

Mental Preparations in the Two Camps Before the Battle of Mantzikert

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Gönderim Tarihi: 26.04.2024

Kabul Tarihi: 08.06.2024

Yayımlanma Tarihi: 28.06.2024

Nasıl Atıf Yapılır:

Vratimos, Antonios. "Mental Preparations in the Two Camps Before the Battle of Mantzikert". *Eklektik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 2, sy. 1 (Haziran 2024): 161-176.

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Antonios Vratimos¹

Abstract

The outcome of the battle of Mantzikert that was fought between the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan and the Byzantine emperor Romanos Diogenes paved the way for the expansion of the Turks into Asia Minor that resulted in the establishment of the sultanate of Rum. It is believed that this defeat was the sequel to the internal machinations of the Doukai against their political enemy Diogenes, since he was proclaimed emperor. In reality, the outcome was decided even before the imperial troops proceeded to battle. The paper discusses the war preparations in the two camps as described in Muslim and Christian historical sources. Alp Arslan's prudent acts gave his warriors the confidence and determination to fight bravely for their religion and their leader. Diogenes' haughtiness and severity in manner had very negative effects on his already dispirited soldiers who lost not only their fighting spirit, but also the trust in their commander. For this reason, the rumours of the Byzantine defeat were the perfect excuse they were looking for to avoid battle and retreat, ignoring Diogenes' order to return to their lines.

Keywords *Romanos IV Diogenes, Alp Arslan, Byzantine army, Seljuks, morale.*

Introduction

Shortly after he took the throne, the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan began his first campaign in Caucasus. In 1065 he became governor of Ani. Almost three years later, he annexed several Georgian regions. In the meantime, the emir Afshin with his troops was marching unmolested through the eastern provinces of Asia Minor. Finally, Byzantium decided to take steps against the Seljuks with Romanos Diogenes, a soldier by profession. His first two expeditions in 1068 and 1069 had some success, but nothing long lasting. In 1071, he launched his third campaign that resulted in the fateful battle of

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Mantzikert. At that time Alp Arslan was in Northern Syria, aiming to occupy territories controlled by certain Arab emirs. His major target was a plunder-rich offensive against the Fatimids of Egypt.² Upon news of Diogenes' advance with a sizable army, the sultan abandoned his plans in Syria and forged his way into Armenia. Following the northern route, Diogenes reached Theodosiupolis (mod. Erzurum). Thence he dispatched the mercenary divisions with the select corps to Chliat (mod. Ahlat) and attacked Mantzikert with the troops available to him. After occupying the fortress and the city, he headed in a southerly direction towards Chliat to join the troops already there. It was at that time, when the foragers were harassed by the vanguard of the sultan's forces. Diogenes called upon the force at Chliat for aid, but received no response; hence, he proceeded to battle with the remnants of his army. On 26th August, the two opponents fought against each other near Mantzikert. The warriors of Alp Arslan scored a notable victory, having lured the Byzantines into ambushes. The emperor was led into captivity, but released eight days later, after he signed a peace agreement with the victor.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the mental preparations held in the two camps on the eve of the crucial battle for the control of Anatolia. Without denying the significance of factors like the fiscal neglect of the armed forces or the arrears of pay,³ our main area of focus centres around the two leaders and particularly their effort to ensure the discipline and morale of their men. To achieve his goal, the sultan worked on strengthening their religious sentiment and conflating his status with theirs. In sharp contrast, the Byzantine emperor further damaged with his offensive manner the already low confidence of his troops. As a result, the battle was lost before his personal enemies put into action the plan of betrayal.⁴

2 For a further analysis see Alexander D. Beihammer, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia ca. 1040-1130* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 152-155.

3 The topic has been discussed by Speros Vryonis Jr., "The Eleventh Century: Was There a Crisis in the Empire? The Decline of Quality and Quantity in the Byzantine Armed Forces" in *The Empire in Crisis (?): Byzantium in the 11th Century (1025-1081)*, [International Symposium 11] ed. Vassiliki Vlyssidou (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2003), 17-43, esp. 23-26, 39-40; and John Haldon, "Approaches to an Alternative Military History of the Period ca. 1025-1071", 45-74, esp. 58-60 (the paper is published in the same volume).

