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The Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm and the Turkmen of the Byzantine frontier, 1206–1279*

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ABSTRACT  This article examines the frontier between the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm and its Byzantine neighbours in the thirteenth century, concentrating on the place of these frontier districts within the Seljuk state. Scholarship on the frontier, influenced by the ideas of Paul Wittek, has seen it as something of a “no man’s land”, politically, economically, culturally and religiously distinct from the urban heartland of the Seljuk sultanate in central Anatolia, dominated by the nomadic Turks, the Turkmen, who operated largely beyond sultanic control. It is often thought that the Seljuk and Greek sides of the border shared more in common with each other than they did with the states of which they formed a part. In contrast, this article argues that in fact the western frontier regions were closely integrated into the Seljuk sultanate. Furthermore, with the Mongol domination of the Seljuk sultanate in the second half of the thirteenth century, the Seljuk and Mongol elites became increasingly involved in this frontier region, where some of the leading figures of the sultanate had estates and endowments.

Keywords: Politics / Geography / Eastern Mediterranean; Anatolia – politics; Rûm (sultanate) – politics; Byzantine empire – politics; Frontiers – between Byzantium and Rûm; Mongols – people; Türkmen – people; Seljuks – Turkish dynasty; Nicaea (empire)

In the thirteenth century, the main political frontier between the Muslim and Christian worlds in the eastern Mediterranean lay across western Anatolia, in a line stretching roughly from Bithynia in the north to the Maeander Delta in the south (Figure 1). To the east lay the Seljuk sultanate of Rûm, with its capital in Konya, while on the west the Byzantine successor state of Nicaea (1204–1261) ruled by the Laskarid dynasty and, after the reconquest of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261, the restored Byzantine Empire. Byzantinists have devoted considerable attention to the frontier region. In part, this reflects the vital importance

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1 Among the most important studies are: Hélène Ahrweiler, “L’histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081–1317), particulièrement au XIII siècle”, Travaux et Memoires 1 (1965): 1–204; Speros Vryonis, The Decline of Hellenism in Medieval Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century (Berkeley, Cal.: University of
of the region to Nicaea, for some of the Empire’s major cities – Nicaea itself, Nymphaion and Philadelphia – lay in close proximity to the frontier. The Byzantine sources of the period are also quite rich in information, especially the chronicles of Niketas Choniates (d. ca. 1215–1217, a native of the frontier town of Chonai,
The Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm

Turkish Honaz), Akropolites (d. 1282), and Pachymers (d. ca. 1310). However, despite considerable interest on the part of Islamicists in both the Byzantine frontier in the Abûsîd and early Ottoman periods, specialists in Seljuk history have paid it little attention. Characterised as the “ difíc” (lit. “extremity, tip, end”), it is often described as “a sort of no man’s land”, dominated by the Turkmen, the nomadic Turks who by the thirteenth century are commonly seen as having become alienated from the ruling Seljuk dynasty.

Over the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the region had been a zone of constant contention, as its rich pastures, river valleys and proximity to mountains provided the perfect environment for the Turkmen to pursue their pastoralist lifestyle. Bithynia was one of the first areas of Anatolia to be settled in large numbers by Turks, with Nicaea briefly becoming the capital of the Seljuks between ca. 1081 and 1097. The town of Dorylaion (modern Eskişehir) had been the site of two major battles between the Seljuk and crusaders allied with Byzantium, first in 1097 and second in 1147. Niketas Choniates describes “the fertile plains of Dorylaion on which [the Turkmens]” herds of goats and cattle grazed, romping in the


3 The phrase is Cahen’s; see Claude Cahen, La Turquie pré-ottomane (Istanbul: Institut français d’études anatoliennes, 1988), pp. 104, 206.

4 See further Elizabeth Zachariadou, art. “ difíc”, in EI2. For a recent example of the assumption of the alienation of Turkmen and Seljuks, see Lindner, Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory, 3–4; for a critique see A.C.S. Peacock, “Court and Nomadic Life in Seljûq Anatolia”, in Turk-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life, ed. David Durand-Guédy (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 191–222. The western frontier features very little in the standard work on Seljuk Anatolia, Osman Turan’s Selçûklular Zamanında Türkiye (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1971). Turan (ibid., p. 281) remarks of the conquest of the area in 1207 that “ difíc Turkmen were concentrated in this região and undertook raids and conquests. [Sultan Ghiyath al-Dìn] Kaykhusraw conquered … this region and made it a principality [ beylık] subject to him”. Note the assumption that the region was somehow separate, a “beylık” not directly incorporated into the Seljuk state, even though no such term is found in the primary sources. See further, ibid., p. 516.

5 For an overview of Seljuk expansion to the west, see Cahen, La Turquie pré-ottomane, pp. 22–6, 43–8, 60–4.

6 The Persian and Arabic sources for the thirteenth century rarely refer to the Seljuk dynasty as Turks, although they certainly had done so in earlier periods, especially the eleventh century. When “Turk” appears in the Islamic texts dealing with Anatolia, it often clearly means a nomad, a point that is sometimes clarified by the addition of the term “ difíc” – atrâk-i difíc, for example. The term “Türkiye” occurs occasionally in thirteenth-century texts, and is unambiguously a nomad, whereas a “Turk” may also mean a military slave. To some extent, the ambiguous terminology reflects the fact that distinction between groups was more fluid than often admitted. For further discussion, see Peacock, “Court and Nomadic Life”, esp. 192–3, and for the terminology also A.C.S. Peacock, Early Seljûq History: A New Interpretation (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 48–53.
There had also been a Turkmen presence on the Maeander at least since the beginning of the twelfth century. Kinnamos (d. after 1185) gives a detailed account of the Emperor Manuel’s encounter with Turkmen grazing their horses by the source of the river, apparently returning after raiding Byzantine territory in 1146. In both the Sangarios and Maeander regions, the Turkmen presence was seasonal – summer time would be spent on cool high ground, while in winter the nomads would bring their flocks down to the warmer lower ground beside the river.

Over the twelfth century, important frontier fortresses gradually fell to the Seljuks, such as Dorylaion in 1176 and Sozopolis (modern Uluborlu, Burghli in the mediaeval Persian sources) in 1180. Following their annexation of Laodikeia (known in the Islamic sources as Ladhqi/Denizli) and Chonai (Honaz) around 1206 and the death of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw in battle at Antioch on the Maeander in 608/1211, the Seljuk advance halted. Despite some fighting between Laskarids and Seljuks around 1225–1231, the frontier stayed roughly where it had been before; and even after 1243, when the Seljuk state became effectively a protectorate of the Mongol Empire, the frontier remained broadly unchanged. Even with the influx of new waves of Turkmen migrants, displaced from their pastures in eastern and central Anatolia by the Mongols, which is reported to have disturbed the frontier in the 1260s, the Byzantines do not seem to have suffered significant territorial losses, at least not initially. Although the picture began to change somewhat in the last two decades of the thirteenth century, when the Mongol governor of Anatolia, Geikhatu, campaigned in person on the southern reaches of the frontier on the river Maeander in 691/1292, his aim was not to expand the Mongol world empire at the expense of Byzantium (with whom the Mongols were allied), but to chastise local rebels.

