Byzantium and the Seljuks: Cultural exchange and interaction

Perception of architectural and artistic expression in the second half of the twelfth century

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I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another’s work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student’s Handbook.

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Abstract

This dissertation is written as part of the MSc in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean at the International Hellenic University. It is set in the period of the Seljuk conquests of Asia Minor, a time which almost coincides with the formation of a general European policy. A brief discussion of the internal and external affairs of the Byzantine Empire is attempted, before several degrees of cultural interaction and integration are discussed with a special focus on artistic and architectural expression.

Due to its strategic geopolitical position, Asia Minor has always been a melting pot for trends and elements of diverse provenance. The Seljuks, representing the cultural “other”, have acted as living vehicles; their gradual settlement and incorporation has eventually transformed Anatolia. Conduct of war, institutions and artistic features derive from the steppes, where the turkic tribes descended from. A brief historical introduction of the world of nomadic tribes, until their contact with the world of Islam in Central Asia is thus, necessary and it is also expected to contribute to the semiology of symbols inocculated into Iranian Art and Architecture, which the Seljuks have disseminated.

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Preface

Contact of peoples of diverse political and cultural backgrounds, within a specific geographical and chronological frame, will traditionally evoke reminiscence ranging from violent confrontation and clash to creative coexistence and interaction. Skilled craftsmen and decorative utensils defy borderlines and fortifications so they both act as vehicles of symbols and ideas through architecture and art. Architectural monuments as well as artifacts in both the Byzantine and the Seljuk courts of the second half of the twelfth century provide a strong argument for the permeability of the borderlines and the interaction of the two cultures, which may have gone as far as cultural-religious syncretism. At the same time any polarizing forces were absorbed in warfare on a regional level on the buffer zone between Byzantium and the Seljuk polity and major attempts to undermine the balanced coexistence came from the crusades, aided by internal conflict of interests in the byzantine elite.

The appearance of the Seljuks and Turkoman tribes in Byzantine Asia Minor was the outcome of events which started unfolding in the steppes of inner Asia as early as the sixth century. Along the road, one large part of the Seljuks proved non resistant and willing to give up their paganist beliefs, for the sake of privileges granted to them in return for their islamization. So the Seljuks succeeded the Arabs and continued their long struggle to take over Byzantium, interrupted in the meantime by the crusades, their target achieved in the fifteenth century. The strategic pattern of Byzantium like the Sasanids and several Empires before and after that time to use nomadic tribes as mercenaries, was also followed with the Seljuks. Gradual creation of urban structures, their transformation from a nomadic civilisation to a sedentary one and the creation of political administrative structures rendered them a valid successor of the Arabs in that region and in Islam, both geographically and religiously.

Special references to the shared culture of precious objects in the Mediterranean world since the ninth century onwards, to the occidental influences and to the special gravity of secular art in the Byzantine court are imperative to conclude the cultural osmosis of that period. The study will conclude with a review of the articles of modern scholars in History and Art History, on the “Mouchroutas” built in Constantinople.
Scarcity of narrative sources of that time is compensated for, by the remaining architectural constructions and temporary or permanent exhibitions of artifacts in major museums around the world. The architectural and artistic proliferation of ideas and symbolic meanings and the multiplicity of degrees of their perception at that time, by peoples belonging to diverse cultural contexts, urban and rural populations and so on are going to be examined, so to demonstrate that, trans-boundary and interregional cultural expression in the form of architectural monuments and artistic creations may be a metaphor for balance of power and coexistence.
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Introduction

This study is an attempt to explore the cultural environment of the second half of the twelfth century as a reflection of the historical events against which it was set and the mentalities of the diverse peoples from which it is projected and to which it is addressed. After the battle of Myriokephalon in 1176, the presence of the Seljuks in Asia Minor is consolidated into a political entity and Byzantium realizes that it is no longer possible to retrieve its lost territories.

For Byzantium the Seljuks are the cultural Other, who officially appear as the heirs of the orthodox (Sunni) Islam of the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad - despite religious deviations deriving either from their shamanistic past or (and) from diverse groups among them such as the Turkomans or the Danishmendis, Saktukids, Artukids, Mencucekids. As such, the Great Seljuk Sultans launch architectural and artistic projects and their branch in Asia Minor follows accordingly. The Seljuk court, both in Iran and in Asia Minor, is one of the many destinations and points of departure for artifacts, which circulate in the political environment of the Mediterranean as merchandise, gifts and war loot. The cultural complexity of that space calls for a cognitive interpretation of architectural constructions and works of art in order to achieve an anthropological analysis of the object and through it, trace the peoples and the cultures producing and receiving it.

Scarcity and discontinuity of written sources as well as interruption of archaeological excavations pose limitations in the research of certain chronological periods. The aim here is to overcome such obstacles and making use of the existing written sources, works of art and archaeological discoveries, to comprehend, how artifacts and monuments were received and perceived by the peoples of their time and how their past experiences, mentalities and collective memories intervened into their perception. Distance in time and the interference of motives and polarizations, foreign to the intellectual framework, might blur the picture that reaches the modern mind and discourage or disorientate any further research. The proposed approach seeks to acquire an understanding of the meanings through thought, study of the sources and aesthetic perception of works of art. Thorough examination of the historical background of the cultural evolution of the peoples involved will lead to the bipole
nomad – sedentary, as this latter is implied in all aspects of interaction from administration and economy to interpersonal relations and artistic expression.

The approach followed is one standard way of research applicable to all sciences. Several expressions of cultural interaction are taken into consideration and an attempt is made to put them into broad categories. Then arguments are produced to provide plausible explanation and reasoning for their appearance. The attempted interpretation fits the historical and geographical context, in which they belong and for this reason a brief presentation of the politics of that era is imperative. Since works of art are the recipients of previous as well as contemporary influences- absolute and relative time - the historical events that have led to the politics of the second half of the twelfth century have to be traced back in time as early as the very endings of the tenth and early eleventh century. This way it is possible to demonstrate the unity and continuity of the political environment of that era, at the level of the courts and the elites surrounding it, without eliminating the distinctive cultural parameters. It is also suggested that, the consideration and evaluation of the osmosis between or amongst several cultural contexts are performed at a safety distance from the question of chronology and origin of works of art and that instead, the focus is put on their reception, perception and degrees of integration within the space where they are established or circulate. Finally, this approach does not intend to establish any kind of rigid or irreversible conclusions; its main goal remains to open up questions for further investigation and research.

The study begins with the tracing of the tribes of the Seljuk Turks to the Turkic tribes on the steppes of Inner Eurasia: Nomads who are occasionally united as loose confederations, trading iron products and controlling large parts of the Silk Road since the sixth century. Animal hunting and livestock breeding are the basis to their survival and consequently, animals become central to their shamanistic traditions. As all the peoples of the steppes before and after them, continuous search of resources under the pressure of Chinese forces will lead them eastwards where they come up against the "upsurge of Islamic piety and evangelism". Their leader sides with the Abbasid Caliphate and its religion, a crucial step for the creation of the Empire of the Great Seljuks, from which the future Seljuks of Rum will draw their power to get settled as the legitimate rulers in Asia Minor.
Then follows a brief historical description of the period since the Seljuks appear in the eastern extremities of the Byzantine Empire until the mid twelfth century almost before the end of the reign of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143 - 1180) and the consolidation and territorial expansion of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. The emphasis will be given in the eleventh century and the first half of the twelfth century, because milestones and major facts in the internal and external affairs of the Byzantine Empire, during that period, have determined the unfolding of future events. Military battles will not be analysed; only their consequences and repercussions in reference to the political development. The settlement of the Seljuks in Asia Minor has undergone several general aspects of cultural interaction and levels of integration between the Byzantines and the Seljuks – Seljuk local rulers are granted byzantine titles, they learn to speak Greek and they are baptized Christians.

