and captured.

Byzantine troop losses

Later historians, such as Alfred Friendly, Edward Foord, and John Norwich have left us with the impression that the Byzantine army was annihilated at Manzikert. [\[41\]](#) Although it was a momentous battle, contemporary Byzantine and Armenian narratives indicate that *most of the army was either not present, deserted, or withdrew before the final collapse*. It is notoriously difficult to assess casualties from medieval sources, who tend to use exaggerated death tolls as a moral device; nevertheless, we are able to make a general assessment of Byzantine losses at Manzikert based on historical troop sizes and what we know of the fate of the various participants.

1. Tarchaneiotes' army of approximately 20,000 troops, including the most of the tagmata did not engage the Turks at all and had withdrawn towards Constantinople before the battle;
2. Roussel de Bailliou's 500 strong Norman contingent, which were scouting the road to Khilat, escaped virtually intact ahead of the main battle;
3. A contingent of approximately one thousand Turkish Uz mercenaries defected on 25 August 1071, before the final battle;
4. Andronicus Ducas' reserve force of approximately 5,000, including most of the Anatolian levies, deserted the battle ahead of the collapse;
5. The 5,000 troops of the left wing under Nicephorus Bryennius' managed to fight their way clear of the battle *after* the collapse. It would be reasonable to assume approximately one thousand casualties, including losses from the first day's battle.[\[42\]](#)

6. Romanus Diogenes' and the Varangian Guard were defeated and captured. We must assume that most of the Varangians were killed as Alp Arslan provided Romanus with a new escort of troops (although such a gesture was customary). Even so, no more than 500 Varangians can have been present at Manzikert as there was still a Varangian contingent at Constantinople to acclaim Michael VIII Ducas.
7. A contingent of 2 – 3,000 Turkish mercenaries in the centre remained loyal to Romanus and was virtually annihilated.
8. The right wing, which mainly consisted of Armenian troops, was hard-pressed throughout the battle and was the first to break so we must assume they bore most of the losses. We also know a contingent of Armenian troops on the wing deserted during the battle. After casualties and desertions probably only a thousand troops escaped to Manzikert.
9. Romanus had left the camp, the baggage and the non-combatants with only a token guard. We know from Michael Attaleiates, who was a secretary on Romanus' staff, that survivors from both the right wing and the reserve warned the camp of Romanus' defeat, which was immediately abandoned to the enemy. Because the battle was fought in the late afternoon it was dusk by the time the Turks reached the camp, allowing the survivors to escape under the cover of darkness to the safety of nearby Manzikert.

The Byzantines probably suffered no more than about 8,000 casualties at Manzikert. If we factor in the permanent desertion of the Armenian and Uz auxiliaries, approximately 30,000 troops survived the battle. Based on the assumption that the Byzantine army had a total military strength of some 100,000 men in 1071AD and that approximately 50,000 garrison and thematic troops remained at their stations around the Empire,[\[43\]](#) then Manzikert cost the Byzantines about 20% of their total military strength. This was not a significant loss and would quickly be made up by the recruitment of native soldiers from the military estates, while service with the Byzantine army would continue to draw professional recruits from around the medieval world. The defeat at Manzikert however, cut off the Byzantines from their supply of Armenian manpower, a critical source of recruitment for the army.[\[44\]](#) Initially it would be the Turks themselves how would make up this loss, but this had its own complications.

After Manzikert

Although Manzikert was a serious blow to Byzantine prestige, Romanus' position was in no way irrecoverable. Alp Arslan treated Romanus with the respect due to his position and imposed no harsh terms on the Byzantines. Although he had long campaigned on the Byzantine periphery, he had no intention of embarking on a full-scale invasion of the Empire. He also recognised that his victory at Manzikert had been a narrow run thing; if Andronicus Ducas' reserve force had not deserted the battle would very likely have had a different result. In a fictional speech written by a later Arab historian, Romanus underlines the threat Alp Arslan faced, "Tell the sultan to return me to the capital of my kingdom before the Rum agree on another emperor and he openly declares battle and war..."^[45] If Arslan was to fulfil his ambition of conquering Fatimid Egypt he could not afford the risk of a war with Byzantium, so it served his interests to have a grateful and subdued Romanus restored to the throne and his Byzantine border secure. Romanus and Arslan negotiated a new peace treaty in which both sides agreed to a return to the status quo ante; in exchange for a ransom of one million solidii and marriage alliance between Arslan's son and Romanus' daughter, Armenia would be restored to the Byzantines and, after the exchange of several disputed border fortresses, Arslan would endeavour to prevent further Seljuk incursions into Byzantine territory.