Doubtless this very stability, lasting almost a century, is one factor that has discouraged research. Indeed, the modern understanding of the frontier under

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8 See Kinnamos, Deeds, 14, noting a seizure of Laodikeia by the Turks before 1119.

9 Kinnamos, Deeds, 53. See Niketas, Annals, 70–1, 108–11 for Byzantine operations against Turkish nomads around Maeander, Laodikeia and Chonai in ca. 1162–1167, 1177–1179. In general, see Thone-mann, Maeander Valley, esp. 4–10, 161–70.


11 On these events, see Langdon, Byzantium’s Last Imperial Offensive, passim.


Seljuk rule remains dominated by the ideas of Paul Wittek (1894–1978). Although Wittek is best known for his theses on early Ottoman history, which continue to provoke debate, the most substantial work published in his own lifetime was his 1934 study of the south-west Anatolian beylik of Menteshe, *Das Furstentum Mentische*. The first three chapters of this book are devoted to the history of the southern parts of the Seljuk-Byzantine frontier on the Maeander River where Menteshe emerged, and many of the ideas that appear in his studies of Ottoman origins also surface here. He identified the following characteristics in the west Anatolian frontier zone:

1. Ethnic differentiation from the central state, but with common features on both sides of border.
2. The emergence of local military leaders who formed war-bands ("Krieger-Clans"), and resisted attempts by central authorities to tax them.
3. A distinctive common culture on both sides of the frontier, owing to its distance from the cultural centres and constant contact with the enemy side.
4. The use of the frontier as a refuge for heresies, owing to the lack of state control.
5. An economy dominated by cross-frontier raiding in this zone of constant war, where fighting was also the main source of income.
6. A completely different way of life from the theological, literary, legal and commercial organisation of government centres, showing a heroic, chivalric, romantic but primitive spirit.

These ideas have proved vastly influential on subsequent scholarship on the frontier, as may be seen from the recent article on “Udj” by Elizabeth Zachariadou in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*:

The inhabitants of these districts were obliged to be continuously in readiness to confront an attack or to organise a raid themselves penetrating into the enemy territory. Their way of life inspired folk poets who composed the epic of the Byzantine ἀκριταί and that of the famous Muslim hero Ghāzī Sayyid al-Baṭṭāl. On both sides, the population of the frontier zones presented peculiarities as it constituted a mixture of ethnic, religious and cultural elements. Changing sides was not unusual for the warriors; women abducted from the enemy side and prisoners taken facilitated some assimilation, while adventurers who aspired to a brilliant military carrier, sheer bandits seeking legitimacy and persecuted heretical elements took refuge in them.

The idea that the frontier possessed its own distinctive culture, common to both sides but not to the imperial centres has been especially influential. The frontier city

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17 Zachariadou, “Udj”.

of Philadelphia has been described as a “Greek emirate”, while Michel Balivet has emphasised the frequent Turkish alliances and marriages of Philadelphia’s Greek rulers, who often sought to assert their autonomy from the Byzantine Empire.  

Keith Hopwood also saw the frontier zone as an area where “Byzantine and Turkish cultures merged”, while Dimitri Korobeinikov has recently affirmed the many common features shared by Greek and Muslim society under Seljuk rule. Such scholarship as has touched on the Seljuk side of the border has tended to emphasise the other strand in Wittek’s thinking, that of the ği as a lawless land, remote from the customs or even concerns of Konya. In a different article and noting the ignorance of events there in the Persian sources, in particular Ibn Bibî (d. after 684/1285), Wittek describes the situation thus: “… as if the chancery at Konya either would or could care about nomad movements on a distant frontier”. The Seljuks’ allegedly tenuous grip on the frontier is thought to have evaporated completely in the second half of the thirteenth century as the Mongol invasions both encouraged the new influx of displaced Turkmen and sapped such power as the Seljuk state had, resulting in the installation of a pro-Mongol vassal Seljuk sultan, Rûn al-Dîn Kılıç Arslan in Konya in 659/1261. This event has been described as “the end of aspirations [for the Seljuk state] to be an independent sultanate”. As Claude Cahen put it:

Les efforts des Mongols pour réduire les Turcomanes avaient échoué, tout particulièrement dans la moitié occidentale de l’Asie Mineure (plateau central exclu). Petit à petit ce qui n’avait été que des bandes de pasteurs nomads autour de villes encore plus ou moins gouvernées par des représentants de l’autorité central étaient devenus autonomes etavaient pris possession de ces villes. Ainsi se formaient des principautés encore élémentaires. (The efforts of the Mongols to reduce the Turcomans had failed, especially in the western part of Asia Minor, apart from the central plateau. Little by little what had been no more than bands of nomadic pastoralists around cities which were still more or less governed by representatives of central authority had become autonomous groups, and had taken possession of those cities. So principalities, still in a primitive stage of development, came into existence.)

The first of these “principalities” (Turkish beylik) was that founded in the Denzli region by the Turkmen chief Muḥammad Beg in 660/1262, about which we shall

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19Hopwood, “Nicæa and Her Eastern Neighbours”, 42.


23Cahen, La Turquie pré-ottomane, 339.

have more to say in due course. This process of beylik formation coincided with the restoration of Constantinople as the Byzantine capital in 1261. In the view of Speros Vryonis, this led to a fatal neglect of the frontier zone on the part of the Byzantines: “These western Udj or Turkmen borders slipped from Seljuk control, and the Turkmen groups began to conquer and settle in the remainder of the river valleys”; ultimately, Vryonis states, these nomads, in the form of the Ottomans, would destroy Byzantium.

No doubt the frontier zone did indeed have some peculiar cultural and demographic characteristics. The Nicaeans, for instance, not only allowed Turkmen settlement within their territories, but also settled Qipchaq (Cuman) Turkish nomads in certain areas of the frontier.26 Wittek was doubtless also correct to argue that both sides of the frontier shared much in common. How else can one explain an instance such as the Byzantine Theodore Mangaphas (d. 1205), whose surname appears to be Turkish, and who proclaimed himself emperor with the support of his Turkish troops?27 Niketas Choniates recounts in horrified tones how the Greek Mangaphas behaved exactly like an archetypical Turkmen chief, sacking the church at Chonai in 1196, selling Christian prisoners into captivity and pillaging settlements in Byzantine territory.28 A similar case was Manuel Mavrozomes (fl. early thirteenth century), a Greek who established himself as a frontier lord serving first Byzantium then the Seljuks. Niketas records of Mavrozomes that, “marching out with Turks, he plundered and laid waste the land watered by the Maeander river”29 — again much as one would expect of a Turkmen chief leading his troops to plunder.

