Background Information Concerning Prevailing Conditions in the north (Crimea and southern Russia) the Balkan peninsula (Rumeli) and Asia Minor (Anadolu) in the period between 1250 and 1350

Conditions in the Anatolian Sector of the Gaza Front

The great dynasties of the period – whether Byzantine, Seljukid or later (post 1270s) even Jochid and Ilkhanid – were all periodically, sometimes simultaneously, either in crisis, dissolution or wrecked by internal squabbles and succession struggles in which power was readily seized and states dissolved and reformulated by a brother or an uncle of the incumbent ruler. In a period characterized by the fragmentation, instability and relative fragility of dynastic power, the de facto dominance at the margins of such states and polities tended to gravitate into the hands of warlords and troop mobilizers, either akinci reisler / emirs or military commanders of higher rank who acted relatively independently, and felt able to act without reference to their would-be or nominal political masters. They, the mobilizers of troops on a significant scale, held the real-terms power and they deferred to ‘higher’ authority only when it was either convenient for them to do so or beneficial to their and their followers’ interests.

The fragmentation of authority still resulted in a real-world situation where “might made right”, it was merely that the decision to exercise might, coercion or to mount military attack was shared out and diffused more widely. Thus, in such periods, the pattern of warfare was not determined by single factor causes and motivations such as din ve devlet / crown and country as it typically was in periods of stable political authority and single source (single unified family) dynastic rule over a unitary state. When governance in a polity was contested, strategic planning tended to be dominated by short-term considerations such

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as the level of profits from warfare that would become available to be shared amongst the
direct participants with less concern being paid to the sums that might be remitted to a
central state authority or made over to any fiscal institution of the state. In the absence of
a fixed and stable political authority or stable state, the beneficiaries of war and violence
were not kings and sultans, but the members of the warrior class who represented not so
much a political cause as a business enterprise in which they were principle shareholders
and beneficiaries. It is also noteworthy that in order to mount a successful bid for political
power and or rule, contestants were compelled to build up their individual war chests by
means of raiding and ransoming of captives.

Under conditions of general political instability such as those described in the foregoing, it
was not a class of clerics or bureaucrats who benefited from their labors, but the warriors
themselves. This broadly speaking characterized the style of warfare being conducted
on several fronts in the late 13th century. In addition to Anatolia, there was the Balkan
Peninsula and the Pontic-Caspian steppe region in which broader theater the pattern
and form of warfare was, at least in its rough outlines and general style and prevailing
rules of engagement, conducted in accordance to the dictates of similar conventions. The
constraints and restraints on the practice of warfare that might be imposed by a strong
religious or a political authority able to enforce a moral code or set of general behavioral
expectations were not features that were absent in the honor code of the frontier warrior,
but the decision as to when they should be operative and when they could be relaxed or
held in abeyance was more in the hands of the participants than of their nominal overlords.

For the Anatolian front, the political reality for western and northwestern portions of post
1250 Asia Minor consisted of the following general outline and scenario. III Giyaseddin
Keyhusrev (r. 1265-1282) was only nominal ruler in Konya while the jurisdiction around Eskişehir in
which Ertughrul, the father of the Ottoman dynasty’s ‘founding father’, Osman, operated
‘belonged’ even more nominally to him. Stated otherwise, that is to say in real-world
practical terms, it was not really his to give. The same applies with even greater force to his
descendant Alaeddin Key-Kubad III (first reign 1284; second reign 1293-1294; third reign
1301-1303; fourth reign 1305-1307) at the end of the century. The handing over (down)
of tabi and ailem (da uul and sancak/baynak) as emblems of power, authority and political
independence were relatively empty symbolic acts since he, the giver/bestower was
himself not really an independent sovereign in his own right, let alone in a credible position
to pretend to grant or bestow sovereignty and independence to a bey who, while formerly
owing him direct allegiance and obeisance, had long since asserted his independence in de
facto terms. This theater or ritualistic performance of the act of delegating of authority did
not represent political reality. Deferring of frontier lords to a political overlord because he
was clearly dominant did not fit the situation in terms of actual power relations. The askici
reisler along the frontier were themselves more powerful than the nominal overlord in
Konya. This was truly a question, in real terms, of asymmetrical power: those who deferred
to a ‘higher’ political authority were in real terms masters of their own fate and in no real
need of the ‘protection’ of the overlord to whom they offered their obeisance.