Romanus remained at Arslan's camp for a week and was entertained as an honoured guest. The Sultan released his prisoners and provided Romanus with gifts suitable to his rank, supplies, and an armed escort. News of his defeat would undoubtedly have reached the capital so it was imperative Romanus take steps to calm the situation. He hurriedly sent a report of his engagement to the Senate and, gathering what troops he encountered on the way, rushed back to Constantinople.

In Constantinople however, the Ducas faction used news of Romanus' defeat to stage a coup in favour of Michael Ducas. Although Michael was now 20 years old he showed no capacity for governing and left affairs of state in the hands of his mother, who continued to act as regent on his behalf. The Empress Eudocia, however, remained aligned with Romanus. While the court debated what action to take, John Ducas rushed to Constantinople from exile in Bithynia and ordered the immediate arrest of the Empress. Romanus was declared deposed and Michael VII

Ducas (1071- 1078AD) proclaimed sole emperor. John reinforced his own position by claiming the title Caesar and effectively became the power behind the throne.

After learning of his deposition Romanus gathered his forces and marched on Constantinople. In late September or October, Romanus was defeated outside Amasia by an army under the command of Caesar John's youngest son, Constantine Ducas, forcing him to withdraw towards his native Cappadocia, where he hoped to winter and regroup his forces. But the following spring his new army was engaged and defeated by troops under his erstwhile reserve commander, Andronicus Ducas. Realising that his position was hopeless, Romanus agreed to surrender in return for a promise of safe conduct into exile. John, however, had him savagely blinded and he died shortly afterwards.[\[46\]](#)

Political Disaster

Manzikert was less an invitation for the Turks to invade than for the Byzantine's to begin a civil war. The emperor Michael inspired neither confidence nor loyalty and Caesar John proved as incapable of securing Anatolia against the Turks as his predecessors, which encouraged the Anatolian magnates to turn their back on the central government and see to their own defence. In northeast Anatolia, Theodore Gabras seized the area around Theodosiopolis and Trebizond; while in the southeast the Armenian general, Philaretos Brachamius, seized Byzantine Cilicia all the way from Edessa in the east, to Antioch in the west.[\[47\]](#) Theodore and Philaretos used the troops at their disposal to put up a stubborn defence and pushed the Turks back, but their efforts were uncoordinated and the frontier between their territories remained wide open.

Despite the disorder in Anatolia, there was no Seljuk invasion. Alp Arslan had respected his treaty with Romanus, and at any rate died the year after his victory at Manzikert. His son and successor, Malik Shah (1072-1092AD) was too busy solidifying his rule in Iran to consider invading the Byzantine Empire, and, like his father had designed on Fatimid Egypt. What neither state could do at this time was prevent the Turcoman raiders, who recognised no authority, from penetrating the Seljuk-Byzantine border and raiding at will. The Turcomen were raiders of opportunity and simply bypassed areas of stiff resistance and pushed further and

further west. One emir named Kutalamis raided Kayseri and Niksar in central Anatolia and penetrated as far west as Amorium without encountering Byzantine resistance.[\[48\]](#)