Despite these common features, this article will argue that in fact the western frontier zone formed an integral part of the Seljuk state, one which in fact became more integrated, not less, with the imposition of Mongol rule. In addition to its close economic and political links to central Anatolia, the region actively participated in the Islamic, Sufi-influenced culture of the Konya court, with which it had more in common than with Byzantine towns across the border, such as Philadelphia. The period we shall concentrate on is that between the Seljuk annexation of Chonai/Honaz and Laodikeia/Ladhıq in 1206, and 678/1279, when the Mongols sought to assert more direct control of Anatolia in the wake of a major rebellion, although I shall occasionally refer to evidence from both earlier and later periods. In particular, I shall evaluate the evidence for the so-called “beylik” of Muḥammad Beg and ‘Alī Beg based in Ladhıq/Denizli, which features

28Niketas, Annals, 220.
frequently in the secondary literature but whose place in the Seljuk sultanate has not been sufficiently understood.\textsuperscript{30} A short excursus on terminology is in order. In this essay, I eschew using the term \textit{uút} to mean the frontier. This is for the simple reason that, despite being well established in modern scholarly usage with this meaning, it is not at all clear that this was the term’s thirteenth-century signification. In fact, \textit{uút} can frequently signify not a place but a people – the Turkmen.\textsuperscript{31} The term \textit{wút-i uút}, which we frequently meet in the Persian sources, does not therefore necessarily mean a frontier province but rather one that is inhabited by Turkmen. Whether or not, as Cahen believed,\textsuperscript{32} the \textit{wút-i uút} had a special administrative status within the Seljuk state (a contention for which the evidence is uncertain), territories with such a name could certainly stretch far into the heart of Seljuk Anatolia, to regions such as Amasya, and even Konya and Antalya, where the Seljuk sultans had their palaces and which were nowhere near any frontier. Certainly, given their substantial Turkmen populations, the western frontiers of the Seljuk state were sometimes referred to as the \textit{uút};\textsuperscript{33} but they were not the only regions described as such. For this reason, clarity is better served if we avoid the usage of \textit{uút} to mean frontier.

**The economic and cultural structures of frontier life**

One of the inspirations for Wittek’s conception of frontier life was the description by the Maghribi traveller Ibn Sa’d (d. 685/1286) with which \textit{Das Furstentum Mentesche} starts:\textsuperscript{34}

\begin{quote}

The mountains of the Turkmen and their land: there are a numerous people of Turkish descent who conquered the land of Rûm in the period of the
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{31} See the discussion in Peacock, “Court and Nomadic Life”, 199–205; see also Korobeïnikov, “How Byzantine Were the Early Ottomans?”, 224–7, who reaches different conclusions from those proposed here.


\textsuperscript{33} See, for example, Shams al-Dîn Ahmed al-Âflâkî, Manâqib al-ârîfîn, ed. Tahsin Yazar, volume 2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976), II: 990: \textit{az safar-i wút-i uút bi-hañwât-i yâh shahr-i Lâdîq nazdîk rasîdîm}. It should be noted that Korobeïnikov questions the size of the Turkmen population of the frontier: Korobeïnikov, “How Byzantine Were the Early Ottomans?”, 227–9. It may well be the case that some of the estimates in the medieval sources are excessive, but the question of the proportion of Turkmen to settled population in these areas cannot easily be resolved.

Seljuks. They have become accustomed to raid the *akritai* who live on the coast, to take their possessions and sell them to the Muslims. Only the existence of a peace treaty (*hudna*) and the force of the sultan hold them back. They make Turkmen carpets, which are exported. On their coast is a gulf called Macre, which is famous among travellers, from which timber is exported to Alexandria and elsewhere. There is located the river of Battāl, which is deep. Across it is a bridge, which is lowered when there is peace (*hudna*) and raised when war breaks out, and which is the border between the Muslims and Christians. The Battāl after whom it is named often raided Christians in Umayyad times … To the north of the aforementioned Antalya are the mountains of Denizli, in which region and its surroundings are said to be around 200,000 Turkmen households, who are the ones called the *ūj*. The distance between it and the castle of Khūnās [Chonai] where bows (?) are made is two *farsakhs*. The mountains of the Turkmen adjoin the lands of al-Lashkari, the ruler of Constantinople, from the gate of Denizli.

Many of the key elements of Wittek’s characterisation of frontier life are present here: nomads, cross border-raiding, and romantic, heroic legends in the form of Battāl, the Umayyad warrior who was the subject of a Turkish prose epic. The region is depicted as having its own character, for sure, but in contrast to Wittek’s view, Ibn Saʿīd suggests that the Seljuk state could indeed make its will felt here. The Turkmen are restrained not just by the sultan’s coercive power (*qahr al-sultan*), but also by a peace treaty – a *hudna*, a word that implies a formal written agreement, not merely a state of peace (*ṣulḥ*). This is confirmed by Greek sources, which indicate that, at least at certain times and places, there was a delineated frontier between Byzantium and the Seljuks, marked by geographical features such as the Sangarios and Maeander rivers. Sometimes, however, formal agreements might be negotiated directly with the nomads. As pastoralists, the latter’s major concern was to maintain access to their winter pastures in the low-lying river basins. Pachymeres relates that, as part of a peace treaty following his campaigns on the Maeander in 1269, the Byzantine general John Palaiologos (d. 1274), “… accepted [the Turks’] request and fixed limits where they could move and descend for their pastures, it being understood that they would pay very dearly if they broke the agreement.”

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35i.e., Telmessos/Fethiye.
36Cahen, “Ibn Saʿīd sur l’Asie Mineure”, 42, n. 10, follows Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche*, 2 in interpreting this as the Dalaman Çay on the basis of its association with Macre. However, it is equally, if not more, likely that as so often Ibn Saʿīd’s information is confused. If we are looking for a river near the sacred sites associated with Battāl Ghażī (whose tomb at Seyitgazi near Eskişehir is discussed below), the most obvious candidate is the Porsuk Çay which flows past Seyitgazi and Dorylaion/Eskişehir, in the northern section of the frontier.
37For a survey of the legend of Battāl, see Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 31–4; for an edition and translation of the Turkish epic devoted to him, see Battālnāme, ed. and trans. Yorgos Dedes (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1996).
Such a policy of accommodation with the Turkmen was not an innovation of the Nicaean state. Dorylaion was fortified by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Komnenos (d. 1180) in the late twelfth century, but it proved impossible to keep out the nomads, and eventually a deal was agreed whereby they would pay for pasture rights. In the Islamic world, such arrangements are well known from Seljuk Central Asia.