Artistically, the eleventh and twelfth century form a long chapter of "the second golden age of Byzantine Art", which had started in the ninth century, after the end of the Iconoclastic Controversy. One of the most significant characteristics of that era is the development of secular Art and Architecture, expressions of which are going to be discussed in the context of the cultural interaction of Byzantium with the Seljuks.

So, the discussion will evolve around a group of items, which combine motifs and techniques of Byzantine and Seljuk cultural backgrounds, exposed in museums around the world. Examination of these objects of metal, ivory, and other material demonstrates their levels of integration and the means of their reception and perception within the cultural context where they circulate. Then, the study moves on to the building in the Great Palace of Constantinople, that was either erected anew or redecorated, according to the trend in the Mediterranean of the mid twelfth century, the Seljuk Pavillion. A review of the papers and books that have been dedicated exclusively to the “Mouchroutas” or included it under a broader issue, aims to demonstrate a broad spectrum of opinions ranging from perceptions of that time, through reception of the pavilion and all, it represents to practical issues about its size, topography even its mere existence as a proper construction.
TURKIC TRIBES

From the steppes of Inner Asia to Central Asia

Nomadic Turkic speaking tribes appeared in the north of China moving from the forests of Siberia to the steppe on the Altai Mountains, gradually undergoing an economical and social shift from animal hunters to animal breeders (Roux (1998):87-97). As all the peoples of the steppes, before and after them, their starting point, as is attested by Byzantine and Chinese sources of the sixth century, is approximately, the territory of present day Mongolia; continuous search of resources will lead them eastwards and southwards (Cahen(1968):1).

These nomads are occasionally united as loose confederations, trading iron products and controlling large parts of the Silk Road since the sixth century. They possess the art of weapon and tool manufacture, using several ferrous mixtures, which along with animal breeding consists the basis of their economy (Kyzlasov in Litvinsky (1996): 315, Beckwith (2009):112-118). In the mid sixth century, they start an attack on one of their major commercial partners, the Juan Juan (the Avars), a multiethnic kingdom guarding the northern Chinese border. After atrocities and evictions by both the Turks and the Chinese, the leader of the Juan Juan – who had subordinated several other tribes - is killed in 552 and this is the time that the first Türk Kaganate (552–630) is established in the territory of present day Mongolia (Sinor in Litvinsky (1996):322-330). This formation as a loose confederation of tribes, trading iron products, breeding livestock, will control large parts of the Silk Road and will eventually be the basis for the formation of a new polity, the first Türk Kaganate (Beckwith (2009):112-118). This polity had been torn apart by the Chinese emperor T’ai-tsung, its eastern part captured by the Uighurs also a Turkic tribe and after long intertribal struggle the Turks manage to form a second Kaganate (682–745) (Klyashtorny in Litvinsky (1996):330-42).

The struggle for rule over Central Asia, between the Abbasid Caliphate and China will lead to the battle of Talas in 751. The Abbasides win and, putting a stop to Chinese expansion westwards, they manage to gain control of Transoxiana. Central Asia will be the place where the madrasa, the theological school of Islam is invented (it will later be introduced into Western Asia by the Seljuks in the eleventh century); it played a
major role in the spread of Islam, along with missionaries, Sufis and merchants (without excluding the use of force) competing over the conversion of the Eurasian nomads amongst Manichaeanism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity (Golden(1992):194,211).

Regardless of this competition, these tribes resisted conversion to Islam anyway. One major case is Kabul, which took three centuries to conquer and adopt Islam; even then, centrifugal forces who wouldn’t recognise the Caliph were formed right away: local chieftains, mainly Turks and Persians, would impose their power around several regions and some of them as will be discussed, even created their own hegemonic dynasties (Μπαντάουη (2003):318).

Such local rulers were recruiting Turkic slave warriors, "the best material available" (Fig. 1) and so did the Abbasid Caliph, as a solution to the military dilemma of Islam i.e. "the exercise of unlimited authority, without setting Muslim against Muslim brother" (Keegan (1994):198). One additional reason for the recruitment of Turkic slaves instead of Arabs, is the suspicion within the caliphate of the diverse rising “politicoreligious rifts” (Cahen (1968): 6-7). Still, in an attempt to keep these slave soldiers away from the population, the Caliph moved his seat to Samarra, were it stayed until 892, when it returned to Baghdad (Hourani (1991):35-6). The vastness of their empire ensured large quantities of tax income and so the power to buy a lot of manpower as slave soldiers but also posed threats to the central control by the warlords in distant provinces. So, the Caliphate entered a vicious circle, which entailed its political decline when local foci of hereditary power appeared in several parts of its territory under certain dynasties (Bosworth(1992):27-35). Amongst them, the Buyids in the region of the Caspian Sea, who grew so strong as to take over power in Baghdad in 945, the Saffarids in eastern Iran (867-c.1495) and the Samanids, of Sogdian origin, in Khurasan (819-1005) and (Hourani(1991): 38), Μπαντάουη (2003): 321-323).

The Samanid rule spread to Transoxiana, the northeastern frontier with the Central Asian world. Their territory, seeded with city states since the time of Alexander the Great and the Seleucids, proved fertile, for the formation of nuclei of land and military power. Besides training and arming the common people, these local rulers were employing Turks for their defense and also their campaigns. This is how slave commanders of the army, achieved power settling down in the small town of Ghazna.
in eastern Afghanistan, on the road from Khurasan to Transoxiana away from the control of central authority. For the purposes of this study, suffice it to say that they came to be the Ghaznavids, the first Turcik dynasty established in Iran, in the second half of the tenth century, prevailing over other rivalling dynasties, most importantly the Kharakanids and the Karluks (Bosworth(1992):35-44, Μπαντάουη (2003): 321-3, Cahen (1968):9-15).

Mahmud of Ghazna ended up ruling a vast territory, from western Iran to India, where the art and culture of Iran could spread. The Ghaznavids fought the Karakhanids over eastern Iran; among the latter, there were Seljuks fighting in that war (G. Agajanov in Asimov and Bosworth(1998): 66-74).

The Seljuks

Since the Middle Ages, the source upon which the semi -legend of the origin of the Seljuks is based is the Malik-nama, which had been composed during the mid eleventh century by order of the Sultan Alp Arslan. According to this narrative, which is now lost, Seljuk was the son of Dokak, a notable of the tribe of the Oghuz (Cahen (1968): 19). The Oghuz nomads were one of the tribes that moved from the eastern T’ien Shan region towards western Central Asia. Although there have been a lot of obscure points about their history, there are “Oghuz historical tales that situate them around the lake Issyk –kül. These tribes reached the middle and lower Syr Darya (Jaxartes) in the Aral Sea region and the area of the northern Caspian where they formed a principality during the ninth and tenth centuries” after prevailing over other nomadic tribes, also of Turkic origin– mainly the Petchenegs - which covered the region west of China. Recent sources testify for the existence of twelve tribes instead of twenty four as was the oldest theory in the past (G. Agajanov in Asimov and Bosworth(1998) 66-74). By the end of the tenth century, the legendary ruler Seljuk “though pagan, sided with the muslims” (Cahen(1968): 19) – most probably the reason being discontent – there were mass rebellion by the end of the tenth century - about the fiscal policy of the Yagbu, the leader of the Oghuz(G. Agajanov in Asimov and Bosworth(1998):74). Seljuk then moved away, his three sons named Michael, Israel and Moses – possibly a Nestorian or Jewish influence as they had been born before his conversion- and he died at the age of 107(Cahen (1968):20).
By way of negotiations, raids and warfare the Seljuks – one of Seljuk’s sons Israel renamed Arslan, along with his two nephews, Ghaghri- Beg and Tughril Beg - gradually took over the lands of the Ghaznavids. The sons of Seljuk fought the Ghaznavids and prevailed in the battle of Dandaqan over Khorasan in 1040. This is the year that the Empire of the Great Seljukids is established and grows after the conquer of Ray (Teheran), Hamadan and finally Ispahan in 1059. The Ghaznavids are pushed to the east and south edges of their former lands, until they are taken over by the Ghurids in mid twelfth century and their dynasty reigns over a territory which expands to India.