With the east in rebellion and virtually no loyal troops available to it, the Ducas government was forced to turn to Norman and Turkish mercenaries. Norman heavy cavalry proved surprisingly effective against the Turks, but they were expensive and often hard to control; having observed the Empire's weakness first hand many harboured their own imperial ambitions. Roussel de Balliou, after a successful campaign against the Seljuks, rebelled against the Ducas and carved a dukedom for himself in eastern Armenia,[\[49\]](#) while in the west, the Norman duke of Apulia and Calabria, Robert Guiscard, seized Byzantium's last Italian possession, Bari.[\[50\]](#) The Norman contribution to the Byzantine army was relatively small however and confined to service in crack regiments, such as "The Immortals."[\[51\]](#) The majority of mercenary troops in the Byzantine army were Turks. The abundance of Turkish manpower, their fighting prowess, and their availability as troops for hire made them indispensable to both the central government and the Anatolian rebels. Caesar John used both Turkish and Norman troops in his campaign against Roussel de Balliou in 1072AD, but his Normans mutinied and handed him over to Roussel, who then proclaimed John Emperor and led their combined force against Constantinople. In response, Michael Ducas commissioned the young and talented Alexius Comnenus to lead an army of Turkish auxiliaries against the rebels. Through guile and bribery Alexius convinced John and Roussel's Turks to arrest their erstwhile leaders and defect to Michael.[\[52\]](#)

In 1078AD, the governor of the Anatolic theme,[\[53\]](#) Nicephorus Botaniates led a revolt against Michael Ducas. Lacking sufficient native troops for an assault against Constantinople, Botaniates sought the support of the Seljuk emir, Suleyman ibn Kutalamis. As Botaniates advanced on Constantinople at the head of a Turkish army, Nicephorus Bryennius and Nicephorus Basiliacius launched separate and simultaneous revolts in the west. Michael Ducas realised his position was hopeless and abdicated, becoming a monk. Botaniates reached Constantinople first and was duly proclaimed emperor. Botaniates then sent Alexius Comnenus with another army of Turks to defeat Bryennius and Basiliacius, however, when his own kinsman, Nicephorus Melissenus, revolted against Botaniates in 1081AD, Alexius refused to fight and instead usurped the throne himself.

The Byzantine civil war had continued for ten years and completely exhausted Byzantine resources in Anatolia. While the Byzantines had been busy fighting each other the Turks had advanced into a power vacuum, initially as raiders, later as mercenaries and finally as settlers. They had successfully exploited Byzantine factionalism by supporting various usurpers as their interests dictated and had profited immensely. By 1081AD the Seljuk's occupied virtually the entire Anatolian plateau from Armenia in the east to Bithynia in the west and Suleyman occupied Nicea as his nominal capital.

...

The mythologizing of Manzikert

History is rarely about what actually happened but more about how events are interpreted. For Michael Attaleiates and the Armenian cleric Vardapet, Manzikert was a disaster and they described it as such. For Michael Psellus, Manzikert was a convenient misfortune and he described it as such.[\[82\]](#) By the time Anna Comnena wrote her history in 1148AD, Manzikert was recognized as an important key historical event, but it had not become the disaster of later legend.[\[83\]](#) The Byzantines themselves seemed not to have imbued Manzikert with any great significance. For them their defeat and decline were simply God's punishment for their sins. It was later, with the rise of modern secular history that people began searching for an identifiable event that would mark the beginning of the decline. Thanks to Michael Attaleiates mythologising of Romanus and his 'doomed' campaign and the triumphalism of later Arab historians, Manzikert had taken on the necessary romantic qualities to become 'that terrible day.' None of this was necessarily true. The real causes of the loss of Anatolia were far more diverse and had little to do with battles and conquests, although these did occur and were in their own way significant.

The political and ethnic transformation of Anatolia was a much more complex process and can be summarised as follows:

- Byzantium's military success during the tenth century eroded both the internal and external defences of the empire. Allowing the decline of the thematic armies and city fortifications was permissible if the Empire was able to maintain the offensive

capabilities of the Byzantine army, but this was neither economically nor politically possible in the long term;