It is worth dwelling briefly on the better researched Nicaean/Byzantine side of the frontier to give some context to our investigations. Recent scholarship on the Byzantine frontier economy has painted a rather more complex picture than one of simple raiding and occasional trading. After the fall of Constantinople in 1204, members of the Byzantine elite rushed to acquire property on the Maeander, and numerous disputes ensued as wealthy members of the Nicaean elite tried to evict existing landowners. This suggests that, despite the Turkmen incursions that had by this point being going on for a good century, territory right in the heart of their summer pastures remained valuable and attractive. This does not mean that there was no Turkmen impact: on the Maeander delta there was a shift away from settled agriculture, as the Byzantines themselves turned to pastoralism. The Nicaean Empire established lucrative and important stud farms in the areas and, although there is no direct evidence of it, it would seem likely that Turkmen were employed thereon, famous as they were for their equestrian skills. However, the agricultural decline was certainly not uniform, and the situation on the Maeander delta may represent only a localised trend. Further north, the fifteenth-century Ottoman tax registers for Bithynia attest a vibrant agricultural economy, and this impression is reinforced for the late-thirteenth century by the list of lands belonging to the villages of a waqf at Sultan Öyügü (Eskişehir, on the Seljuk side of the frontier), which refer to the income expected from farm land (mazārī), fruit trees and mills.

Indeed, there is some evidence that the Nicaeans came to see Turkmen as an asset to be managed and propitiated, in a least certain circumstances. According to an encomium by Theodore II Laskaris (d. 1258) written around 1250, after settling his Qipchaqs on the frontier, the Nicaean Emperor John Vatatzes (d. 1254) had wed the Qipchaqs’ children to those of the “Persoi” – by whom must be meant the Turks, and more specifically, the Turkmen. Both Qipchaqs and Turkmen accepted baptism.

41For a twelfth-century negotiation over pasture rights in Central Asia, see Nāmahā-yi Rashīd al-Dīn Watwat, ed. Qāsim Tūsīrkān (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Tīhrān, 1383), pp. 29–32.
44On the modern Turkmen presence in the area, see ibid., 297–8.
been carefully calibrated specifically to include a Turkmen population. A prime example is Tarsia, lying on the eastern side of the Sangarios – on the other side of what Pachymeres (supra, n. 38) tells us was the frontier – and basically consisting of a large plain, today known as Akova, near modern Adapazar – a major Turkmen pasture. From the point of view of defensive strategy, it would make relatively little sense to invest in holding this scantily populated region; far better to retreat to the western bank of the Sangarios than try to defend a prime winter pasture with little other strategic or economic value. The Nicaean governor of Tarsia must therefore have been responsible for managing and harnessing the nomad presence rather than simply keeping it out. The story of a remarkable defection underlines this point. The future Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (d. 1282) had been governor of Tarsia and neighbouring Mesothynia on behalf of the Laskarids since 1254. In 1256, fearful of Theodore II Laskaris and for his own safety, Michael suddenly fled to the Turks, to the court of ʿIzz al-Dīn Kaykāʿūs II (d. ca. 1280), where several of his Komnenian relatives were already in the Seljuk service. Michael was appointed to a senior position in the Seljuk army, the office of beglerbeg, in which position he led the Seljuk forces to their disastrous defeat by the Mongols at Aksaray in 654/1256. In the wake of the defeat, Michael, still supported by his Turkish troops, fled to the northern province of Kastamonu, possibly becoming its governor or muqtaʿ. Kastamonu was famous in the thirteenth century for its Turkmen population, and would have been the very province adjoining his old territory of Tarsia. Effectively, therefore, he was moving from administering the Nicaean side of the frontier to its Seljuk counterpart. Āqsaraʿī (d. ca. 1323–1333), our major Persian source for Michael’s activities in Rûm, is profoundly hostile to him, accusing him of inciting Sultan ‘Izz al-Dīn to seek Turkmen support for his resistance to the Mongols. Apparently, Michael somehow incurred the profound enmity of Muḥammad Beg, the “amir of the Turks of the ūj”. All these factors suggest that Michael was intimately entangled with Turkmen politics; it is probable, if impossible to prove, that his involvement in and understanding of Turkmen affairs derived from his time as governor of Tarsia.

49Ibid., 174; Akropolites, History, 352.
53This suspicion of his nomadic alliances is in fact strengthened by one superficially contradictory piece of evidence, the testimony of Akropolites that as Michael fled across the frontier in 1256, he was waylaid and robbed by a group of Turkmen, arriving in Konya in desperate straits. Why does Akropolites, ever anxious to present an idealised portrait of Michael, provide this information – the sole source to do so? One credible explanation is that it was precisely to defuse rumours of the emperor’s close association with the Turkmen to a Constantinopolitan audience. See Akropolites, History, § 65, p. 315, and see also p. 317, n. 2.
If relations between the Greeks and the Turkmen could be subject to negotiation and mutual accommodation, as illustrated by the cases of the lower Maeander and Tarsia, we should anticipate that it is likely that something similar would have happened on the Seljuk side of the border. The political structures that facilitated this will be investigated in the subsequent section. For the moment, I wish to return to the economic and cultural characteristics of the frontier, now adding the evidence from the Seljuk side, to show how the region was integrated into the Seljuk state. Given the paucity of references to the frontier in the Persian chronicles that constitute our main source for Seljuk history, the most striking evidence for the region’s status are the surviving architectural remains, in the form of caravanserais and religious buildings.

Most of the dated caravanserais are from the period before the disturbances of the year 659/1261.\textsuperscript{54} One group clusters around the Phrygian hills near the source of the Sangarios, between modern Afyonkarahisar and Seyitgazi, and two more survive in the Maeander region, near the town of Denizli. Unfortunately, the inscriptions from the northern set of caravanserais have not survived, although that at Deve Han near Seyitgazi was apparently constructed in 1207–1208, and Egret Han perhaps in 1260. Slightly further from the frontier lies an earlier caravanserai, the Çardak Han, built in 627/1230. As we shall see, there is also literary evidence of other caravanserais in the area that have not survived. The caravanserais, traditionally thought to have been used as rest places for itinerant caravans, suggest cross-border trade, linking the western peripheries of the Seljuk state and the Nicaean Empire to the major economic centres in central Anatolia, Konya and Kayseri, and to Seljuk emporia on the Mediterranean. However, there are few such buildings on the Nicaean side of the border,\textsuperscript{55} and it has been suggested that commerce was just one function of caravanserais. They also projected and symbolised the power of the Seljuk state and its officials who built them, and served a variety of purposes to facilitate state administration, among them accommodation for itinerant officials or even sultans, as part of the postal and intelligence system, and supporting tax collection and military manoeuvres.\textsuperscript{56} Whatever their exact purpose, the caravanserais are certainly testimony to the engagement of the most senior members of the Seljuk elite in the frontier zone. According to epigraphic evidence, the best known of these caravanserais, the Ak Han outside Denizli, was built in 652/1254 by Qara¯sonqor.