When, in 1055, Tugrul conquers Baghdad, he is honoured by the Abbasid Caliph with the title “Sultan (holder of power) and Sovereign of the East and West”. So the Seljuks officially appear as the military and political “guardian” of the Abassid Caliph against the Sh’ia Buyids and the Fatimids (969-1171) of Egypt (Talbot Rice (1961): 31-32, Cahen (1968):22-24).

Their leader Togrul Beg appeared as the warrantor of order under the auspices of Sunni Islam which the Turks had officially adopted with the blessings of the caliphate which they were “protecting” against the siite Buyids but he also had to look after his precious Turkoman soldiers whose insatiable hunger for loot and easy profit he conveyed to neighbouring territories. This is how the first Turkoman appeared raiding the eastern provinces of Byzantine Asia Minor (Roux(1998):152-5).

During the first decades of the eleventh century, raids of Turcomans either free or under Seljuk command become very frequent across the former arab-byzantine fortification line as well as to Syrian territories. These may have been of seasonal character in search for pasture for their livestock and also mere attacks on urban centres, especially when they thought that they were not adequately fortified (Beihammer (2017): 74-6). "When the year 467 of the Armenian era [1018-1019] began, the divine-rebuking wrath of God was awakened against all the Christian peoples and against those worshiping the holy cross, for a fatal dragon with deadly fire rose up and struck those faithful to the Holy Trinity. In this period the very foundations of the apostles and prophets were shaken, because winged serpents came forth and were intent on spreading like fire over all the lands of the Christian faithful. This was the first appearance of the bloodthirsty beasts. During these times the savage nation of infidels called Turks gathered together their forces. Then they came and entered
Armenia in the province of Vaspurakan and mercilessly slaughtered the Christian faithful with the edge of the sword" (Vryonis (1986 : 81).

The way of fighting and organizing expeditions, other expressions of leadership as well as the ghulam mentioned earlier possibly date back to the traditions and way of life in Central Asia (Beckwith (2009):22-5). The force is usually measured in tents as the attacks, apart from the raids, resulted in "migratory conquests" of land, which meant that, apart from the army, there were women, children and livestock carried along - this phenomenon has been recorded by sources as late as the fifteenth century. (Vryonis (1986):263)

Warfare apart, this is a good point to state some facts about nomadic populations when they come side by side to the sedentary populations. There are parallels between the civilizations: the steppe for the nomads and the sea for the Greeks, the horse for the steppe and the ship for the sea (Baldick (2012): 2-3). The God of the Turks is Tengri -whom they– and the Mongols - inherited from the Hsiung-nu, a name given by the Chinese sources to the inner Eurasian people from the fourth century BCE to the second century CE. According to one myth recorded in the Chinese sources, there was a Hsiung-nu boy who had been thrown into a marsh; a female wolf rescued him and brought him up. Then, this young man- son of the wolf has intercourse with his mother wolf and this is how the first Oghuz Turks are born. The names of the turkic leaders are composite, including the name of an animal, whose mighty properties are hopefully passed on to the person (e.g. Arslan = lion) (Baldick(2012): 22-23, Beckwith2009:8-9). Despite the totemic origin of their names, it is derived, from the absence of any evidence to support the opposite that, the sultans started using emblems of power like the double headed eagle as soon as they entered Asia Minor; this trend declined in the Ottoman period (Androudis (1999):315-6).

Animal hunting (especially from their past in the woods, before entering the steppe) and livestock breeding are key to their survival and consequently animals become central to their shamanistic traditions (Roux (1998):90-93, Baldick (2012):2-3). So the depiction of an animal, on a piece of art or a monument transmits, one or several properties and conveys messages. The semiology of these symbols can be studied through works of Art and Architecture. Under the patronage of the Seljuks, the cultural
identity of the steppe (which has also come across symbols and meanings of ancient civilisations) is inoculated into Iranian works of art and architectural monuments.

“There is, undoubtedly, no other Islamic country, where the natural gift, of the central Asiatic nomadic people, of melting together different cultural trends into a new unified form, is more explicitely manifested than in the art of the Seljuks of Rum. What happened there is that they connected the central Asian heritage with the ancient and Christian traditions that had already existed there also with the irano- seljukides forms that they established and with elements of primitive muslim art…” (K. Otto-Dorn, translated from Androudis (1999):314-5)

In the Irano-Turkic environment, the most common are the double headed eagle and the dragon (Androudis (1999):311): in this context, the special symbolism of the dragon conveys cosmological and astrological connotations. His qualities are depicted in the turkic religions in the cyclical form his body acquires as he is swallowing his tail (ουροβόρος): it is the symbol of unity, at first of the earth and sky, death and life and of all antithetic notions (Androudis (1999):324-5). “On architectural monuments he may be depicted as a cthonic carrier of the tree of life or as an aerial being underlining with his waving movement the decoration on iwans” (Androudis (1999):325). Conversely, both in Indoeuropean and Near Eastern civilization, the dragon represents forces, which threaten to drug the orderly world into chaos; this notion is probably inherited from the Indo-Iranian mythology and appears in the Vedic texts (1500–1000 BC). The hero or king must kill the dragon so that order is restored (fig. 5) (Kuehn (2011):87). Also the motif of interlaced dragons appears on objects as a symbol of the ruler so as to verify his supernatural powers. Finally objects bearing the picture of the dragon are thought to have apotropaic and protective properties for their owner (fig. 6) (Androudis (1999):325, Kuehn (2011):113).

The double headed eagle (fig. 3) appears both on architectural monuments and on artifacts as a symbol of the sultan (Androudis (1999):315). The Seljuks follow the oriental form of two heads stemming from a common neck (unlike the one depicted in fig 3 where the necks are separated). “Usually the wings are deployed and the queue is large like a fan” (Androudis (1999):325). Opposite to the dragon’s position, supporting the tree of life from within the ground, the double headed eagle is put on its top. Its ability to fly, like all birds to rise up in the sky, is one of the levels the shaman must
cross in its journey from the earth. "In order to move between these three levels humans must either be carried by animals and birds or turn into them, while animals and birds must themselves undergo transformations" (Baldick (2012):88-91).

These real (lions, rabbits, hares, etc) or fictional animals like sphinxes, harpies (figures 4,8,9) are included in the decoration of artifacts and monuments. Most of them come from archaeological finds in Iraq; as for Asia Minor, the majority of artifacts and monuments are dated in the thirteenth century as it will be discussed later on. Very few samples exist from the twelfth century, which was the time that major urban centres that had been conquered in the course of the eleventh century, undergo the consolidation of Seljuk power over them. In the second half of the twelfth century, the Seljuk polity will expand territorially and during its last quarter, it will even experience "its crisis in expansion" (Cahen (1968):110)

Scholars employed in the discussion on the interaction or relation between tribes and states or empires - whether the former are precursors of the latter or what is the role of the tribes in the formation or destruction of the latter - have included the transformation of the political landscape in Asia Minor during these two centuries to conclude that "the Ghuzz invasions are an example that only some of the tribes pouring into Iran were under Seljuk control, while the invasion of Anatolia which dealt an ultimately mortal blow to the Byzantine empire was wholly uncoordinated"(Crone (2011):365-372). Admittedly, the conclusion is not final and the brief presentation of the historical facts, will demonstrate the burden of several factors, both internal and external, imposed upon the Byzantine Empire during the eleventh and twelfth century.
THE SELJUKS AND BYZANTIUM

Seljuk Byzantine relations until 1081

Whatever the ethnic or tribal composition of these raiders, they started flowing into the Byzantine Empire, in the first quarter of the eleventh century right at the time just when it had recuperated territorially during the successful reign and campaigns of Basil II (976-1025) (Παπασωτηρίου(2000):279-81). In the beginning, there were only raids for loot and then retreat back into Northern Iran (Cahen 1968): 72). However, when Tugrul started taking measures to impose state authority on the Turcomans there was massive migration into the territory of the Byzantine Empire. (Talbot Rice (1961):34-5).