The Seljukid state was tributary to the Mongols from 1243 onwards and the state was
further weakened by internal squabbles and contested successions. From the reign of
Izzeddin Key-Kavus II, who ruled between 1246 and 1248 as sole sovereign, onwards
the kingdom was divided and he ruled jointly, first with one brother then with two, until
he was finally forced off the throne in 1257 and compelled to take up exile outside the
kingdom where he died (in Crimea) in 1267. It is hard to see how this condition of divided
sovereignty and kingship would allow any Seljukid ruler of the late thirteen century to declare himself capable of assuming in his own right the leadership of the crusade against the Christians or to devolve responsibility for that crusade to anyone else. The Seljukid polity itself was too self-divided to think of projecting or expanding its own power base by enlisting the support of a coalition of forces or asking them to contribute to enhancing its power and prestige over a broader region. The lines of authority, control and submission and subservience were too undecided and inchoate for that to take place.

Territorial expansion or expansionist impulses were a luxury that the late Seljukid sultans could not contemplate given the fact that both to the east and to the north they were under threat by the force of the Mongol imperium which, even in its weaker moments, was still capable of mounting serious retaliatory action against the lesser rulers of the western borderlands of the Islamic oecumenē (οἰκουμένη) in the late thirteenth century. The political realities were these and any attempt to convince potential confederates or potential coalition members to undertake acts that might be construed as ‘rebellion’ by the Mongol invaders, who were at the same time both de facto and de jure rulers of the territory, were doomed to carry little conviction with would-be allies. If the Mongol overlords were non-Muslims, or Muslims only by virtue of alliance with a Muslim power such as the Mamluks as was the case for a time in the Jochid polity, then to declare oneself as leader of an Islamic crusade or to claim to found or rule over a state in which the principle legitimizing factor was Islam represented a difficult if not dangerous strategy for asserting one’s own dominion. If such religious or political-religious discourse was present in the period it was always couched in cautious terms and usually not in terms of sovereign right.

Another feature of the period that needs to be borne in mind is that, because of the dominance of tribal groupings and confederations over states and fledgling states, the modes of communication and of history writing that represented popular and folk traditions such as the Saltukname can be regarded as a more accurate mirror of historical reality than the writings of the representatives of established courts who expressed themselves in vocabulary and the idiom of ‘High’ Islamic culture and defended its norms and values. It mattered little whether the aims and values of this ideal social order should seem (for the present) imaginary and unobtainable under the constraint of prevailing historical conditions. The world view of such writers would always seek to present the Islamic state and its norms as being in the ascendant. The reality was that, putting aside Mamluk Egypt, prevailing conditions in the wake of the Ghengizid invasions of the 1220s and the fall of Baghdad in 1258 represented a rather apocalyptic historical conjuncture; one that favored neither the pre-eminence of dominant dynastic formations and established states, nor the triumph of the cultural values espoused and cherished by such political formations and polities. In this period, gaza was carried out by the gazis for purposes other than the triumph of a unitary Islamic state which professed ambitions for universal rule. Prior to 1258 it was still possible for the Abbasids to make the claim of pre-eminence over the whole domain of Islam. Thereafter the shadow caliphs of Cairo enjoyed only minimal power in the temporal sphere. The divided leadership which characterized the period after the mid-thirteenth century meant that in many cases gaza activity was carried out with more limited aims and purposes than universal imperium or the creation a political sphere over which “the sun never sets”.

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1 On the confused political conditions within the Seljukid polity at this time, see Osman Turan, Selçuklular zamanıda Türkiye (Ankara, 1971), pp. 521-22 and on the flight of the Türkmen from central Anatolia under the pressure of Mongol occupation, chapter 12, pp. 523-574.
The real leaders of the ‘crusade’ in this period, i.e., ca. 1250 to ca. 1350, were frontier troop mobilizers and the akınca reisler who had no desire to seek political legitimacy in their own right as founders of independent states and polities and were happy to retain a nominal allegiance to a distant and seriously weakened overlord in Konya (the rump Seljukid sultanate with multiple co-reigning sultans ruling over a divided patrimony) or a powerful but even more distant overlords in Tabriz (the Ilkhanid ruler after 1256) or in Saray on the lower Volga (from the 1240s onwards). Consequently, a puppet sultan, such as the Seljukid sultan had inubitably become after 1250, was in no position to hand over the baton in the race for the mobilizing of campaigns against the Byzantine lands to anyone of his particular choosing. Power was not delegated or handed over (or down) by powerful rulers to their chosen recipients, but had naturally devolved to the local level where it was open to multiple claimants such as, for example, the descendents of Hüsemmedin Çoban (d. mid 1220s) who operated in the Kastamonu region just to the north of what was later to become the home of the embryonic Ottoman polity in the time of Ertegrul Gazi, i.e. the 1230s. This fluid condition of the frontier, with very little in the way of clear boundaries of authority and control, was the kind of environment in which the gazis whose exploits are described in the Saltuk-name flourished and prevailed.