4 Speros Vryonis Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971), 100-101, note 109.

The War Preparations from the Muslim Perspective

Surprisingly, the only source which provides the most balanced account of the warfare preparations in both camps is the fifteenth-century Persian writer Mīrkhwānd. His description begins with Romanos IV Diogenes sitting on a golden throne under a high tent that was set up in the middle of the camp. A great number of hierarchs were standing in front of him, holding vessels of holy water in their hands, while other clerics and monks were reciting the Bible and chanting psalms. On the opposite camp, the sultan invested himself in encouraging his men by reminding them that many times in the past, God assisted a small army overcome a large one.⁵ In response, they cheered him on and started preparing their armour for the battle ahead.⁶

The next phase of preparations occurred three days later (on Friday) after the failure of the negotiations and the contemptuous dismissal of the sultan's peace proposals by Diogenes. Mīrkhwānd relates that the emperor tried to arouse the zeal of his men. He ordered a full-scale attack, hoping to be victorious. He then took his spear, mounted his horse, and asked from the Greek and Armenian soldiers to fight with determination and strength⁷ (it should be noted that all the mercenary units were at Chliat, but ignored Diogenes' call for reinforcements.⁸ He was thus left with no alternative, but

5 Zahīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī has the Turks recite altogether that verse after their historic victory [Carole Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol: The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 36]. For this Persian chronicler, see Claude Cahen, "The Historiography of The Seljuqid Period" in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis – Peter M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 73-76. Also, Carole Hillenbrand, "Some Reflections on Seljuq Historiography" in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium. Papers from the thirty-third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Antony Eastmond, University of Warwick, Coventry, March 1999, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 76-77.

6 Mīrkhwānd, *Turkish Myth*, 99-100, apparently draws on from other historians. He states that patriarchs in forty rows and four bishops took part in the Eucharist. Al-Ḥusaynī, the thirteenth-century chronicler, makes a mention of the event, focusing on the splendour of Diogenes' pavilion and the throne. He refers to the presence of a large number of clerics and monks without saying anything about hierarchs. See, Qibla Ayaz, *An Unexploited Source for the History of the Saljūqs: A Translation of and Critical Commentary on the Akhbār al-Dawlat al-Saljūqiyya* (Ph.D. diss.: Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1985), 120-121 (hereafter, Al-Ḥusaynī).

7 Mīrkhwānd, *Turkish Myth*, 100-101.

8 Eudoxos T. Tsolakakis (ed.), Η συνέχεια της Χρονογραφίας του Ιωάννου Σκυλίτση (*Ioannes Skylitzes Continuatus*) (Thessaloniki: Hetaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1967), 144.22-24 (hereafter, Skylitzes Cont.). See discussion in Antonios Vratimos, "Joseph Tarchaneiotes and the Battle of Mantzikert (AD 1071)", *Al-Masāq* 32, no. 2 (2020): 163-168. Cf. Jonathan Shepard, "Byzantinorussica", *Revue des Études Byzantines* 33 (1975): 220-222.

to attack with the troops at his disposal. Those were made up of Byzantines and Armenians).⁹ The sultan, at the same time, tried to bolster the morale of his men, warning them that an ignominious slavery or a shameful death would befall the cowards in the upcoming battle. Their only choice was therefore to put their trust in God and fight with courage and distinction. Everybody then pledged to exert utmost efforts to protect their leader and their religion.¹⁰ All these preparations, as appear in the text of Mīrkhwānd, are most likely inflated and are thrown in for reasons of sensationalism. The divine sentiment is what defines the meaning that the chronicler wishes to convey to his reader: Diogenes swore a most solemn oath that he would put his throne in Muslim land.¹¹ Yet, Islam triumphed against Christianity. The significance that the chronicler attaches to religion is further disclosed in the language he employs to create a sonoric effect. The words of Alp Arslan to his warriors, in the first phase, are presented as an omen of victory for the Turks, while in the second, the ardour for religious warfare filled everyone with much confidence.¹²

Similar embellishments in the preparations for the fateful encounter are found, more or less, in all Muslim sources. In general, the storytelling motif that most chroniclers articulate is as follows:

Upon the news of Diogenes' march westwards, Alp Arslan sent away his wife with his most precious treasures and ordered his vizier Nizam al-Mulk to collect a big army

9 According to Peter Charanis, *The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire* (Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand, 1963), 20, the Armenian elements in the imperial army predominated from the ninth century to the Crusades. A similar opinion has been also expressed by Tara L. Andrews, *Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa with a Discussion of Computer-Aided Methods Used to Edit the Text* (Ph.D. diss.: University of Oxford, 2009), 91, who argues that the Armenians made up much of Diogenes' army. Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Mantzikert. Un désastre militaire?", *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 424, maintains too that a large proportion of the army consisted of Armenians either from Sebasteia, or from Theodosiupolis, or from Syria and Armenia.