The Turks began their penetration into the byzantine frontier by breaking down strategic coalitions and administrative structures that Byzantium had been constructing since the mid-tenth century: these were on one hand, its muslim vassals, the soft underbelly, which had been formed along the byzantine fortification line; on the other hand, the lately conquered and fortified places like Melitene, where the empire exerted no central control but the power had been given to doux or catepanos (Beihammer (2017):51 - 61). Despite impairments and military defencies, there had been established a defensive zone to the southeastern of the Empire stretching from Antioch to Melitene; attempts to establish a similar one on the eastern side led to the cession of Armenia and Iberia from Georgia (Talbot Rice (1961):34-5).

Basil's death didn't allow him to stabilise the frontier of the reconquered lands, a need which will be neglected by the long sequel of his successors, as they had been preoccupied with the seize of power rivalrying one against the other; potentates, which had been in containment since the tenth century and hadn't been allowed to pursue their goals, were now set loose: the powerful landowners (both ecclesiastical and lay) were putting pressure on the central power in Constantinople as well as on the peasants of their land. These latter peasants and soldiers of the countryside, were the core units of the Empire, supporting its economy with their work and tax paying in times of peace and also forming the military units of the thematic armies in times of war. As the land aristocracy grew, the majority of the peasants and soldiers would be subdued to them, and although some gained exemptions from the heavy taxation, the
majority would even abandon their homes to escape it (Vryonis (1986):72-78).

Deterioration or disorientation of the fiscal policy peaked in the mid tenth century when the stringent measure of tax farming was applied; what's more, anyone who could afford it, could buy out a position in the administrative hierarchy. Gradually the state was cutting down the military expenses so to cope with the financing of the civil servants on one hand and the court demands on the other (Ostrogorsky (1969): 364, Παπασωτηρίου(2000):282-5).

Apart from the weakening of the economics of the state - no tax rendered to the state and the debasement of "the dollar of the middle ages", the solidus, which starts in this time and its effects last long into the Comneniar Era - and the implications on the social structure of the communities, this led to a gradual dismantling of the Byzantine army forcing it to recruit foreign mercenaries such as Normans, Turks and Arabs. (Vryonis (1986):72-78). Setting aside the discussion about the loyalty, professionalism and cost-efficiency of mercenaries versus indigenous troops (Haldon (2003):93-96), this vicious circle in which the administrative, social and economic life of the provinces in Asia Minor was caught up, had long lasting consequences, aggravated by the external affairs of the eleventh and twelfth century so it finally became irreversible.

Nomadic peoples flowing from the steppes appear threatening the Empire from the North and the East and also there is the rising power of the Normands in the West which will be discussed late on. These nomads in the North kept the Russians occupied as they also appeared in their north eastern frontiers, so around the mid eleventh century Russian attacks against Constantinople stopped. Around the same time (1047), the aforementioned Petchenegs cross the Danube and since Bulgaria had been conquered by Byzantium, they are directly threatening the Empire. In the tenth century, the Byzantine Empire had been using the nomads of the North as defense against the Rus’ (the “ancient” Russians) and as strategic allies for the encirclement of the Bulgarians and the Hungarians. Now, incapable of defending itself against them, it allowed their settlement on byzantine territory and negotiated so that their looting raids would slow down(Ostrogorsky (1969): 364-5).

Diplomatic means were used to face the other rising power on the southeastern side of the Empire, the Great Seljuks. Exchange of embassies between Byzantium and the Great Seljuks took place; also the dedication of the Friday prayer at the mosque in
Constantinople to Tughril Beg and the Abbassid caliph, which since 988 had been a Fatimid attribute (Σαββίδης (1988):27-8, Beihammer (2017):92). This was one of the several expressions of Fatimid-Seljuk rivalry. Byzantium exploited it, in the exercise of its external politics: the sources speak about a convoy of gifts sent in the mid eleventh century by the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX (r. 1042-1055) to the Fatimid caliph al- Mustansir (r. 1036-1094). Turks were included amongst the precious artifacts that were sent as gifts; slave Turks were widely exchanged as gifts amongst muslim rulers.

In the case of Byzantium and the Fatimids in the eleventh century, it must be interpreted in the context of diplomatic attempts "suggesting or seeking alliance against a rising common enemy" (Walker (2012):92). Conversely, there is the opinion that the Byzantines pursued diplomatic alliance with the Great Seljuks in hope of ensuring stability on their southeastern border (Angold (2008):82). All scholars insist that there was no plan at this time in the external politics of Tugrul to capture Byzantine Asia Minor and all the raids that will be described bellow were an attempt to secure the western border of his empire.

As regards relations with the West, religious disputes, personal ambitions, political differences and the subordination of the slaves and the russians under the Patriarchate of Constantinople, i.e. decades of accumulated hostility, peaked during the mid tenth century, putting a sudden stop to the byzantine moderate policy towards the West in view of a possible expansion in Italy: At this very time, in 1054, the schism between the east and the western church, during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos will soon prove to be also of political nature (Ostrogorsky (1969): 298). A few years later the Pope will ally with the Normands - the Amalfi synod in 1059- and he will concede Apulia and Sicily to their leader Robert Guiscard. This rendered the Normands strong enough to threaten the byzantine strongholds in southern Italy during the following years (Angold(2008):101-2).

Back to the eastern front, apart from the Turcoman raids mentioned above there organised campaigns taking place against the Byzantine Empire as soon as the Empire of the Great Seljuks is established. During the period until the battle of Manzikert, there is continuous warfare of the Byzantine army with the Seljuks and the Turkmen under seljuk orders around regions of strategic importance along the fortification line. According to the war tactic "the men were sent to a pre-arranged meeting point where
they were divided into four groups of equal strength and drawn up in a square formation to face the four points of the compass. Then each section advanced to another predetermined point where each again divided, this time into three units of equal size, when the entire force swept forward simultaneously, spreading out in a fan like formation to loot and destroy everything in its path till the target had been reached. Finally, all rapidly withdrew with their booty, reassembling in accordance with the method they had used for their advance" (Talbot Rice (1961):35-6).

There are attacks in Theodosiopolis (1047), Ani (1049), Melitene (1056) and Sebasteia (1059) (Vryonis (1986):88). Melitene stood at the crossroads of routes from the South and the North and it was also a key point of entrance from the East; due to its strategic position, it will stage several battles in the near future (Cahen (1968):84). In the meantime, during these years (1056-1060) “there was a significant strengthening of the Fatimid influence in the entire region – expectations of an imminent collapse of Seljuk predominance may have arisen” (Beihammer (2017): 99).

In 1063, Tugrul dies and a civil war starts for his succession in the Great Seljuk Empire. The usurper Kutulmus dies of an accident during a decisive battle in Damgan and Alp Arslan, the loyal military commander of Tugrul takes over (Talbot Rice (1961):32). Worried that the Byzantines and the Fatimides would form an alliance against him, he attacks Ani before going on to capture Herat, Jand, Mecca, Medina and Aleppo. (Talbot Rice (1961):34 - 36).

In 1067, Romanos IV Diogenes becomes the Byzantine Emperor: a military commander, on active service he was most capable of fully comprehending the strategic implications of the Seljuk conquests. However, the imperial army had been dismantled as mentioned above. "The soldiers that were called up from the thematic armies lacked weaponry and discipline" (Angold (2008):85). He mobilised them to pursue his immediate strategic goal which was to drive the Turks away from central Asia Minor. His campaign against Chalepion on the syrian fortification line, only facilitated the Seljuks to penetrate west and capture Amorion. In 1069 he established Kaisareia as his operational basis, succeeding a few victories against the raiders as now he could control most of the major routes leading to Asia Minor. Then, he campaigned to conquer Chliat in order to stop the raiders coming in from Armenia. On the way from the river Euphrates to lake Van, part of the exhausted army had been defeated
by the Seljuks while the rest never reached Chliat. The Seljuks conquered Iconium and the remaining Byzantine soldiers retreated to Sebastia only to be defeated and captured along with their commander of the Komnenoi dynasty in the following year. This is also the year that Chonai was conquered (Angold (2008): 85).