Conditions in the Danubian and Trans-Danubian Sector of the Gaza Front (Kefe and the Deşť-i Kıpšak)

If we turn our attention to the extensions of the Islamic World in the Balkans and Trans-Danubia, we find that the lines of power and political authority were equally blurred and confused. After the death of Chengiz Han (1227) and his son Ögret in 1255 who oversaw the early phases of the establishment of the Mongol imperium, the lands of the Jochid appanage in the far west and in the southern Russian steppe during the reigns of Berke (1257-1267) and Möngke Timur (1267-1280), as well as their immediate successors up to the close of the thirteenth century, remained under the loosely exercised grip of rulers whose seat of power was at Saray on the Lower Volga. Furthermore, even in the Mongol imperium, power was not just open to challenge, but also in real terms devolved to the campaign mobilizers who operated on the remote frontiers of the territory nominally controlled by the khans in Saray. Thus, leadership of the campaigns directed against Russia and the northern Balkans was practically speaking in the hands of successful war lords such as Emir Neghay. Neghay held no legitimate or recognized political authority in his own right, but he held the lion’s share of real-terms power and decision-making at the local level in the west and all along the Danube front which defined the remote boundary of the lands belonging to the Golden Horde (the Jochid appanage) during the final decades of the thirteenth century.

[Genealogical Chart Showing Succession to Power in the Jochid appanage of the Mongol imperium]
Emir Noghay (d. 1299) was virtually co-ruler in the western reaches of the Jochid appanage. He managed to create a break-away Republic in the lower Danube populated by booty raiders and “ambitious brigands”. From the late 1260s it appears that Noghay, apart from contesting rule over the Golden Horde, had no real political aim and acted independently of either Möngke / Tokta Han whilst many of his ‘followers’ behaved similarly towards their own immediate commander (emir) Noghay by attacking spontaneously when and where opportunities for profit arose. This they did autonomously without seeking approval from the would-be political masters and hegemons. In this period, the ‘alliances’ forged with comrades-in-arms recruited among the Islamized Oghuz tribesmen gathered around Sari Saltuk in Deli Orman were aimed not at achieving long-term objectives, but designed for the sharing of the gains from short-term partnerships lasting for a single campaign season lasting between three and twelve months, depending on circumstances. The temporal horizon for defining of ‘mutual interest’ was calculated not in decades or even years, but months. Raiding parties were typically composed of cohorts numbering a few thousand strong. Military formations in this period and on these frontiers consisted not of hundreds or even tens of thousands of combatants provided by ‘the state’. This pattern of mass mobilization warfare in the Balkans would not emerge until much later, well after the establishment of the Ottomans in Edirne after 1361. At this juncture (1250-1350) ‘The state’ consisted of empires in dissolution (Seljukid and Byzantine) and emerging empires (Jochid, Ilkhanid and Ottoman) whose territorial extent and administrative structures had yet to be defined.

Raiding activity in the earlier period was generated by self-mobilizing forces and free agents / freelancers emerging from the bottom up, not imposed from the top down and for much of the period the prime mover and initiator of military activity was not the ‘state’, but rather independent tribes populating (as well as overseeing and controlling) the border regions at the margins of newly emerging empires, kingdoms states and mini-states (tawāif al-muluk) that sprung up in the power vacuum left by the vanishing world order formerly, i.e., pre-1250, dominated by the Byzantine and Rum Seljukid empires. If we are to have any hope of understanding the wellsprings of motivation that inspired and governed the independent actors who occupied center stage in the late 13th and early 14th centuries in Anatolia, the Balkan Peninsula and the Pontic-Caspian Steppe at this stage of history we will have to look elsewhere than the state and its perspective and attempt to inhabit the thought world of the displaced tribes and tribesmen who circulated throughout this region in search of a dwelling place (orun) or homeland (yurt) for themselves and their fellow tribesmen.