10 Mīrkhwānd, *Turkish Myth*, 101. The Seljuks' conversion to Islam in the era of Tughrul Beg and Alp Arslan is a subject of an ongoing dispute. Recent views concur that the process was of longer duration than initially thought [see for example Andrew Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 9; Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth*, 114-138]. Nicholas Morton, "The Saljuq Turks' Conversion to Islam: The Crusading Sources", *Al-Masāq* 27, no. 2 (2015): 109-118, enumerates several cases in which the Seljuks compromised their Sunni identity in the name of political expediencies.

11 Ibid., 100.

12 Ibid., 100, 101.

for him.¹³ He next gathered his warriors to appeal for support in his fight against the Christian enemy. In order to keep their spirits up, he declared his readiness to wage *ghazā* in expectation of divine reward and assured them that martyrdom is the path that leads to paradise. He only demanded that in case he died in the battle, his men should make his son Malikshah his successor. Some sources (e.g. al-Turtūshī, al-Fāriqī, al-Aqsara’i) completely omit this phase, while others (e.g. Rashīd al-Dīn)¹⁴ incorporate it into the second. The exact date of this first phase is rather hard to determine. We learn from the Coptic Orthodox bishop Ibn al-Muqaffa’ that Alp Arslan was told about the Byzantines’ campaign in the month of Bashans, which corresponds to the ninth month (9 May-7 June) of the Gregorian calendar. This was during his stay in Edessa, but after his unsuccessful effort to take the city of Aleppo.¹⁵ According to Arab chroniclers, though, the sultan had crossed the Euphrates and had been at Azarbayjan when informed about Diogenes’ expedition.¹⁶ But the point cannot be pressed any further in the absence of firm evidence.

The second phase of the storytelling motif starts with the sultan’s speech to his men on Friday. Following some religious invocations, he let them choose whether to stay with him or leave the camp; yet he did not force anybody to take part in the battle. He afterwards stressed his humbleness before Allah, referring to himself as a modest warrior for faith.¹⁷ (Ibn al-Jawzī also has the sultan emphasise the secular and spiritual benefits awaiting the participants to the battle: spoils for the victors and eternal heaven for the martyrs. All the rest will face ignominy and shame).¹⁸ His followers answered by promising obedience. Then Alp Arslan left aside his bow and arrows (the typical nomad weaponry for long-range encounters), collected the sword and mace,

13 The account of al-Ḥusaynī, *Unexploited Source*, 117 leaves one with the clear impression that the sultan’s wife and the vizier had been dispatched to Hamadān sometime earlier.

14 Rashīd al-Dīn, *Turkish Myth*, 92.

15 See, ‘Aziz Sūryal Atiya, Yassā ‘Abd al-Masīh, and Oswald Hugh Ewart KHS-Burmester (trans.-ann.), *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, Known as the History of the Holy Church by Sawīrus Ibn al-Muqaffa’*, Bishop of Al-Ašmūnīn, Vol. 2/3, *Christodoulos – Michael (A.D. 1046–1102)* (Cairo: Société d’archéologie copte, 1943-1974), 307-308.

16 E.g. Donald S. Richards (trans.-ann.), *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī’-l Ta’rīkh of ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr* (London: Routledge, 2002), 170 (hereafter, Ibn al-Athīr). Also, Al-Ḥusaynī, *Unexploited Source*, 116.

17 E.g. al-Ḥusaynī, *Unexploited Source*, 120; ibn al- Athīr, *Annals*, 171.

18 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Turkish Myth*, 39.

and tied the tail of his horse.¹⁹ His gesture was emulated by his warriors. Hereupon, they performed religious duties and read out Quranic passages. What came afterwards was the preachers' prayers on the pulpits for a victorious outcome.²⁰ Regarding the religious zeal as a sign of good fortune, the sultan said the *takbīr* together with his faithful warriors, mounted his horse, and began the attack against the army of the infidels.²¹