In 1071, Romanos IV Diogenes insisted on his goal of securing the fortifications around lake Van and set out to recapture this fortress. This time he employed mercenaries including Franks, Slavs, Turks like Cumans Ghuzz and Petchenegs and he chose the northern route through Theodosiopolis (Erzurum). His army's diversity didn't guarantee the discipline of the soldiers (Σαββίδης (1988): 41) but such impairments would be overpassed as he was planning a surprise attack while Alp Arlan's army was occupied in Egypt (Talbot Rice (1961): 44–7). As regards the battle of Manzikert, when Alp Arslan led his army from Egypt all scholars agree that the defeat of the Byzantines was the cumulative outcome of a number of factors: lack of effective intelligence services, the diversity in the composition of the army, mistakes of strategy and tactic and the defection of one unit of the army are only indicative and not necessarily in that order.

For the purpose of this essay suffice it to say that, in the decade following Manzikert, the Seljuks founded several principalities in Anatolia which were vassal to and relied upon the Empire of the Great Seljuks. Asia Minor had been transformed in a land controlled by smaller or larger emirates that their chieftains had set up around former Byzantine urban centres (Ahrweiler (1966): 183). There were the Artukids in the region of Mardin and Harput, the Saltuqids in the region of Erzurum, the Mencucekids around Erzincan and Sivas and the Danishmendids around Tokat Niksar and Malatya (Ocak Ahmet Yasar in Fleet (ed.): 357–8). During the decade after Manzikert until the rise to the power of Alexios Komnenos "the overall situation may simply have been too chaotic to allow the transport of such a load" (Beihammer (2017): 101).

"At the beginning of the year 528 of the Armenian Era [A.D. 1079-1080] a severe famine occurred throughout all lands of the Cross-worshipers on this side of the Ocean Sea [the Mediterranean], for the bloodthirsty and bestial nation of Turks had spread over the entire face of the country and there was not a single district at peace. Rather, the entire House of the Christians was betrayed to the sword and captivity. Farmers' crops were interrupted, grain for bread was cut off, laborers and cultivators were
reduced by the sword and captivity and, generally, [famine] spread throughout all the land. Many districts became depopulated and the House of the East was pulled apart; the land of the Byzantines turned into a ruin, bread could not be found anywhere nor was there any place to rest except in Edessa and all its borders. There was no rest for people in Antioch and the entire land of Cilicia as far as Tarsus and the entire land of Marash, to Tluk' and all their surrounding lands. [This was because] all creation fled and came in a mass to these lands in countless multitudes, thousands upon thousands, myriads upon myriads. Humanity billowed upon the earth, covering these lands of ours the way locusts cover the ground in their multitude. I can say beyond this that there were seven times more people than Moses led through the [Red] Sea, more than the quails in the Sinai Desert. Thus was the country filled up with an enormous multitude. Grandees and glorious men, azats and princes and illustrious women wandered about, begging. We saw all this with our own eyes. From famine and [the harshness of an] exile's life [many] died throughout the entire country. [Grave-diggers] became exhausted burying them and the country filled up with their corpses. Beasts and birds even wearied of eating them. The ground stank from the innumerable multitude of their decaying unburied bodies. Glorious priests and clerics died in exile and became food for beasts and birds. This became the start of the destruction and dissolution of the House of the East and of the Byzantines" (Matthew of Edessa, p. 89)

By the time Alexios I Komnenos rises to the throne, Suleyman has already established his capital in Nikaia as governor (Sultan) of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. He had been appointed by Malik Shah of the Great Seljuks in Iran, in order to exercise control under his lord's suzerainty over the nomad Turcomans and the Turkish chieftains (Talbot Rice (1961):43-46).
Seljuk Byzantine relations until 1176

As regards internal affairs of the Byzantine Empire, the rise to the throne of Alexios Komnenos - no matter how it had been achieved - meant that "from that moment there was peace in the House of the Byzantines" (Matthew of Edessa, p. 89). “But in these later times the boundary of the Roman rule was the neighbouring Bosporus on the east and the city of Adrianople on the west. Now, however, the Emperor Alexius by striking with both hands, as it were, at the barbarians who beset him on either side and starting from Byzantium as his centre, enlarged the circle of his rule, for on the west he made the Adriatic sea his frontier, and on the cast the Euphrates and Tigris. And he would have restored the Empire to its former prosperity, had not the successive wars and the recurrent dangers and difficulties hindered him in his purpose (for he was involved in great, as well as frequent, dangers)” Comnena, Book VI ch XI.

This is the recapitulation of the goals of the Komnenian external policy: to reinstate the empire to its ancient borders - although they stretched to the Euphrates and not the Tigris river - but given the enemies on the east, the west and the north, the dire situation of the finances of the empire and the state of the army and navy, priorities had to be set. Alexios I stabilized the frontier with the Seljuks in Bithynia. The byzantine army was sent by boat (akatia) to the Bithynian coast and pushed the Seljuks back into the mainland behind preexisting fortresses and other “oikodomemata”. Then a peace treaty was signed with the sultan of Nikaia. This way the moral of the population in Constantinople recovered as they felt safe from the raiders and also the emperor could now concentrate his efforts against the Normans (Ahrweiler(1966):184). The Seljiks did not comply with the terms of the peace agreement and to make things worse they started building a fleet so that Constantinople had to cope also/still with that front in the east. That first attempt of the Seljuks of Nikaia to start building ships failed: Alexios sent all the ships he could summon to Kios where they burnt down all the Seljuk ships under construction in the shipyards (Ahrweiler(1966):183-4). By the end of the twelfth century though, the Sultan of Konya (Iconium) would protest to the Emperor of Constantinople for damages inflicted upon turkic commercial ships.
circulating in the Black Sea by pirates who had been acting on their behalf but also under the auspices of the imperial government and its officials (Ahrweiler(1966):291).

Signing an agreement with Suleyman, the Sultan of Nikaia, Alexios also got manpower from the Seljuks to reinforce his western and northern defence (Angold (2008):222). First came the Normands, who were threatening the whole of Byzantine Greece coming in from the Byzantine province in Durrachio. Warfare lasted until 1085 when their ruler Robert Guiscard died and a civil war broke out in their kingdom. Then until 1094, there was the threat from the aforementioned nomads from the North, the Petchenegs - who were also plotting with Tzachas, the Seljuk ruler of Smyrne to be discussed below. Still, Byzantium without its proper fleet was doomed to remain a landlock state having to rely on others for its maritime defence. It had to hire venetian sea power against the Normands and grant Venice customs immunity in exchange (Angold(2008):216). The decisive facts that initiated the construction of a grand fleet were the threat of Tzachas for the capital and the break out of the separatist movements in Cyprus and Grete: Tzachas, the chief of the Seljuks installed in Ionia, built a fleet which conquered the coastland until Addramyteion and Abydos and also the islands (including the islets around them) of Chios, Mytilene, Samos and Rhodes. It was clear that he was heading northwards to Constantinople where he tried to conquer the peninsula of Kallipolis while at the same time the aforementioned Petchenegs would attack Constantinople from the hinterland. The latter had been fought off by the Emperor, aided again by the Cumans, while the summoned naval power broke the siege at sea (Σαββίδης (1988):66). This had been the decisive turning point for the navy: by 1094, the largest fleet of the century had been built and it would also constitute the nucleus for reconstruction of the byzantine naval power in the following years - that would be under the reign of Manuel I Komnenos. Ioannis Doukas, who had supervised all constructions, became commander in chief of the imperial navy (Ahrweiler(1966):184-185) The fleet reestablished byzantine sovereignty over the coastland of Asia Minor and the islands of the Aegean Sea and it also suppressed the late revolts in Crete and Cyprus (Angold (2008):223)