\textsuperscript{55}Xenodocheia (hostels) dating from the ninth and tenth centuries are known, but seem to have been intended to link Nicaea with Constantinople. It has been suggested that Bithynian trade in the thirteenth century was of regional rather than international importance. See Maria Gerolymatou, “Le commerce, VIIe-XVe siècle”, in La Bithynie au moyen âge, pp. 485–98, esp. 485–6.(See note 45.) However, more recent research has indicated that Nicaea was a major commercial player in the thirteenth century eastern Mediterranean. See Redford, “Caravanserais and Commerce”.


\textsuperscript{278}A.C.S. Peacock
b. ‘Abdallāh – brother of the leading political figure in the Seljuk state, the vizier Jalāl al-Dīn Qarāṭāy (d. 652/1254). Meanwhile, the Çardak Han was built by the amīr Rashīd al-Dīn Iyāz b. ‘Abdallāh al-Shihābī, an officer of sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Kayqubād (r. 616/1219–634/1237).  

The other form of investment was in religious structures, of which the most prominent was the shrine of the Umayyad ghazi hero Baṭṭāl at Seyitgazi. Although the surviving structures at Seyitgazi were all erected by the Ottomans, popular legends that circulated in the later Middle Ages recorded that the shrine had been founded by the mother of the Seljuk sultan ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Kayqubād after a vision. She is also reputed to have been buried there. Other evidence suggests that the shrine may have been endowed or restored by Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I in 1205 after his release from captivity in Constantinople, possibly to thank the Danishmen-did Turkmens who had played a key role in securing his restoration to the throne. The fact that a member of the Seljuk family, Masʿūd b. Kīlīc Arslan, had been appointed as governor of the Dorylaion region after 1176, gives these claims of Seljuk involvement further credibility.  

Did the turmoil around 1261 result in an abandonment of Seljuk investment in the region, as might be suggested on the tenuous evidence of the absence of caravanserai construction? On the contrary, the frontier region remained the focus of considerable elite investment in the 1260s and 1270s by both Mongol and Seljuk officials. Land around Sivrihisar near Eskişehir was owned by the immensely powerful nā’ib al-saltāna (deputy of the sultanate), Amin al-Dīn Mīkā’īl (d. ca. 676/1277), who converted it into waqf, as well as in 673/1274 restoring the main mosque of Sivrihisar, where he probably also built several other structures including a madrasa, a library and a zāwiyā, according to the evidence of Ottoman documents. In Sultan Öyüğ (Eskişehir), the leading Mongol amīr and governor of Kırşehir, Nur al-Dīn Ibn Jāja, undertook an even more extensive campaign of building. According his waqfiyya dated 670/1272, he built a new mosque and a caravanserai, restored no fewer than 17 other mosques and a zāwiyā, and endowed two nearby villages, their lands and their produce for the support of his foundations in the town. An indication of some of the products traded in the caravanserais is also given: that outside Sultan Öyüğ had a “market for cloth, coloured and raw silk”, which

59 Yürekli, Architecture and Hagiography, 79–85; Wittek, Das Furstentum Montesche, 8.  
60 Peacock, “Court and Nomadic Life”, 203, with further references at n. 67.  
63 Temir, Kırşehir Emiri, 61–2, ll. 554–5: al-khan alladht/fsih sitq al-bazz wa-l-khazz wa-l-gazz. The spelling for al-khazz as ār in the text is evidently a misprint. Temir’s Turkish translation gives “bez, yünülü ve ipekli kumaşlar” (“cloth, wool and silk textiles”), which is wrong.
was produced by the Empire of Nicaea. Another Seljuk grandee involved in the frontier was Fakhr al-Dīn Şâhib ‘Atâ (d. 687/1288). He endowed a madrasa and a caravanserai to the west of Akşehir, and carved out much of the western frontier as a family fief. Ibn Bībī tells us that he gave Lâdhīq, Honaz and Karahisar Develi to his sons, and his descendants held sway in Afyon until the middle of the fourteenth century, as inscriptions there attest.

The investments of these leading figures suggest that the frontier enjoyed a degree of prosperity and was economically and politically integrated into the Seljuk state through the elite’s involvement as much as through trade networks. The presence ofwaqfs such as those endowed by Nūr al-Dīn b. Jāja at Eskişehir and Āmīn al-Dīn Mīkānī near Sivrihisar raises the question of the broader religious and cultural orientation of the region. While the presence of the shrine at Seyitgazi may seem to support Mühyīdīn’s contention of a distinctive frontier culture inspired by romantic, heroic epics such as the tales of Baṭṭāl Ghāẓī, the early-fourteenth-century hagiographer Aflākī tells a rather different story, stressing the enthusiasm of the Turkmen elites of Lâdhīq for Sufism. Mūḥammad Beg, “the ghazi and hero (ghāzī wa bahādur) of the land [of the uṣūf]” is portrayed as a disciple of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), whom we visited in Konya, while Shuja’ al-Dīn Ānīn, who may have been Mūḥammad’s grandson and who ruled in Lâdhīq/Denizli ca. 1292–1333, is said to have been a mūrīd of Ārif Chelebi, Rūmī’s grandson.