Christian Accounts of the War Preparations on the Byzantine Side

The eleventh-century historian Michael Attaleiates provides the most accurate account of the event in question. He accompanied Diogenes on all three of his military campaigns, but did not witness the battle itself at Mantzikert, since he had most likely stayed with the camp.²² The emperor, irritated by the failure of the magister Nikephoros Bryennios to repel the enemy assault against the foragers of the army, accused him of cowardice, and ignored his appeal for reinforcements. Then, Attaleiates reports, he summoned the soldiers and “*spoke to them about the battle with hard language, and contrary to custom*”. Next, the priest recited some excerpts from the Gospels that roused intense feelings of fear. Some – including the historian himself – regarded them as an early warning signal for the debacle that would befall Byzantium.²³

19 In all probability, the choice of weapons was a symbolic act meant to express Alp Arslan's intention to fight to the end. Alfred Friendly, *The Dreadful Day: The Battle of Manzikert, 1071* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), 188.

20 The content of that prayer is offered by al-Husayni, *Unexploited Source*, 117-119. An abridged version of it is also found in the narrative account of Ahmed Ibn Mahmud, the sixteenth-century Ottoman scholar and historian. See Antonios Vratimos and Ender Büyükközkar, “The Manzikert Campaign from an Ottoman Perspective”, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 74 (2021): 502-503.

21 The second phase of the preparations is also repeated in the account of the thirteenth-century Syrian chronicler Bar Hebraeus. See, Ernest A. Wallis Budge (trans.), *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l-Faraj, 1225-1286, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Physician Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus; Being the First Part of his Political History of the World* (Amsterdam: Apa – Philo Press, 1976), 220.

22 See Antonios Vratimos, “Was Michael Attaleiates Present at the Battle of Mantzikert?”, *BZ* 105, no. 2 (2012): 833-839. For a detailed biography of the writer, see the introduction by Dimitris Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh Century Byzantium* (Tempe: ACMRS, 2012).

23 Eudoxos T. Tsolakis (ed.), *Michaelis Attaliatae Historia* [CFHB 50] (Athens: Academia Atheniensis, 2011), 119.18-120.4 (hereafter Attaleiates). This is also reiterated by Skylitzes Cont., *Συνέχεια Χρονογραφίας Σκυλίτζη*, 145.22-28, and Ioannes Zonaras. See, Theodor Büttner Wobst (ed.), *Ioannis Zonarae Epitomae historiarum libri XIII-XVIII*. 3 vols. [CSHB] (Bonn: Ed. Weber, 1841-1897), 697.17-698.1 (hereafter Zonaras). The translation of excerpts from Byzantine texts is mine.

“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you...because they do not know him who sent me...indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God”.²⁴

The divine element, thus, makes itself visible in Attaleiates’ work too (it merits notice that its importance is also underscored in the *Taktika*, the military handbook of Leo VI: “[All] wars are conducted in the name of God and our love towards Him”).²⁵ What, however, draws greater attention is the difference in how the two commanders alerted their men to be ready to take the field. For reasons not explicitly stated in the *Historia*, the emperor changed his initial decision and sent the magister Nikephoros Basilakes to help Bryennios. Basilakes was finally defeated and led captive to the Seljuk headquarters.²⁶ The bad news and the appearance of the arriving soldiers groaning with pain from their wounds instilled an atmosphere of panic in the entire encampment. Things turned worse at night, when the Uze mercenaries were attacked by the enemy mounted archers before the palisade. Due to the terror and confusion that followed, “everyone wished to die rather than to witness such [an occurrence]. Not having experienced this was regarded as good luck. And they called fortunate those who had not attended this”.²⁷ Some lines below, Attaleiates provides an even more dramatic picture of the situation, stating, “Everyone spent the night staying awake and having their eyes open because, who was able to sleep when the danger of the [enemy] sword drawn out was virtually pointed before them?”.²⁸ The very next day,

24 John: 15.20-16.2, Eberhard and Erwin Nestle – Barbara and Kurt Aland (eds.), *Greek-English New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1981), 301-302.

25 See George Dennis (ed.-trans.-comm.), *The Taktika of Leo VI* [CFHB 49] (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Library, 2010), 248.412 (hereafter Leo VI).

26 A different version of this event is provided by the twelfth-century general statesman and historian Bryennios, Paul Gautier (ed.-trans.), *Nicéphore Bryennio Histoire* [CFHB 9] (Brussels: Byzantion, 1975), 109.15-113.18.