In 1086 Suleyman captured Antioch probably aided by its governor and then he went on to Aleppo (Tlbot Rice (1961):49-50) Civil wars ensued after the death of the Grand Vizier Nizam al Mulk and the Sultan Malik Sah in 1092 and this was an opportunity to
be exploited. Also in 1097 during the course of the first crusade, the crusaders after taking knightly oaths to the Byzantine emperor and provisions of ships, food and weapon, they started the siege of Nikaia. For the crusaders (and also for the Turks) the siege was a way to compensate for their hardships so far and possibly a moral reward for fighting against the enemies of Christianity but for Byzantium it was the opportunity to regain control of the western littoral of Asia Minor (Beihammer (2017):308-10). Eventually Alexios came into a secret agreement with the Sultan who agreed to surrender the city to him so that further damages (and looting) on both sides would be avoided (Σαββίδης (1988):71-2). It is noteworthy though that "in spite of the betrayal felt by many crusaders when they were passing through Asia Minor their leaders were still under the spell of of the imperial charisma. Leaders in the East and in the West, instead of criticising the emperor, sought his acceptance and eventually tried to imitate their new feudal lord when they returned home in their own petty realms. It was not a question of inferior or superior culture, of richness or of poverty; it was simply a process of self-improvement" (Ciggaar (1996):86)

Ongoing turkic attacks didn't stop the crusaders who crossed the Anatolian plateau moving southwards until Konya and then to the southeast until Antioch. The provinces of Phrygia, Pisidia, Lycaonia and Cappadocia were simultaneously devastated on one hand by the Turks pursuing the crusaders and on the other hand by the crusaders who were constantly short of supplies (Beihammer (2017):312)

By the end of the century, the crusader states are established (Ράνσιμαν (1978):9-21). Still, boats from Pisa and Genoa sailing to and from the crusader states were effectively repelled by the Byzantine navy based in Cyprus. By 1108, also using Cyprus as a naval base for supply and retreat, the Byzantine consolidation in Attaleia was achieved and then the conquests of the fortresses of Seleukeia and Korykos at the Cilician straits opened the way for the Syrian littoral and all the way northwards to the coastland of Cilicia and Laodikeia

"by the end of his reign, Alexios had been able to make serious progress in his efforts to reassert Byzantine authority in Asia Minor. The Anatolian provinces of the empire in 1118 included the province of Trebizond, all the land to the west of a line passing through Sinope, Gangra, Ankara, Amorium, Phelomelium and the whole of the southern coastline up to the Duchy of Antioch." (Vryonis (1986):117).
John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143) inherited the throne after his sick and dying father. Aided by his Megalos Domestikos, the Seljuk John Axouch, he conquered Laodikeia in 1119 and Sozopolis in Pamphylia in 1120, thus securing control of the Maeander valley. Still he had to abandon this front and mobilise his troops to the Balkans against the Petcheneg nomads -again-, the Serbs and the Hungarians (Angold (2008):293-8). Also there was pressure from Venice regarding certain privileges that had been promised to them by Alexios and which were finally granted - after a long range of violence from both sides - in 1126. So, they went on largely substituting for the byzantines at sea since the emperor considered that any further constructions in the fleet would undermine his land troops so he would rather rely on that foreign naval power (Angold (2008):300-1).

Finally, in 1132 Ioannis could devote all his efforts in Asia Minor where he continued pursuing the same strategic goals like his father had before him and like his son would do after him: to reinforce the fortifications around the Euphrates river as the border and to regain byzantine control in the interior of Asia Minor. While he had been otherwise engaged in the previous years, the Seljuks had gained control of the south part of the central plateau around Iconium, while the Danismendids had conquered Melitene in 1124 and were expanding their control to the Black Sea coasts and southward to Antioch, after killing its crusader ruler Bohemond II. The emperor's very own brother had seeked refuge to the Danismendids (Angold (2008):301).

For six years and three campaigns, all byzantine efforts focused on the recapture of the castle of Kastamone (and Gaggra 50 km to the south). Still these areas were densely populated by Turkic settlers, so the Byzantines only succeeded in ephemeral victories, which would fail even before festivities could hastily celebrate them in Constantinople. Then in 1137, the emperor turned to his other major strategic goal, Antioch and in 1138 he allied with the crusader princes against the Zengids of Syria. He would trade Aleppo for Antioch. But when they entered Antioch and Ioannis settled in the palace, he found himself besieged by violent crowds, which the two crusade princes had readily enraged although there were allegations of spontaneous popular revolts. The emperor was forced to abandon Antioch and go back to Bithynia to stabilize the fortresses and secure the Sangarios frontier. When he accomplished that, he coped with the Gabras of Trebzon and Pontos as well as one more attempt against
the Danismendids. Lack of time for the troops to recuperate and bad weather conditions in 1140, didn’t allow the conquest of Neokaisareia so the Danismendids went on having unimpeded access into the hinterland of the Black Sea(Angold (2008):301-4).

In the following year, he attempted campaigning against Cilicia and Antioch. The Latin Lords were startled but the few successes John I Komnenos had achieved both in Cilicia and in the crusader state, which might have peaked into warfare had been abruptly cancelled by his curious death in 1143 - either a hunting accident or an assassination (Ostrogorsky (1969):401, Magdalino(2002):41,ftnote: 45)

The crusades and the formation of the crusader states are the expression of a general european policy in the eastern Mediterranean; Byzantium is compelled to follow accordingly as the ancient and universal force in the region but the pursuit of the Komnenian ideal to restore it to its ancient borders is limited by that very european policy (Ostrogorsky(1969):401-404). Still, in pursue of its restoration, it follows an "open door" policy, allowing for allies (Magdalino (2002):44). This is how Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143 – 1180) tried to establish a balance for the Empire. Having inherited the problem with the Normans right before setting out for Asia Minor, he concludes a marriage alliance with Conrad III against Roger II of Sicily. In 1146 Manuel I Komnenos defeated the Seljuks at Akroinos then he moved on and conquered Philomelion, the headquarters of their Sultan Masud, with the final goal to conquer Iconium, which he soon had to abandon as he had to get back because there where rumours of a crusade (Angold (2004):311-2).

The second crusade was launched in 1147, by the allied forces of France and Germany, despite Manuel’s marriage alliance with Germany, their pretext being the conquest of Edessa by the Zengids. The german crusaders set out to cross Asia Minor taking the road to Philomelion but the Seljuks crushed them at Dorylaum and forced them to get back to Nikaia where the french joined them. Exhausted even more by the continuous Seljuk attacks and bad conditions Luis VII had a byzantine boat carry him to Antioch whereas Conrad III went back to Constantinople and, after a short trip to Accra, he travelled by ship to Thessaloniki to meet and conclude a treaty of mutual alliance with Manuel, who was preparing to attack the Normands (Angold(2004): 309-318).
These had attacked and captured Corfu, to then enter and march into the byzantine hinterland as far as Thebes and Corinth. Although the Venetians were compelled to ally with Constantinople, since Corfu was one strategic point of entrance into the Adriatic Sea, Manuel I proceeded with renovations in the fleet and he managed to recapture the island in 1147. Then he decided to do away with the Normand threat altogether and although he didn't get any support from the Germans, Manuel I attacked Sicily. Despite the numerous successes the overall outcome was defeat for Constantinople ratified in a peace agreement in 1158 (Angold (2004):322-8).