- The decision to conquer and directly administer territories in Armenia, Mesopotamia and Syria was a strategic error that removed natural buffer states and over-extended the military resources of the Empire. Given that the central government was demonstrably unable to control the magnates on its own territory, the incorporation of large, non-assimilated populations into the Empire created significant problems of policing and governance that the Byzantines were ill equipped to cope with at that time;
- Basil II's failure to adequately plan for the succession invited political disorder after his death, resulting in two key developments detrimental to the state. Firstly, the Anatolian magnates, who Basil had antagonised during his lifetime, either withdrew entirely from the political process, or else used their influence to restore and extend their privileges. Secondly, the general political instability of the period encouraged the growth of a strong, but generally corrupt and self-serving civil administration. None of Basil's immediate successors had either the strength, the ability or the legitimacy to prevent these developments;
- As the central government's authority disintegrated during the 1060's and 70's it was forced to dramatically reduce its expenditure. As the largest single expense in the Byzantine budget, the military bore the brunt of the budget cuts. These cuts proved untenable given the extended borders the military had to police and defend. And, as the central government proved increasingly unable to secure the interests of the provinces or protect them from raiding, the provinces broke down in rebellion and separatism;
- Romanus' Manzikert campaign was tactically sound if he was aiming to strike a blow against the Great Seljuks of Iran, but it completely failed to solve the problem of Turcoman raiding, which could only have been addressed by providing additional resources to the local garrisons. Nevertheless, having chosen to attack the wrong enemy, Romanus' fought a textbook action at Manzikert and was only defeated by poor intelligence and treachery. The majority of the Byzantine army escaped intact however and Romanus managed to secure an equitable peace treaty from the Seljuks;

- After Manzikert, Byzantine separatism was allowed to run its destructive course. Had the Empire been better run and the civil war not occurred a coordinated defence against Turkish raiding may have diverted the Seljuk's back towards Fatimid Egypt;
- For a variety of reasons the Byzantines did not recognize the Turks as a long-term threat. The Seljuks who conquered Anatolia had little or no centralized political structure and were undisciplined and fractious, likely as not to attack each other as the Byzantines. Nor were the Seljuks an unstoppable military force. After the Manzikert the Georgians expanded their territory at the Seljuks expense, as did many of the Armenian principalities of Cilicia. The Byzantines, however, were more interested in fighting challengers to their throne than repelling the Seljuks;
- As Anatolia broke apart in disorder the Turks began to exercise an increasingly important role in Byzantine politics. Sultan Suleyman variously assisted the Byzantine central government or rebellious magnates to his advantage and by the time Alexius Comnenus secured the Byzantine throne the Seljuks occupied the entire Anatolian plateau;
- From the central government's perspective the economic loss of the Anatolian plateau was not as significant as it might appear, given the amount of territory lost, as it had long ago lost control of those territories. It was therefore sensible policy to concentrate the government's limited resources on the defence of western Anatolia and Rumelia;
- The repopulation of Anatolia and the subsequent revival of several deserted Byzantine cities under the Rum Seljuk provided a stimulus to the Byzantine economy, at least in the short term;
- Cut off from its traditional Armenian recruiting grounds, the Byzantine army was quick to utilise the Turks as an abundant supply of available military manpower. By the eleventh century the Byzantine army was completely dependent on Turkish manpower and would remain so until the fourteenth century;
- To a great extent, the Sultanate of Rum owed its existence to the Byzantines. Byzantines occupied positions in the Rum court and help guide and structure its administration, at least in the early decades. The Byzantines conferred legitimacy on its rulers and recognised the states borders and possessions. Sultan Suleyman enjoyed good relations

with Michael Ducas, Nicephorus Botaniates, Nicephorus Melissenus and Alexius Comnenus and was generally a good ally to the Byzantines throughout his life. If Suleyman's successors were less reliable vassals this was simply because they were in a position put Seljuk interests ahead of their relationship with the Byzantines;