The phenomenon of divided sovereignty, a feature present in both the Byzantine and the Seljukid empires in their later imperial eras, is shown for Byzantium by the number of instances in which power was shared amongst rival contenders for the throne. Palaeologid succession too was a convoluted and impermanent affair. The general situation is summarized in the charts below showing Palaeologid rulers and co-rulers who shared (and contested) power in the final decades of the thirteenth century.

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2 For the use of this evocative term, see Joo-Yup Lee Qazaqlıq, or Ambitious Brigandage, and the Formation of the Qazaği: State and Identity in Post-Mongol Central Eurasia (Leiden, 2016).
Ruler and (co-ruler) | Tenure of office
---|---
Michael VIII (with Andronikos II as co-emperor, 1261–1282) | 1259–1282
Andronikos II (with Michael IX, 1294–1320 and Andronikos III, 1321–1328 as co-emperors) | 1282–1328

The situation a bit later on – in the period coinciding with Orhan’s reign (1326-1362) during which the Ottoman polity experienced rapid growth and expansion – became even more fraught with difficulty, complexity and uncertainty with respect to degrees of power-sharers and orders of precedence within the Byzantine realms. In this later period and during the first years of the reign of Orhan’s successor Murad I, the territories nominally under Byzantine administration exercised from the political center in Constantinople shrank even further. This situation is indicated in the chart provided below:

Ruler (Co-rulers) | Tenure of Office
---|---
John V (with John VI Kantakouzenos, 1347–1354, Matthew Kantakouzenos, 1342–1357 and Manuel II, 1373–1391 as co-emperors) | 1341–1391

Under such conditions of general political dissolution, it was military strong-men, troop mobilizers such as Emir Noghay and his equivalents and counterparts (whether Turk, Tatar or alliances consisting of a Turco-Mongol confederation of forces) who were massed along the borderlands at the margins of empire in the Danube Basin, the Crimean Peninsula and the Black Sea approaches that played the determinant role in shaping historical outcomes during the 100 year period coinciding with the prelude to, the birth and the early rise to prominence of the Ottoman emirate in Western Anatolia and the southern Balkans between 1250 and 1350.

What were the main characteristics of this period and what source or group of sources can we turn for an accurate reflection of the shared values and ethos of the participants who held center stage during this period and in these borderland regions? The is a compelling need for a non-statist non-centrist approach to the events of this period and one that avoids falling into the trap of being deceived by the political and religio-political rhetoric of the main state players who claimed agency for themselves in the dynastic annals and state-centered narratives that they devised in order to promote their own dynastic cause or perceived imperial interest. The answer is clear: we need to consult folk narrative including most especially the menakibname and the semi-legendary deslan traditions reflective of the oral culture and nomadic customs and beliefs of the tribesmen themselves. Folk literature highlights and heralds the achievements as well as the mindset, honor code and ethics of the non-dynastic agents, folk heroes and military strongmen cloaked in their own humble garb rather than disguised in the raiment of office and dignity bestowed on them by state authority. Such sources convey a sense of the homespun values and virtues cherished by the frontiersmen expressed in their own language and idiom. In these sources the actors appear warts and all not with the false honor bestowed on them by outsiders representing the top-down authority of the state.

By serving as a uniquely unfiltered account accurately reflecting historical conditions on the ground at the frontier in the late thirteenth century, the voluminous material provided in the surviving 619 folio (1238 page) text of the Saltukname ³ is ideal for our purposes as a

³ See for the manuscript copy of 619 folios, Topkapı Saray Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1612 and for the modern edition the
means of supporting the undertaking of a social anthropology of Sari Saltuk and his tribal confederates in the years between ca. 1261, when he first arrived as a refugee / displaced person to the area around the mouth of the Danube and ca. 1297, the year when he is thought to have died in the same location. In the intervening years, as is documented from other sources too, he and his fellow tribesmen went anywhere and everywhere in search of good fortune and / or self-enrichment from the shared enterprise of booty raiding accompanied by some mission work along the frontier between Christendom, Tatar and Islam.

While it is undoubtedly true – as has been ably demonstrated in a contribution by Ahmed Karamustafa to a recently published edited volume entitled Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia – that it is possible to glean rich information from the text about the importance to Sari Saltuk and his followers of their Muslim identity and the shared task of spreading the faith among Christians of the Northern Balkans and the Shamanist / Animist Tatar tribes of the Southern Russian Steppe, it is a far cry from that sense of their shared Oghuz Turkic / Muslim identity to the formulation and implementation of a state-sanctioned officially sponsored gaza ideology. The degree to which the participants in the raiding campaigns directed against Christian communities in the frontier zone of between Christianity and Islam shared a common proselytizing mission and purpose as gazi (religious warriors / combatants for the faith) that dominated in their military persona should and can be questioned with reference to the same text.