Due to force of circumstances as mentioned above, the decade 1160 as regards the eastern front, is one mainly dedicated to reinforcement of fortifications and manning of the military units stationed there. Still after taking care - one way or the other - of affairs in Italy, the campaigns that had been launched in the years 1158-1161 had been fruitfully concluded as the Sultan of Iconium, Kiliç Arslan II (r. 1156-1192) was forced to a provisional agreement in 1160 and eventually to a treaty with Manuel, which was ratified in 1161 when Kiliç Arslan II visited Constantinople. The treaty included mutual military alliance against all enemies - the Turkmen included - and surrender to the emperor of all cities the sultan would capture. It opened the way for personal ties between the Emperor and the Sultan. The latter who do service to the emperor while the emperor would do him the honour to adopt him as a son. In the diplomatic language of the Middle Ages, to be a ruler's "son" would mean "son in law". In this case, religion was an obstacle for such a relation so it obviously meant that the Sultan was vassal to the Emperor. According to that treaty, in 1164 Byzantium supported the Seljuks against the Danishmendids, a victory which would be exploited by the Sultan in 1174 who rushed in to occupy their lands, thus causing the Byzantine attack against Iconium (Korobeinikov (2014):112-5).

Until these events unfolded, that treaty had also proved beneficial for Byzantium as it provided it with troops for the campaigns in the Balkans: during the years 1151-1172, Manuel fought and managed to regain control over Hungary, this one of major strategic importance for the control of Dalmatia, Bosnia and Croatia and the nomadic Serbs in the Western Balkans. Approximately thirteen campaigns had been launched by Byzantium against Hungary in the years 1151-1167. Control of Hungary would ensure control of the Serbs – also of the Vlachs and the Albanians - who were a threat
to Egnatia and to the Danube border the major avenues of "balkan hegemony". What’s more, influence on the russian princes - who were seeking autonomy from the byzantine church- would secure byzantine interests in the Black Sea. In 1167 Byzantium won a devastating victory and imposed their own terms on the peace treaty that was signed with Hungary. Also, Byzantium regained its ancient rights of suzerainty over the kingdom as Manuel's only daughter married the heir who became king in 1172. The same year, a devastating campaign against the Serbs forced them to surrender to Byzantium (Angold (2004):329-336).

Byzantine sovereignty in the Balkans gave it the chance to reinforce its military manpower and attack the Seljuks who were following a revisionist policy towards the above mentioned treaty. Manuel I Komnenos set out to capture Iconium but his troops were ambushed within the straits of Myriokephalon by the Seljuk army, which had been long preparing for such a confrontation (Cahen(1968):104-5). This defeat is shown as parallel to the one indicted upon the byzantine army in Manzikert and it has been coloured sentimentally in terms of imperial prestige and so on "Προεκπέμψας δ’ ἄγγέλους τά συμβεβηκότα ταῦτα τοῖς Κωνσταντινουπολίταις παρίστα, νυν μέν ταύτοπαθῇ πως ἕαυτόν Ἡρωμανῶ τιω Διογένει κατονομάζων, ἐπεὶ καί οὕτος ὁ βασιλεύς κατά των Τούρκων ἤξυπνος κατέκλυσε τό τε πολύ τῆς στρατιάς ἀπεβάλετο καί αὐτός συλληφθεὶς ἀπήχθη αἰχμάλωτος, νυν δὲ τάς μετά του σουλτάνου σπονδάς ὑπεξ Ἐπιφάνειας ταύτωσαι, ἀνέμω ἀναπτυμένης καί προς τό τῶν ἀντιπάλων ἀφορώσης μέτωπων ός φόβου ἐμπίπτειν καὶ τρόμον αὐτοῖς (Choniates: 191).

In realistic political terms, after the battle of Myriokephalon (1176), the presence of the Seljuks in Asia Minor is consolidated into a political entity and Byzantium realizes that it is no longer possible to retrieve this region (Cahen(1968):104, Vryonis (1986):125, Korobeinikov (2014):112, Beihammer (2017):379). (Βασίλιεφ:529).

According to Thukydides, the study of war is a study of human nature (Θουκιδίδου (2002): 29, 65). Sun Tzu instructs that, one of the prerequisites to achieve victory or at least diminish the risk at battle is to know yourself but also to know the enemy (Carr (2000):80-1). Warfare has been depicted in literature; the epic poem of Digenes Akritas serves as a metaphor for the interculturallity as the hero is the offspring of two genres.
Aspects of Cultural interaction between the Seljuks and the Byzantines

Byzantine Seljuk Interaction

The discussion on the interaction of Byzantium with the Seljuks as the cultural "other" goes back to the transitional period after the Arab conquests and is eloquently summarised in a name: Vasileios Digenes Akrites, the epic which is considered as the first text of Modern Greek Literature (Πολίτης (1978):1-30, Μαστροδημήτρης (2004):91-104). One depiction of the hero and his wife Kore or his lover Maximo, the Amazon queen is on a glazed plate with champluvé decoration; on the right side within the central medallion of the plate, there is a rabbit which is a symbol of lust and fertility (Fig. 1).

The Seljuks substitute the Arabs after the creation the Great Seljuk Empire and their invasions cause for refugees from all over Asia Minor fleeing to safe destinations, mostly to Constantinople, starting in the eleventh until the fourteenth century. This demographic burden on the Capital had had severe public heath implications (Vryonis (1986):255). Ptochoprodromos describes the dire living conditions of the populace in his letters to Emperors in the form of poems (Μαστροδημήτρης). Conversely, in remote areas, which the central authority of Constantinople had been neglecting, Seljuk rule was most welcomed (Cahen (1968):156-7). Byzantine sources keep a distinct posture as regards nomadic Turkmen and the Seljuks (Magdalino 125-7, Angold (2008): 355).

From their part, the Turkish rulers who were inoculated in a foreign environment (their point of view of the other) were struggling to find ways of legitimizing the power they were trying to exercise both on local populations as well as on their rivals of their tribe. Byzantium exploited that need by granting them titles and privileges and giving them formal recognition (Beihammer (2017):392).

Notorious Tzachas, the future ruler of Smyrna, had been captured as prisoner of war, when he was a young warlord raiding around Asia Minor. His obedience and loyalty to the Byzantine military authorities, awarded him the title of "Protonobelisimos"; he had...
received hospitality in Constantinople, where he became acquainted with the Byzantine way of life and governmental practices, which he later largely applied in Smyrna, which he took over when Alexius I Komnenus - who had in the meantime deprived him of his privileges - was busy fighting the Normans (Beihammer (2017): 272-3). Another Turk, who had been captured at childhood was Ioannis Axouch and had been brought up in the court of Alexios Komnenos, together with his son and heir, Ioannis. He became Grand Domesticos, head of Command in the Byzantine army (Angold(2008):293).

On the other hand, there were a lot of Byzantine exiles, amongst which, members of the Gabras family and a cousin of Manuel I Komnenos who had converted to Islam and had seeked asylum in the Sultan's court (Angold (2008):355). The Seljuk palace was also the place, where the Sultan's women and concubines were kept in the harem. Seljuk Sultans like Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw I had a Christian mother. Byzantine (Greek speaking and Christian) women as mothers and wives have helped the closer approach of the Seljuks to Asia Minor, eliminating as much as possible those elements that connected them to their ancient past in Central Asia (Yalman (2010) : 38). They lived with their children in the harem, passing on to them the Christian faith and the Greek language as well as practise all the traditional byzantine household activities and cooking. The fifth century Byzantine church of Agios Amphilochios in the Alaeddin complex in Konya was (Shukurov in Peacock, Yildiz (Eds) (2013): 115-149). This is a good explanation of the fact that the sultans would seek refuge at the Byzantine court.

Courtly cultural osmosis was also happening in Constantinople. Byzantine art had been undergoing its "second golden era" since the end of the Iconoclastic Controversy. Since the end of the ninth century there had been a gradual loosening of the ties between Byzantine art and religion. New ways of expression were being sought, turning either to its ancient past or to the Arab East. Still religion remained (along with Greek language) the most important tie to keep the empire together. So the new school that was created during this period had two components, one secular and a religious one and they were interpenetrating (Diehl (1910):365-386).