- Despite occasional conflicts, Byzantium and the Rum Sultanate enjoyed unusually close relations throughout their existence. There was a constant exchange of personnel and personalities between their respective societies, and, surprisingly considering their religious differences, regular intermarriage. Both states provided sanctuary and employment for the others exiles and adventurers, such as the future Emperor Michael Palaeologos, who commanded a Byzantine contingent in Sultan Kay Kuwas' army in the twelfth century.[\[84\]](#) This constant exchange of personnel and culture between Byzantium and Seljuk Rum ensured that the interests of their respective elites were, if not always aligned, at least understood. Nevertheless, Byzantine endeavours to acculturalise the Rum Seljuks, who in the eleventh century at least were only vaguely Islamic, were half hearted and hampered by religious and political arrogance. The Byzantine's failure to impress their culture on the Rum Seljuks made it inevitable that they would eventually realign with the Islamic world;
- Finally, the Seljuks use of Byzantine coinage, while important symbolically, permanently disrupted the Empire's carefully balanced economic cycle. The Byzantines had very limited gold reserves and so carefully regulated the circulation of gold nomisma within their economy. All taxes had to be paid in currency, which guaranteed that most coinage circulated through the economy but ultimately returned to the treasury.[\[85\]](#) Unless politically sanctioned, gold exports were strictly prohibited. The Seljuk court however became a significant consumer of coinage, which over time eroded Byzantium's gold reserve.[\[86\]](#) This significance of this cannot be overstated and over time was probably more damaging to Byzantium's long-term viability than any loss of territory.

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End Notes

[1] The gold coinage retained its value however the bronze coinage of the Empire, which was so essential to local trade and taxation, plunged in size, quality and value, forcing a return to a barter economy. Heraclius and Constans attempted to address the problem by increasing the number of local mints and coin issues but this only had the effect of devaluing the bronze coinage further. P D. Whiting. *Byzantine Coins*, 1973. Jenkins & Barrie, London. Pg 119

[2] W H Haussig identifies the origin of the theme system as Diocletian's (284-305AD) restructure of the Roman Empire's defences in Mesopotamia and Syria, where the *limes* system of border fortifications were abandoned in favour of a series of strategically sited fortresses, manned by military settlers. *Kulturgeschichte von Byzanz*. 1966 Revised edition (translated by J M Hussey). 1971. Thames and Hudson, London). Pg 91.

[3] The early Caliphs desired Constantinople as the capital of their Islamic Empire. Nadia Maria El Cheikh. *Byzantium Viewed by Arabs*. 2004. Harvard University Press, London. Pg 62.

[4] Ahmad Shboul. Byzantium and the Arabs: The image of the Byzantines as mirrored in Arabic literature. *Byzantine Papers*. 1981. Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, Sydney. Pgs 52-55

[5] Mu'tasim targeted Amorium specifically because it the native city of the emperor Theophilus (829-842AD). Theophilus led an army in its defence but suffered a massive defeat and was lucky to escape alive. When his opponents in Constantinople heard of his defeat they attempted to have him deposed. Only the swift action by his step mother, Euphrosyne, saved his throne.

[6] Arab sources are complimentary of Irene and her decision to maintain peaceful relations with the Caliphate. By contrast, her son Constantine VI (780-797AD) was seen as an irresponsible leader and his subsequent deposition by Irene was regarded a logical act of statesmanship on her part. El Cheikh. *Ibid*. Pg 91.

[7] In the west the Byzantines defeated and crushed the resurgent Bulgarian Empire.

[8] The *De Administrando Imperio* devotes significant space to Byzantium's relations with the Danubian tribes.

[9] The Seljuks proclaimed themselves protectors of Sunni Orthodoxy in the name of the Abbasid Caliphate against the rival Shi'a Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt. It is interesting to note the parallels to the career of the Normans in Italy. After invading Italy at about the same time, the formerly pagan Norman Vikings set themselves up as protectors of Papal authority.

[10] Vardapet Aristakes Lastivertc'i. 11th century. *Regarding the Sufferings Occasioned by Foreign Peoples Living Around Us*. Translated by Robert Bedrosian. Published by Medieval Source Book @ <http://rbedrosian.com/a1.htm> pg 3. Successive Byzantine emperors from Michael IV (1034-1041AD) through to Constantine IX sent troops into Armenia but failed to take it.

[11] Lastivertc'i, *ibid.* <http://rbedrosian.com/a1.htm> pg 3

[12] In this context, the Persians are the Turks. Lastivertc'i, *ibid.*, (<http://rbedrosian.com/a7.htm> pg 5).