Two surviving manuscripts produced in the city shed a certain light on its cultural and religious atmosphere. The first was produced in Lâdhīq in Rajab 660/May–June 1262, when, as we shall see, the city was under the control of the Turkmen chief Mūḥammad Beg. Written by a scribe named ‘Aṭī b. Sulaymān al-Qūnawī, the manuscript (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Halet Efendi Ek 92) is a collection (majmī‘a) of three Persian works dealing with Sufism in the Akbari tradition of the great Seljuk intellectual Ṣādūr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 673/1274). These are a work dedicated to an otherwise unknown Turkish or Turkmen amīr, Sayf al-Dīn Ṭūghrīl, Manāḥīj al-Sayfīyya; and two further works dealing with the faith and behaviour of the Muslim from a Sufi perspective, the Ṣādūr Ṣādūr al-imān and the Taḥṣīrat al-mubtadi. Both the nisba of the scribe, attesting his affiliation with Konya, and the contents of the work suggest the penetration of the theology, language and culture of the Seljuk capital into the Turkmen heartland of the frontier. Another slightly later example of this

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64See Redford, “Caravanserais and Commerce”.
67e.g. Aflākī, Manāḥīj al-ʿarīfīn, II: 864, 869, 934, 939, 943.
interpenetration of Turkmen and Islamic culture is MS Süleymaniye Hudai 71, a manuscript of Najm al-Dîn Râzî’s (d. 654/1256) al-Ta’wilât al-najmiyya, consisting of a Sufi tafsîr of selected Qur’ânic sîras, copied in Dhû l-Ḥijja 738/1338, according to the colophon “in the madrasa in the [God]-protected frontier city of Lâdhiq” (هيئة المحرسة دار النفر لاقح حرسها لله تعالى في المدينة المينية بها). The copyist’s name is ʿAbd al-Salâm b. Turkmân b. Tughânshâh al-Qûnawî, suggesting both Turkmen ancestry and a connection with Konya. Even the quintessential dâr al-thaghhr (frontier city) of Lâdhiq thus possessed madrasas, manuscript copyists, and Persian texts, and its Turkmen elite shared in the same Sufi culture as Konya.

Political structures on the frontier

By what means might what Ibn Saʿîd calls the qahr al-sultân, the force of the sultan, be brought to bear on the Turkmen to facilitate Seljuk control? There were of course governors appointed to towns in the frontier region. After the annexation of Chonai and Lâdhiq, the Seljuks appointed the Greek marcher lord, Manuel Mavrozomes, as governor. 70 By 612/1215, Chonai had been granted to a high ranking Seljuk amîr, whose name we know from an inscription at Sinop – Asad al-Dîn al-Ghâlîbî. The last element of his name is particularly interesting as it indicates he was personally connected to the Sultan ʿIzz al-Dîn Kaykhusraw I, who bore the title “al-sultân al-ghâlîb”, most likely as a member of his personal slave (ghulâm) retinue. 71 In contrast to the Nicaean side, which witnessed widespread construction of fortifications in the thirteenth century on Lower Sangarios and the Maeander, 72 to date little evidence of Seljuk military architecture or construction from the border region has come to light. The most significant Seljuk garrison in the vicinity of the frontier (at least to judge by the frequency of references in the sources) was the re-used Romano-Byzantine fortification at Uluborlu. This had something of the character of a high security prison for elite prisoners, 73 and in any event was not particularly close to the frontier, lying a good 120 km southwest of Lâdhiq/Denizli. As mentioned above, caravanserais may also have played a role as government outposts and in maintaining local security, and many of them were situated much nearer to the frontier, next to the shrines, with

70 Niketas, Annals, 350–1. On the governors of Honaz, Lâdhiq and Kütahya, see further Cahen, La Turquie pré-ottomane, 204. On Mavrozomes, see further Yıldız, “Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes”.
71 For the inscription, see Scott Redford, Legends of Authority: The 1215 Citadel Inscriptions of Sinop Citadel, Turkey (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2014), pp. 228–30.
73 Alâʾ al-Dîn Kayqubâd’s estranged wife Mahpar Khâtun was exiled here in the 1220s, where she also engaged in building mosques and caravanserais; on his accession in 1237, Ghîyâth al-Dîn Kaykhusraw II’s half-brothers ʿIzz al-Dîn Kaykâûs and Rûkûn al-Dîn were sent to Uluborlu. See Scott Redford, “Paper, Stone, Scissors: ‘Alâ’ al-dîn Kayqubad, ‘Ismat al-Dunya wa’l-Dîn, and the Writing of Seljuk History”, in The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East, ed. A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 151–70, esp. 152–8; Ibn Bîbi, al-Awâmîr al-āldîyya, 472, 549.
which they may have served to mark the frontier. Doubtless, as at Uluborlu, the Seljuks re-used Byzantine forts where they were available, and it is possible that, given the absence of research, there was more of a military infrastructure than is realised.

The Byzantine sources were frequently sceptical of attempts by the sultans to distance themselves from the nomads. The treaty between Manuel Komnenos and Kılıç Arslan II in 1162 stipulated that “those who lay under his authority, but who are clever at living by thefts and customarily are called the Turkomans” would not be allowed to raid Byzantine territory, obliging the Seljuk ruler to prevent this. Indeed, the Turkmen themselves sent a delegation to Constantinople to ensure that Kılıç Arslan represented their interests – “to be suitor on their behalf to the emperor”. Attempts by an ambassador of Kılıç Arslan II to claim to Manuel in ca. 1167 that the Turkmen raiding had taken place against the sultan’s wishes were not believed; Choniates remarks that, “Offering other such specious arguments but describing conditions that were not in accordance with the facts, he was caught in the act of lying”. The Byzantines had good reason for their scepticism. A careful reading of the sources reveals that, notwithstanding revolts and tensions from time to time, the Seljuk sultans and their court maintained close links with the Turkmen; indeed, when Turkmen revolts occurred, they were frequently sparked by disputes over legitimate succession within the Seljuk family. Notwithstanding the Turkmen revolts that took place from time to time, both Byzantine and Persian sources confirm the enduring “special relationship” between Seljuk sultans and at least some groups of Turkmen in their accounts of the Seljuk Sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn Kaykāʿūs II, dethroned at the Mongols’ behest in 659/1261. These sources recall that ʿIzz al-Dīn was accompanied into exile in the Byzantine lands by a mass of Turkmen.

The Persian sources offer some hints as to how sultanic authority made itself felt among the Turkmen. Ibn Bībī mentions the “commanders of the āy province” – sarwar wa-farmān-rawā-[yiy] vilāyat-i āy – themselves descended from the Danishmendid Turkmen Yaghibasan, who were instrumental in ensuring the return of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw from exile in Byzantium in 1205. They had command over more junior officials and commanders, described as “umarā wa-sar-khaylān-i ān nawāḥ”. The three Danishmendid brothers were bound to Ghiyāth al-Dīn by the tightest bonds of personal loyalty, we are told. Elsewhere Ibn Bībī refers to the office of Turkmān-shīhna. From the context, this individual seems to have had responsibility for Turkmen troops in the Seljuk forces, but it is also possible that, as was the case in the Great Seljuk Empire, the shīhna

75 Kinnamos, Deeds, 158.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Peacock, “Court and Nomadic Life”, passim.
79 See Cahen, “Seljukides, Turcomans et Allemands”, 24–31; see also the discussion of the Jimrī episode below.
80 See the discussion of these events in Wittek, “Yazījoghlu ‘Ali”, passim.
82 Ibid., 76: waftā wa-walāʿ-i sultān Ghiyāth al-Dīn-rā shīʿar wa-dīthār-i khowd sākhtā bādand.
83 Ibid., 621.
functioned more generally as the sultan’s representative to the Turkmen, with a variety of responsibilities, from collecting taxes from the nomads to mustering them for military operations and allotting pasturage. On occasion, this shihna was himself a Turkmen. As we shall see below, Muḥammad Beg of Denizli actively sought the appointment of a shihna, which suggests that the office in the Anatolian Seljuk sultanate was (or at least could at times be) of much greater significance than merely a military command.