27 Attaleiates, *Historia*, 121.14-17.

28 Ibid., 171.24-27. On that, see also Skylitzes Cont., *Συνέχεια Χρονογραφίας Σκυλίτζη*, 146.25-26.

their anguish reached its pinnacle, when a Scythian group went over to the Seljuks.²⁹

Diogenes' acute stringency and stubbornness, therefore, brought about results opposite to those he desired. But how this “*contrary to custom*” may be interpreted? It should be borne in mind that Attaleiates followed the emperor Diogenes on his military campaigns as member of the legal officers. Being in charge of dispensing justice within the army, he was required to have a detailed and elaborate knowledge of Byzantine military textbooks that contain binding instructions for the armed forces.³⁰ In this light, Attaleiates' statement should be considered as an oblique criticism of how Diogenes prepared his army. By Leo VI's prescriptions, the priest has to perform the prayers and seek God's help in the impending battle.³¹ The commander-in-chief, on the other hand, ought to inspire his men with an appreciation of the glory inherent in being Romans³² and promise rewards for valiant deeds.³³ In Attaleiates' text, though, there are no hints at all that the emperor tried to keep the morale of the soldiers up. The twelfth-century Armenian chronicler Matthew of Edessa simply reports that in the morning before the ill-fated battle, the emperor was pledged to bestow honours on

29 Attaleiates, *Historia*, 122.2-7; Also, Skylitzes Cont., *Συνέχεια Χρονογραφίας Σκυλίτζη*, 146.26-147.4; Zonaras, *Epitomae historiarum*, 699.3-5. According to Cheynet, “Un désastre militaire?”, 424 – a view that I fully share – those Uzes did not belong to the mercenary regiments dispatched to Chliat. They constituted an auxiliary body of the imperial army. This conclusion relies on the *Συνέχεια*, 116.5-10, where Skylitzes Continuatus reports that the Uzes settled in Macedonia during the reign of Constantine Doukas (1059-1067) had been incorporated as subject allies.

30 On whether Attaleiates' post had an official status, see Vratimos, “Was Attaleiates Present?”, 830-833. Cf. Andreas Gkoutzioukostas, “Returning to the *krites tou stratopedou*: Previous and recent considerations”, *BZ* 109, no. 1 (2016): 33-40. The functions of this office are discussed in John Haldon, “The *Krites tou Stratopedou*: A New Office for a New Situation?”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002): 279-286. Also, Andreas Gkoutzioukostas, “Ο κριτής του στρατοπέδου και ο κριτής του φοσσάτου”, *Byzantina* 26 (2006): 79-99.

31 Leo VI, *Taktika*, 290.1-7. The significance of this work is reflected in a great number of manuscripts (totally eighty-eight) that have survived to the present day. This undoubtedly reveals that the major military principles of the *Taktika* retained their value unabated until the fall of Byzantium. On Leo VI's Tactical Constitutions see also Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912) Politics and People* (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997), 168-183.

32 It is known that the Byzantines considered themselves direct descendants of the Romans through their history. See indicatively Ruth Macrides – Paul Magdalino, “The Fourth Kingdom and the Rhetoric of Hellenism” in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Paul Magdalino (London, Rio Grande: Hambledon, 1992), 120. Also, George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, translated by Joan Hussey (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 28.

33 Leo VI, *Taktika*, 278.13-17.

those who would fight the Seljuks with courage and fortitude.³⁴ Aristakes of Lastivert focuses upon the Armenians only, claiming that Diogenes' anger was mollified when he saw that they were fighting with loyalty and integrity, while their fellow soldiers turned to flight;³⁵ hence, he promised many rewards.³⁶ Regrettably, their writings cannot be cross-referenced in Byzantine texts. In Leo VI's *Taktika*, it is pointed out that material rewards should be secondary to rewards of patriotic virtues.³⁷ Apparently, his prescription concerns donatives and rewards that emperors granted to officers, occasionally to regular soldiers too, in the course of campaigns.³⁸ What is of great importance, though, is that both Matthew of Edessa and Aristakes of Lastivert record some grave problems that Diogenes had with the Armenian element in his army,³⁹ problems that affected to an extent the soldiers' fighting spirit and contributed to the catastrophe at Mantzikert.