Michael Psellus relates the whole incident without any context (a certain indication he is hiding something), saying Michael “started by finding fault with them en bloc – a mean thing to do. Then, having made their leader stand forth in the centre of the group, together with his second-in-command – Isaac Comnenus...he poured out a torrent of abuse on Isaac.” (Michael Psellus. *Chronographia*. 11th century. Translated by E R A Sewter, 1966. Published as *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* by Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, pg 276). Theodore Skoutariotes however, describes the scene differently. He states that Isaac was “very well received by the Emperor himself” but was abused and ignored by those advising the emperor. Michael, being rather powerless, was unable to prevent his courtiers offending the powerful Isaac and the incident sparked the civil war. (Theodoros Skoutariotes: *Synopsis Chronika: The Emperors of the 11th Century* @ the Internet Medieval Sourcebook. Translated for by ©Nikos Koukounas <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/skoutariotes1.html>). Lastivertc'i, provides the background that explains the cause of Michael's outburst. It is likely he received this information from someone in one of the many embassies sent by the Armenian princelings (who had retired to estates in Cappadocia) that would have travelled to Constantinople to do homage to Michael as his vassals after his accession.

[13] Michael VI was at least able to raise an army to fight in his defence. His predecessor, Constantine IX Monomachus had been forced to face the rebellions of George Maniacus and Leo Tornikes with a scratch force enlisted from the palace guard, local mercenaries and prisoners.

[14] “There was so much blood shed that people said that such carnage in one place had not occurred before in Byzantium.” Lastivertc'i, *Ibid.*, (<http://rbedrosian.com/a8.htm> page 3). The army of Michael VI suffered the greater loss but remained intact.

[15] Justinian II (685-695AD) had also forcibly relocated tens of thousands of Slavs from the Balkans to western Anatolia in 689AD.

[16] Nicephorus I set about repopulating Thrace and Hellas with Byzantine settlers in 805AD, first through voluntarily resettlement programs, and then forcibly in 809AD when it became apparent insufficient settlers were migrating. Thrace and Hellas recovered quickly and soon became peaceful and prosperous. Treadgold. *Revival*. Pgs 136-7 & 157-8

[17] Rumelia is a later term to describe the western provinces of the late Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. It is used here as a collective description of all Byzantium's western provinces.

[18] Lastivertc'i uses the archaic term Persians when he in fact means Turks. @ <http://rbedrosian.com/a8.htm> page 1.

[19] Isaac seems to have been an unpopular emperor. Soon after his elevation he deposed the powerful and popular patriarch, Michael Celularius, resulting in riots. His first coin issue

featuring his portrait standing with an unsheathed sword was extremely unpopular, resulting in the issue being withdrawn and replaced with new portrait with the sword sheathed. Whiting. *Ibid*, pg 198.

[20] During the Manzikert campaign, Romanus would reject the advice of several of his generals to wait for the Seljuk's at Theodosiopolis (Erzerum in modern Turkey) specifically because he knew he could not sustain his large army in the region for an extended period

[21] The loss of Anatolia to the Turks has clear parallels to the loss of Syria, Palestine and Egypt to the Arabs. Both the Arabs and Turks were nomads with no need for complex military apparatus and extended supply lines. On both occasions the Byzantines did not initially recognise the threat, expecting the invaders to plunder the countryside, bypass the cities and then move on. Once the Turks and the Arabs gained possession of the countryside however, the Byzantines found their position untenable. Walter E. Kaegi. (*Byzantium and the early Islamic conquests*. 1992. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[22] A chain of fortified cities comprised the Empire's eastern and southeastern border. They included (north to south) Kars, Ani, Manzikert, Khilat, Edessa and Antioch. Ani was the easternmost city in the chain.

[23] The empress' Zoe and Theodora, the last of the Macedonian line, had both lost control of their respective consorts (Romanus III, Michael IV and Constantine IX) and found themselves sidelined from positions of power. Eudocia was careful in her choice to ensure she retained control of political affairs, leaving Romanus to concentrate on military matters. Barbara Hill. *Imperial Women in Byzantium. 1025-1204. Power, Patronage and Ideology*. 1999. Pearson Education limited, Harlow. Pgs 63-64.