The Turkmen also evinced a need for political legitimacy in some form. To appreciate this, it is worth citing the account of the revolt of Muḥammad Beg, the Turkmen chief of Denizli, preserved by the Mamlūk author Baybars al-Manṣūrī. It was this event, coming in the wake of ʿIzz al-Dīn Kayqubād’s defeat by the Mongols, that Cahen saw as marking the collapse of Seljuk power on the frontier (see nn. 23, 24 supra):

[in 659/1261] ... Sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn fled in defeat [at the hands of the Mongols] to Constantinople ... and his brother inherited his kingdom except for the frontiers, mountains and coastline, which were in the hands of the Turkmen. The latter resisted giving allegiance to Sultan Rukn al-Dīn [IV]; their leaders [kubaraʿuhum] were Muḥammad Beg and his brother Iylās Beg and his relative by marriage ʿAlī Beg ... They sent to Hulagu [the Mongol ruler of Iran and the west] offering him obedience, and tribute, and asking from him to send a flag [sanjaq] and a decree [fīrmān] with their investment, as well as a shihna to reside with them. He agreed to this, and sent them a shihna named Qulshar, and wrote for them a decree investing them with the land they controlled, which was Denizli, Honaz, Taḷamān (Dalaman), and their surroundings ... [In 660/1262] Hulagu sent to Muḥammad Beg the chief [amīr] of the Turkmen in Anatolia, summoning him to the ordu [Mongol court/military camp]. [Muḥammad Beg] refused and did not go. Hulagu then sent an order to Sultan Rukn al-Dīn and the Mongols in Anatolia to go and fight Muḥammad Beg and the Turkmen who were with him. His relative ʿAlī Beg betrayed him, and went to Sultan Rukn al-Dīn and strengthened the latter’s resolve to fight the Turkmen. He showed him their weak points and the entry points to their country ... [the Turkmen under Muḥammad Beg are defeated] ... and ʿAlī Beg was established as chief over the Turkmen [amīran ʿalā l-Turkmaṇ] and the Mongols ruled those border lands up to the extremity of Istanbul.

Thus a Turkmen chief required not just the symbolic legitimacy of the standard and fīrmān but even the appointment of a resident representative of authority, the shihna. No doubt Muḥammad Beg needed these forms of recognition to secure his position locally. What he was trying to do was not to assert independence so much as to swap one overlord — the Seljuk sultan — for another — the Mongol khan; it was essential that

he be seen to have a suzerain, whoever it was. Furthermore, the situation was much more complex than simply one of independent-minded Turkmen throwing off Seljuk tutelage. Muḥammad Beg’s ambitions are opposed by his own relative ‘Alī Beg, who was successfully able to harness Seljuk-Mongol support for his own ambitions.

A further impression of Muḥammad Beg’s integration into the Seljuk system comes from Aflākī’s anecdote about him, noted above (n. 68), which is intended to show his devotion to Rūmī. The incidental details, however, are suggestive of his political role: he is summoned by the leading Seljuk political figure, Muʿīn al-Dīn Sulaymān the Pervane (d. 676/1277), to Konya (where he also meets Rūmī). He is then obliged to continue to Kayseri “to give the amīr’s account of the realm of the ʿūj” (umarā-rā ḥisāb-i mamālik-i ʿūj diḥad). Although his men are implicated in plundering a caravan, this lawlessness is not ignored by the Seljuk state, and Muḥammad Beg is thus portrayed as subject to the Pervane’s authority, and summoned to Konya and Kayseri to answer for himself and his supporters.

Under the rule of Muḥammad’s successor ‘Alī Beg, the Turkmen principality on the Maeander did not suddenly flake away from Mongol tutelage. As Baybars al-Mansūrī specifically states, the Mongols thereby actually extended their control over the borderland. Further evidence for the political status of the polity comes from Ibn Bibi’s account of ‘Alī Beg’s own attempted revolt some fifteen years later, while the Seljuks were distracted by the rebellion in 675/1276 of the pretender Jimrī, who established his base on the western frontier in Karahisar Develi (Afyonkarahisar). However, the response by the Seljuks suggests that they maintained intelligence networks, sympathisers and officials in the heart of ‘Alī Beg’s territories:

The sultan moved from that place and came to the plain at Burghlū [Ulu-borlu]. The agents and sympathisers of the dynasty [umarā wa hawādārān-i dawlat] who were in the region of Lādhiq and Honaz complained about ‘Alī Beg. At the time of the disturbances and the takeover of Funduqdār [i.e. Jimrī], ‘Alī Beg had turned away from the bondage of loyalty to the Seljuk family and had rebelled, and sought to make friends with foreigners [ajānīb]. They summoned him to the court [bārgāh], and confronted him with his enemies. When he admitted his crime, they sent him from the royal tent to Karahisar Develi [Afyonkarahisar], where he died of terror and worry. Afterwards, the sultan went round the vicinity of Karahisar, Sandıklı, Şuhut and other areas to suppress unrest, summoning all the Turkmen [turkān-i ʿūj] to the rightly guided path [of obedience]. They all took the path of seeking forgiveness and sought pardon for what had happened. The sultan gave each one a decree of amnesty [fīrmān-i amān].

Ibn Bibi’s account shows that ‘Alī Beg’s revolt was precipitated only by the major crisis posed by Jimrī’s rebellion. It is not entirely clear whether ‘Alī Beg actually allied himself with Jimrī; perhaps Jimrī’s Karamanid allies are the ajānīb who are

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86 Aflākī, Manāqib al-ʿārifīn, I: 485.
87 Āqsara‘ī, Musāmarat al-akhbār, 131.
contemptuously mentioned. If so, however, from a legal point of view, ‘Alî Beg was swapping one form of Seljuk suzerainty for another, as Jimrī claimed to be a legitimate Seljuk. Moreover, as Āqsarāʾī implies, ‘Alî Beg had been considered a loyal vassal of the Seljuk state and his participation in crushing the rebellion was expected. Once Jimrī’s rebellion had been put down, thanks to the existing Seljuk network of agents and sympathisers within ‘Alî Beg’s territories, control was rapidly restored and the Turkmen proclaimed their loyalty. The western frontier fell largely under the control of the Germiyanid confederation (of obscure origins), who were granted it as a reward for their loyalty to the Seljuks and assistance in suppressing the Jimrī rebellion. Thus, the extent to which ‘Alî or Muḥammad Beg considered themselves as rulers of an “independent” beyliḳ – or indeed a beyliḳ in any meaningful sense at all – is dubious. They clearly operated within the context of the broader Seljuk polity and, even when rebelling, as far as our sources tell us, they sought the aid not of the Greeks across the border but of the Seljuks’ Mongol overlords in distant Tabriz.