Concluding Remarks

The contrast between the two camps is conspicuous. Alp Arslan, being well aware that his forces were numerically inferior to the Byzantines, had to try harder to maintain discipline and increase the courage of his warriors with statements of religious

34 Ara Edmond Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades, Tenth to Twelfth Centuries. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* [Armenian Heritage Series] (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1993), 134. On Armenian writers and their chronicles see Charles J. F. Dowsett, "Armenian Historiography" in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and Peter M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 259-268.

35 A considerable number of Armenians had deserted with the general Joseph Tarchaneiotos before the battle. On this see analysis by Antonios Vratimos, "Revisiting the Role of the Armenians in the Battle of Mantzikert", *Reti Medievali Rivista* 21, no. 1 (2020): 73-89.

36 Marius Canard – Haïg Berbérian (intro.-trans.-comm.), *Aristakès de Lastivert, Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne* (Brussels: Éditions de Byzantion, 1973), 126.

37 Leo VI, *Taktika*, 250.419-420.

38 John Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI* [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 44] (Washington, D.C.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 268.

39 By Matthew of Edessa's account, Diogenes threatened the Armenian inhabitants of Sebasteia with extirpating their religion after returning from his campaign in Persia (Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades*, 132-133). This is repeated by the thirteenth-century Armenian scholar Vardan Vardapet in more general form. He simply relates that Diogenes, in the course of his campaign against the sultan, threatened to Grecise the Armenians. [Robert W. Thomson, "The Historical Compilation of Vardan Arewelc'i", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989): 195].

content. Diogenes, on the contrary, had too much confidence that his massive army would fill his adversary with terror. Indeed, the thirteenth-century Persian writer Rashīd al-Dīn describes Alp Arslan as frightened by the size of the imperial forces.⁴⁰ Yet, he was not dejected, but carefully worked on drawing up the battle plan and undermining the morale of the enemy ranks. Judging from the outcome, he was effective and efficient in both instances. His vanguard attacked the Byzantine foraging parties and defeated the reinforcements sent from Mantzikert. Meanwhile, he obtained control of the river flowing beside the imperial camp which was at risk of being cut off from food and water supplies.⁴¹ Leo illustrates in the *Taktika* the disastrous effects of dearth of necessities on the soldiers' morale.⁴² On this basis, the eleventh-century distinguished General Kekaumenos prescribes in his own military handbook, the *Strategikon*, that the commander-in-chief should never delay the battle if there are limited provisions, and also reinforcements are not expected to arrive in time.⁴³

By Attaleiates' account, Diogenes was overcome by fear only when he was told about the double failure of the magisters who had been dispatched one after another to aid the forces that were foraging in the vicinity of Mantzikert.⁴⁴ The result was to transfer his frustration and irritation towards his soldiers whose anxiety turned into panic when the Scythian mercenaries were attacked outside the encampment on a moonless night, while others defected to the side of the enemy on the next day. Finally, the troops at Diogenes' disposal had to face the Seljuks in close quarters without the support of the divisions who were at Chliat. And those divisions constituted the special corps of the army. In Attaleiates' wording: "*They were more trained in the 'dance of war' and were always fighting in front-line battles*".⁴⁵ All this leads us conclude with some certainty that the troops under Diogenes' leadership were intimidated and hesitant to confront an enemy who had already gained the upper hand in terms of morale. On this basis the sudden reversal of the imperial standard during the pursuit, as Attaleiates

40 Rashīd al-Dīn, *Turkish Myth*, 91.

41 Attaleiates, *Historia*, 121.28-122.2.

42 Leo VI, *Taktika*, 298.89-93.

43 Dimitris Tsougarakis (intro.-trans.-comm), *Kekaumenos Strategikon* (Athens: Kanakis, 1996), 95-97.

44 Attaleiates, *Historia*, 120.19-20.

45 Ibid., 115.27.116.2. Attaleiates considers the dividing of the army as the main reason for the defeat, putting the blame on Diogenes. On this see analysis by Antonios Vratimos, "Two Remarks on Michael Attaleiates' Account of the Preliminaries to the Battle of Mantzikert", *Symbolae Osloenses* 91, no. 1 (2017): 161-163.

claims,⁴⁶ and the spreading rumors of Diogenes' defeat provided the Byzantines with the excuse they sought to run away and save their life. The emperor's participation in the fighting was rather a desperate attempt to stimulate the courage and tenacity of his army. It came, however, very late, because the battle had been decided before it really began.

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46 Attaleiates, *Historia*, 124.14-27.

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