[24] The historian Michael Attaleiates served with Romanus on his campaign and has left us a grim account of his experiences. We should not necessarily take Attaleiates account at face value though, as Attaleiates' was seeking to place the blame for Byzantium decline on Romanus' effete predecessors and therefore emphasized the difficulties Romanus' faced. Paul Magadalino. *The Byzantine Background to the First Crusade*. 1996. *Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies*, Toronto. @ <http://deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/ARTICLES/magadalino.htm>.

[25] W H. Haussig. *Ibid*, pg 91.

[26] Warren Treadgold. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. 1997. Stanford University Press, Stanford. Pgs 548-49.

[27] Eokoimene, meaning community (of believers). Catherine Holmes argues that the administrations of Nicephorus II and Basil II took care to ensure the trade of Syria was preserved by encouraging Muslims to remain resident in the provinces and leaving the indigenous administration intact ('How the east was won' in the reign of Basil II, from *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium* @ www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/PDFs/HOLMES.pdf.) P D Whiting (*Ibid*, pg 173) supports this analysis with speculation that the gold tetarteron introduced by Nicephorus II was intended to replace the Fatimid dinar. Haussig, however, points out that the failure to

integrate the new conquests into the Byzantine *eokoimene* meant the central government was left to bear the costs but was unable to secure the benefits, which accrued to the Anatolian magnates (*ibid*, pgs 304-05). Also see Haussig, pg 59 for a discussion of the causes of the 3rd century inflation in the Roman Empire.

[28] Vasso Penna. *Byzantine Coinage. Medium of transaction and manifestation of imperial propaganda*. 2002. Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, Nicosia. Pgs 96 & 116.

[29] Psellus skips over this incident embarrassedly with the statement “The fact is, he put such overwhelming compulsion on me to join him on the campaign that I could not possibly refuse. I would rather not say anything at the moment of the reason why he was so insistent that I should accompany him, because I am abridging most of this story, but I will speak of it when I write the history of these events. I am still under an obligation in the matter.” (Michael Psellus. *Chronographia*. 11th century. Translated by E R A Sewter, 1966. Published as *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers* by Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, pg 352 & 353).

[30] Anna Comnena. *Alexiad*. 11th century. Translated by E R A Sewter, 1960. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, pg 31. The emir’s name was Chrysoskoulos. He was given the rank of proedros and would remain a loyal to the Byzantines, even after the disaster at Manzikert. Charles M. Brand. The Turkish Element in Byzantium, Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers no 43*. 1989. Dumbarton Oaks Publications, Washington. Pg 2.

[31] Lord John Julius Norwich. *Byzantium. The Apogee*. 1991. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, pg 346

[32] Haldon. *Byzantine Wars*, pg 115.

[33] Justin McCarthy. *The Ottoman Turks. An Introductory History to 1923*. 1997. Longman Books, London. Pg 12

[34] Edessa had only been brought within the Byzantine sphere in 1032AD, when George Maniaces captured the city after Romanus III’s (1028-1034AD) disastrous Syrian campaign. Alp Arslan’s sought to restore the city to Abbasid control.

[35] The emperor Julian II (360-363AD) attempted a similar manoeuvre in his Persian campaign of 363AD.

[36] “..battles are decided... by strategy and skill. Strategy makes use of times and places, surprises and various tricks to outwit the enemy with the idea of achieving its objectives without actual fighting.” Maurice Tiberius. *Strategikon*. 6th century. Translated by George T Dennis, 1984. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. Pg 23.

[37] Amongst some of the more famous mercenaries who served with the Byzantines were the Norwegian king, Harald Hardrada (then in exile), Edward the Confessor’s natural son (and

dispossessed heir) Edward Aethling, as well as numerous other Saxon nobles, exiled from Britain following the Norman Conquest of 1066AD.

[38] Romanus had left behind the experienced general, Nicephorus Botaniates, as he did not trust his loyalty. Nicephorus would later make his own challenge for the throne, usurping Romanus' successor, Michael VII. Romanus' most dangerous rival, Constantine X's brother, John Ducas, to his estates in Bithynia. John's son, Andronicus Ducas, was with the army as a commander of the reserve force and potential hostage.