Conclusion

With Jimrī’s defeat in 678/1279, Anatolian history enters a new phase. The Mongols sought to bring Anatolia under increasingly direct rule. This they largely achieved on the central plateau, but their ability to assert their authority on the Turkmen-inhabited frontiers was limited and frequently challenged. The relatively peaceful equilibrium of the frontier started to break down and, after 1279, Byzantine territories became increasingly subject to Turkmen attacks. Nonetheless, there may have been more accommodation between Mongols and Turkmen than is often recognised. A letter purportedly from the vizier Rashid al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) advises the Mongol Ghażān Khan (d. 703/1304) to adopt Denizli as a winter camp, stating that it is “the pleasure ground of sultans, the relaxing place of khans, the campsite of Caesars and the army camp of great kings”. Now the authenticity of this letter is suspect, but its writer evidently knew well enough that...

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89It is also possible that Byzantines are intended by the term ajānīb, although here one might expect instead a reference to allying with “infidels” (kāfīr) or some such term, a more serious accusation by a Muslim author, and a more common way of referring to the power on the other side of the border. For this reason, given Ibn Bibī’s intention to paint ‘Alî Beg in the blackest colours, the Karamanids seem more likely to be meant by ajānīb.

90Āqsarāʾī (Musdararat al-akhbār, 132) states that ‘Alî Beg “had been disloyal to the sultan in suppressing Jimrī” (dar dafʿ-i Jimrī mutaʿābaʿat-i sultān nanīmīnā baḏ).


92For the date, see Turan, Selçuklu Dārū İsmânîn Muhāsabatı, 570.

93Āqsarāʾī, Musdararat al-akhbār, 133. See also Cahen, La Turquie pré-ottomane, 271ff.; Melville, “Anatolia under the Mongols”, 71ff.


95See A.H. Morton, “The Letters of Rashid al-Dīn: Ilkhanid Fact or Timurid Fiction?”, in The Mongol Empire and its Legacy, ed. Reuven Amitai and David Morgan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 155–99. Morton’s arguments are extremely cogent, but the source contains much detailed local information about Anatolia that it is very doubtful would have been accessible to a putative Timurid forger. If it was, he must have got it from somewhere, and the most likely source would seem to be authentic Ilkhanid documents rather than information gained from an participant in Timur’s brief campaign in Anatolia, which never went anywhere near Denizli. For a defence of the letters’ authenticity, see Abolala Soudavar, “In Defence of Rashid al-Dīn and His Letters”, Studia Iranica 32 (2003): 77–120.
Denizli was an ideal winter pasture; nonetheless, for him it was far from being a den of restless Turkmen rebels. Even if the author was not Rashīd al-Dīn but another medieval compiler, this image of the frontier at the close of the thirteenth century offers an interesting antidote to the usual assumptions about its nature.

The purpose of this article, however, has to been to investigate the structures of life on the Seljuk side of the frontier during the height of the sultanate, and the causes and consequences of the shifts in the nature of the frontier after that date must be addressed on a future occasion. The evidence presented here allows us to modify the image of the Seljuk–Byzantine frontier in the period under discussion in several respects. First, it is worth underlining the political complexity of the Seljuk side of the frontier, especially in the Mongol period. Rather than seeing the western frontier as a political void filled by rebel Turkmen, we should see a complex patchwork of different players. There were Turkmen chiefs like Muḥammad Beg and ‘Alī Beg, sometimes loyal, sometimes disloyal, but requiring a patina of legitimacy through the appointment of a shihna and the granting of a flag and a diploma of investiture. Alongside them were Mongol or pro-Mongol officials, whose interests doubtless sometimes intersected with and sometimes clashed with those of said Turkmen chiefs. Such, for example, were the sons of Fakhr al-Dīn Sāḥib ‘Atā – allotted, on the one hand, the territories claimed by Muḥammad and ‘Alī Beg, but on the other nonetheless able to successfully bequeath territories elsewhere in the frontier to their descendants, who became tributary to nomadic chiefs like the Germiyanids. Finally, there were evidently Seljuk agents and sympathisers, even in ‘Alī Beg’s polity.

These features suggest that we should take issue with Wittek’s dismissal of the Seljuk state’s interest in the region, or as he put it, “as if the chancery at Konya either would or could care about nomad movements on a distant frontier” (n. 21 supra). The evidence presented here suggests that the chancery not just would but also could and did have knowledge of “nomad movements on a distant frontier”. After all, the chancery would have been responsible for drafting the manshūrs that chiefs like Muḥammad Beg and ‘Alī Beg required, as well as the firmanāns granting safe conduct to rebel Turkmen who had been forgiven. If the frontier and its Turkmen rarely feature in our Persian historical sources, this has everything to do with the genre and intentions of the historian, and nothing to do with the limits of his knowledge.96

The idea propounded by Cahen of the frontier as a no man’s land should also be modified. The interest in the region shown by major officials in the Seljuk regime under Mongol domination in the 1250 s to 1270 s, such as Amīn al-Dīn Mīkāīl, Nūr al-Dīn Ibn Jāja and Fakhr al-Dīn Sāḥib ‘Atā, suggests Muḥammad Beg’s attempts to assert his authority did not symbolise or precipitate the collapse of a tenuous central authority on the frontier at all. On the contrary, the thirteenth-century frontier and its Turkmen chiefs were integrated into the Seljuk state through economic and political ties. Of course, the nature of that state requires further enquiry, and the argument made here is not intended to deny the possibility

(indeed probability) that its potency fluctuated in both different places and different periods. Even if the Seljuk state was scarcely monolithic, it should be emphasised that, culturally and religiously, the frontier was an increasingly Islamised area that, with the construction of mosques, the endowment of waqfs, and the circulation of Persian Sufi treatises, had much more in common with the cultural atmosphere of Konya than it did with Greek Philadelphia. The popular common frontier culture identified by Wittek and Zachariadou, represented by heroic cults like that of Baṭṭāl Ghāzī, represented only one element, and not necessarily a predominant one.