The question as to how much confessional identity mattered or could be specified with precision in this borderland context during the High Middle Ages and the extent to which it excluded other loyalties and identities (both political and professional, i.e. the soldier / warrior classes and cultural norms of residents located on the far side of a shared frontier region) are all aspects of identity and multiple / composite identity that call out for more detailed investigation. To what extent did religious zeal outweigh all other factors in identity formation in these frontier regions far from the influence of either political authority or established religious institutions present in the central zone or the heartlands of empire? All this needs to be addressed, though it is admittedly far too tall an order to be filled in a short fifteen-minute conference presentation. While Karamustafa has warned us away from reaching: “tempting generalizations about [so-called] frontier ethos”, the Saltuk-name text is actually an ideal source for studying the realities that faced the gazi of the frontier zone in the period under study, i.e. 1250-1350.

For purposes of this investigation it will be necessary for us to draw a very clear distinction between popular Islam and grassroots movements that aimed at the conversion of largely civilian population groups and masses in which charismatic preacher / saint figures such as Sari Saltuk endowed with semi-miraculous and superhuman powers and ability to defeat monsters, dragons and achieve unexpected results against overwhelming adversaries on the one hand and rhetorical and political Islam within which framework the “ideology of Gaza” was conceived and whose agents (the warrior gazi) worked on behalf of a recognized political authority or state that sponsored their activities on the other. The category of ‘warrior saint’ was in some ways an oxymoron since the ways of the

4 Michael Kiel, Divanet Vâdî Islâm Anıtklopedisi, Vol.36, pp. 147-150, has argued persuasively for his death in that location and year.
5 For an exposition of Karamustafa’s argument, see “Islamicization through the lens of the Saltuk-name”, in A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno De Nicola and Sara Yildiz (eds.), Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia (Farnham, UK 2015), pp. 349-364
6 The quote is from Karamustafa, “Islamicization through the lens of the Saltuk-name”, p. 364.
preacher/ missionary were largely peaceful as opposed to militant. Likewise the behavior of warriors who accepted voluntary surrender in exchange for quarter and the payment of tribute or indemnity (aman) seems in some ways inconsistent with warfare inspired by religious zealotry. The reality was indeed complex and considered flexibility and maneuverability to the actors and participants in ‘Holy War’. One needs to examine very carefully the sources from which such backing for the raiding activity derived. The root meaning of gazw / gazwat in Lane’s Arabic-English Lexicon is:

“The act of al ghazwa, repairing to fight with [or fight with and plunder] the enemy [in the country of the later].” 7

It is noteworthy that in its original sense the term applied not to the context of inter-denominational or sectarian conflict, but to the context of inter-clan and tribal rivalries and enmities.

The text of the Saltuk-name provides important clues as to whether we should regard the frontier warriors as exiles in search of a homeland, self-governing tribesmen in search of a livelihood by application of their technical skill and expertise in the arts of soldiery and the military profession more generally or as agents of a missionary cause fighting on behalf of a clearly identified political overlord. For us the significant time frame will not be the period of Ottoman dominance in the Balkans beginning with the capture of Edirne in 1361, but the conditions which prevailed in the previous century from circa 1261 onwards.

From a logical standpoint, it is the conditions that prevailed in the earlier era that are most likely to shed light on conditions in the years leading up to the emergence of the Ottoman state at the close of the 13th century. It is both illogical and a-historical to expect to reach an understanding of the conditions that prevailed in the half century preceding the birth of the Ottoman state with reference to conditions which emerged sixty years after its founding when it was already, relatively speaking, well-established. Leadership and direction of the gaza in the late 13th century was neither exclusively nor even primarily in the hands of states in which Islam was the primary and dominant faith.