[39] Manzikert was a key fortress on the Armenian frontier and had been held by the Turks for several years. Psellus and Lastivertc'i are highly critical of Romanus' decision to split his army, attributing his decision to engage the Turks with only half his forces to arrogance. Psellus. *Ibid*, pg 355 & Lastivertc'i, <http://rbedrosian.com/a10.htm> pg 2.

[40] Maurice's *Strategikon* recommends the use of envoys to sow dissension in an enemy camp. *Ibid*, pg 65.

[41] Alfred Friendly, *Manzikert: The Terrible Day*, Lord Norwich, *Byzantium. The Apogee*; and Edward Foord, *The Byzantine Empire*. A more modern example is: That Terrible Day: The Byzantine defeat at Manzikert, AD 1071. Published @ *Journal of Ancient and Medieval History at Dickson College*. November 1997
<http://www.dicksonc.act.edu.au/Showcase/ClioContents/Clio2/manzikert.html>.

[42] Given that Bryennius was reported wounded with two arrows in his back and spear thrust in his side on the first day of battle, one thousand casualties might even be a little excessive.

[43] Western troops were carrying out a campaign in Bulgaria and at the same time, while the garrisons at Dyrrachium and Corfu were on alert against Norman aggression.

[44] Sirarpie Der Nersessian. *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire. A Brief Study of Armenian Art and Civilization*. 1945. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. Pgs 22-23.

[45] El Cheikh. *Ibid*, pg 178

[46] Edward Foord reports that after his defeat Romanus sent his entire fortune to Alp Arslan as part payment for his ransom. The story is likely to be an apocryphal later invention, like much of the Manzikert legend. Foord. *Ibid*, pg 328.

[47] Philaretos did not seize Antioch until the beginning of Nicephorus Botaniates reign in 1081AD.

[48] Niki Gamm. 'Celebrating the Beginning of the Beginning.' *Turkish Daily News*. 29 August 1999. @ http://www.turkishdailynews.com/past_probe/08_29_99/Art2.htm viewed 14 September 2004.

[49] The young Alexius Comnenus defeated Roussel would later be captured by the young Alexius Comnenus in his first military campaign, in 1073AD. Anna Comnena. *Ibid*, pgs 31-37.

[50] In an attempt to neutralise Guiscard and retain Calabria within the Byzantine sphere of influence, Michael Ducas offered him a marriage alliance between his son and heir, Constantine, and Guiscard's daughter. The marriage never eventuated as Michael abdicated before the marriage could go ahead.

[51] The Immortals were established by Michael Ducas to replace the tagmata of the east. Anna Comnena. *Ibid*, pg 38.

[52] John prudently became a monk and retired once more to his estates in Bithynia. In gratitude to his earlier loyal service, Roussel escaped blinding and was rehabilitated to the emperor's service.

[53] The Anatolic theme was situated in the north central Anatolia, directly north of the Cappadocian theme.

...

[82] After his cursory 'I told you so' description of Romanus' downfall after Manzikert, Psellus moves directly on to a panegyric of the Ducas family and paints a picture of the empire at peace with itself and its neighbours. Psellus, *Ibid*, pg 355 on.

[83] "The barbarians had gone unchecked, from the time when they invaded the Empire soon after Diogenes' elevation to the throne and his eastern campaign (which was ill-starred from the very beginning) right down to my father's reign." (Anna Comnena, *Ibid*, pg 504-05). The implication being that Alexius had checked the Turks. Anna's assessment was somewhat optimistic as the Turks were now a permanent fixture in Anatolia. That she did not use John II's inability to dislodge the Turks as opportunity to slander her hated brother suggests she failure of Alexius' eastern policy.

[84] Amongst those who moved between the two societies were Manuel Comnenus' brother, Isaac Comnenus and several of his children, Andronicus Comnenus, Alexius III Angelus, Michael Palaeologus and Kay Khusraw.

[85] Penna. *Ibid*, pg 103-108.

[86] On must also factor in the trading concessions Alexius granted the Venetians. Both actions were economically disastrous in the long-term.