Experts such as Istvan Vasary who have investigated the reliability and durability as well as the breath of dissemination of the new faith outside the restricted circle of the Ihan’s close advisers at court in the Jochid appanage have questioned the sincerity of Berke Ihan’s ‘conversion’, allegedly dating from the decade of the 1250s preceding his accession to the throne in 1257, and noted the subsequent reversion to the old tribal ways under Berke’s successor Mongke Temir (r. 1267-1280). 8 According to another specialist, Ö zalp Gökbilgin, it was not before the reign of Özbek Han (r. 1313-1341) that the mass conversion of the Tatars to the Islamic faith gained any real momentum in the territories belonging to the Golden Horde. 9

In closing I would like to focus on a passage found in volume one of the Saltuk-name that is

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particularly revealing of the condition of the frontier raiders in the last half of the thirteenth century. The tampering with the text that appears to have been taken place at the time of its copying down in a presentation copy made ready for the palace library in the year 1000 A.H. / 1591 A.D. is indicative of a sensitivity that arose in a later, more orthodox Sunni, imperial age concerning the issue of the rudimentary or even intermediate status of Islamic identity among the Tatars of the late thirteenth century on whose efforts as allies the Muslim fighters’ success in crusading relied so heavily. The no-strings-attached, short-term and time-limited partnerships for mutual gain in the *gazw* are described in in a telling passage:


The strong implication of these lines is that the gazis are rather mixed bag with elements recruited from diverse sources including non-Muslim Tatars. *Gazilik* does not imply homogeneity, nor uniform motive or unanimity of purpose. It is to say the least interesting to note how the wording of the text found in the Milli Kütüphane manuscript B-64 was altered (and the meaning manipulated) by the repositioning of the word *dahi* by a later copyist. For this copyist, the reconstructed text: *Olay yakında konmuşlardı. Onlara revane oldular. Onlar da gazileri karşıladilar. Müslümanlardı. Gelip buluştular. Dahi cem olrular. Bir alay olup dahi, etrafı aklınlar [.....] 11 conveyed the spirit of the age more appropriately. But by such transparent manipulation of the text: “methinks he he protests too much”. 12

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11 Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1612, folio 103a.
It is undeniable that both numerically and militarily, not to mention in terms of political hegemony, it was the Tatars who were the dominant group in the allied forces conducting the gaza in the southern Russian steppe at the particular historical conjuncture which the Saltuk-name purports to reflect and represent. 13 Scattered across the three volume of text there are many further examples of the historical realism characteristic of the text that are far too numerous to cite here. What can be said in general is that the wording as well as the meaning of the tales, legends and orally preserved narratives reflect a world order in which militant political Islam represented perhaps only a minority strand and one element among a number of others that made up the mixture of influences and motivating forces giving direction to the gaza as conducted by the likes of Sari Saltuk and his confederates. Sari Saltuk’s lifespan encompassing the decades between the 1260s when he passed over to Rumelia with his followers and the late 1290s when he died in his newfound home in the Dobruca coincided closely with the lifespan of Ertugrul Gazi who died in Söğüt in the early 1280s. The thought that warriors of this era, whether in Rumelia or in Anatolia, fought primarily either for the sake of vatan-perverlik (in an anti-Mongol context) or from an impassioned sense of religious duty or dindarlik (in an anti-Byzantine context) belies the more prosaic and mundane facts of life among the tribesmen inhabiting the no man’s land on the western frontier between mature empires in a state of rapid dissolution at the end of the troubled thirteenth century. To argue the converse smacks of anachronism and a-historicism. 14 It has been noted that in relating the military exploits of the heroes who battled on the frontier against Christendom in pre-Ottoman Anatolia the real hero was heroism itself as an abstract virtue or personality trait and not the nobility of the cause they fought for. Furthermore there is a serious undercurrent of anti-authoritarianism and anti-state sentiment that permeates these texts, a fact that we must presume reflects historical reality in the tribal circles for whom and by whom these accounts were composed and preserved. 15

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13 The numbers attributed to the Tatars are far greater, up to ten fold greater, than those estimated for the Oghuz warriors led by Sari Saltuk’s field commandants. See Akalin, Vol 1, p. 166: « Bu yanadan gaziler dahi durdular. 14:009 Şirin halka Tatarlar dahi durdular ».

14 In a speech prepared for delivery in 1956 and later published in in 1974 (see Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi 4-5 (1974), pp. 79-90) the late Professor Tayyip Gökbilgin argued that ethnic and religious solidarity were apparent in the mindset of the thirteenth century warriors of the frontier, but it is difficult to see what the format for the expression such idealism could have been other than rebellion against their Seljukid overlords who were themselves already both Oghuz Turks and fellow Muslims. We cannot interject the enthusiasms and ideologies of today’s world into the thirteenth century without running the risk of serious distortion.

15 See Gottfried Hagen, "Heroes and Saints in Anatolian Turkish Literature", Oriente Moderno, nuova serie, Anno 89 (2009), pp. 349-361. See in particular, p. 357: “Most of [the] religious heroes show contempt for centralized political power”. 