In the second half of the twelfth century, under the reign of Manuel I Komnenos the Byzantine court had become a major melting pot for eastern and western trends. His adoption of western customs, dress codes, sport activities like the giostra etc have
been partly attributed to the influence of the crusaders or/ and his two wives who
were both of western origin(Ostrogorsky(1969):401-2). Also precious artifacts of
western and eastern provenance were made available to the craftsmen, who enjoyed
the freedom of experimenting on styles and techniques, combining decorative
secular motifs of several cultural backgrounds. These artifacts constituted a common
code of communication, a "visual language" that was welcomed and comprehended by
all members of the elite (Walker (2008):114), who could participate in that "shared
culture of objects" around the Mediterranean Grabar.

Further dissemination of works of art would follow the routes travelled (and
constructed) initially by armies then by tradesmen, pilgrims and other travellers. In the
Anatolian plateau, the infrastructure inherited from the Roman Period is recorded by
Byzantine historians and hagiographers and also by Arab geographers and travellers.
The road network secured the integration of the most distant regions and so it ensured
the military and administrative central control as well as the movement of merchants,
pilgrims and other travellers. Western Asia Minor was served by roads following the
coastline and the river valleys. Three major highways in the Anatolian plateau led from
northwest to southeast, with larger branches and minor roads to and from regional
urban centres (Vryonis (1986) : 30-33).

This is where the Silk Route began or ended: was a network of main and
supplementary roads (including land and sea routes which connected the
Mediterranean to China and the region south of the Urals to the Indian Ocean. The
historical geography of the silk route has evolved due to climate changes, urban
growth or decadence, demand and production of goods and political events. Products
that were carried from and to all directions included apart from the silks, "lacquered
ware, Chinese bronzes including (especially) mirrors and paper". (Litvinsky A.B. and

Along this road artistic influences are witnessed by the sources to have travelled
from China as early as the sixth century. The shamanistic mythology of Inner Asia and
pre-islamic Central Asia was part of the Seljuk identity. The influence from the Seljuk
court was an artistic combination of their double identity : the official art of their
Iranian backround where they had set out as defenders and heirs of the orthodox
(Sunni) Islam, innoculated with elements from their long preserved pre-islamic shamanistic past on the steppe (Cahen(2001):157).

Motifs and images of the Iranian visual culture fall under three categories. The first one is the princely cycle which includes seated, female and male, human figures, dancers, musicians etc. A variation of that category is considered to form the second one, which may be named the cycle of love and meditation: male and female figures usually with slit eyes and heavy jaws either just sitting side by side or involved in an activity like music playing. Finally, signs of the zodiac and planets form the last category (Grabar in Boyle (2007):644-8).

Pre-Islamic iconography includes mainly birds, felines and other animals real or fictional. They reflect the animal human relation which is the basis of Turkic religion as has been mentioned above. Animal hunting and livestock breeding are the means for survival. The changing of the seasons is related with animal husbandry and wild game availability. The horse is central to transportation and fighting. The animals borrow their properties to humans when these are transformed and so they become rapid and omnipresent at the same time. The religious leader, the shaman who is a prophet and a healer undergoes transformations into animals or climbs up and down trees to complete the ritual itinerary which starts on earth through the sea and up to the sky (Baldick (2012): 88-91). This animal human relation and interaction is depicted in art.

Works of art bearing this mixed iconography are preserved in museums and private collections around the world. They include a broad variety of items such as ceramics, textiles, ivories, metalwork, and woodwork.

**Artifacts**

The mere description of each one of the following objects is a herculean task, undertaken by the experts in museum and exhibition catalogues. The aim here is to demonstrate the combination of motifs and images on objects which have been traditionally classified as “Islamic”, “Byzantine” and “Western” according to criteria such as site of discovery, production under the patronage of a certain polity and
predominance of one decorative pattern over others. Still, they participate in the "the shared culture of objects" (Grabar in Maguire ed. (1997):118), stretching across the known geographical limits of the world of the Middle Ages. Their secular characteristics - with the exception of two- facilitate their circulation in a world of separate religious identities (Walker (2008):114).

They are considered "portable monuments" which participate in and contribute to the osmosis amongst several cultural contexts; as such, they transport and acquire meanings related to their social context (Kopytoff's "cultural biography of things" and subsequent work by later scholars) and so they can testify for their very own anthropologies (Grabar in Maguire ed. (1997):116). A safety distance is kept from the question of chronology and origin of these works of art and instead, the focus is put on their reception and perception, within the space where they are established or circulate (Hoffman (2007):317-336). Being the "interplay between vision and thought" (Arnheim (2007):356), they may convey perceptions of their time and space as regards themselves and the "Other" as may be the case for the Byzantine and the Seljuk courts (Paton in Hourihane ed. (2017):969 - 991).

Since works of art are the recipients of previous as well as contemporary influences - absolute and relative time (Grabar (1978):6),- the historical events that have led to the politics of the second half of the twelfth century have to be traced back in time as early as the very endings of the tenth and early eleventh century.

The Artukid bowl (fig. 11, 12) is the largest sample of enamels from the Middle Ages. It is exposed in Innsbruck, in the Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum. It is classified as a work of Islamic art because of its inscriptions - the name of the owner or the person to which it was dedicated- on the rim, on both the obverse and the reverse surfaces. Still, the iconography on both surfaces - motifs in pairs across the item - consists of birds, fighting animals and scenes of courtly life. The central medallion on the interior represents the Ascension of Alexander the Great which was the way of the depiction of the Byzantine emperor in secular (ivory tablets) and religious (marble reliefs decorating churches) art from the tenth century onwards (Steppan in Pevny (ed.)(2000): 84-101).

The incense burner (fig. 13) represents a building which either as a palace pavilion (Grabar, 1951) or a garden kiosk (Kalavrezou,1996). Its the stage of performance for
the twelfth century novels and it is decorated with a mixed iconography: animals - real and fictional - human figures with corresponding inscriptions in greek i.e. personifications of the virtues ΑΝΔΡΕΙΑ (bravery) for the man and ΦΡΟΝΕΙΚΗ (prudence) for the woman. The crosses were probably a later addition when the item was taken to Venice where it had a second life as it was transformed into a reliquary (Walker (2011), Evans C. H. and Wixom D.W. (eds)(1997): 218-54).

The rosette casket (fig. 14) along with the one described below and some tens of others fall under the category of ivory caskets ready - made or to order, dated from the tenth century onwards, exclusively decorated with secular motifs. The surfaces are decorated with acrobats, dancers, musicians, animals and carvings of floral motifs. Guilded bronce attachments depicting radiating disks, human figures - one seated and one riding an eagle are a later addition. Regardless of aesthetics, a thematic continuation and harmony between the thematography of the metal attachments and the ivory can be attested (Kalavrezou in Evans C. H. and Wixom D.W. (eds)(1997): 218-252), Walker (2008).

Artifacts of different material, use and all but one, of secular art, will be considered as a group due to a common feature of decoration, the Chinese feng huang bird, a symbol with evolving meaning but generally associated with imperial power of Chinese dynasties from the tenth century onwards. It is found depicted in six middle Byzantine artifacts: Two silver cups dated to the tenth or eleventh century: the first one (fig. 15) was discovered in Dune on the Island of Gotland in Sweden, and is exposed in Historiska Museet in Stockholm; the second cup (fig. 16) was discovered in the Kama region of Plehanovo in Russia but its location is now unknown; one lead seal (fig. 17) from the tenth century included in the Byzantine Collection at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C.; one manuscript headpiece(fig.18) of the tenth century from the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin; an ivory triptych (fig.19) from the tenth or eleventh century Constantinople at the Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica in Vatican City; an ivory casket (fig. 20) dyed purple painted with porphyry from the tenth or eleventh century Constantinople which depicts royal hunting (the emperor may be Constantinos Porphyrogenetos) is kept in the Cathedral Treasury of Troyes in France.

These items apply for several levels of cross cultural exchange analysis ranging from transfer which is simply copying to adoption or adaptation which involves alteration of
the original so that it fits another cultural environment and finally to integration which is the utmost degree of adaptation to such an extent that it is not possible to identify the provenance from the destination of a decorative motif or style and so on. Conversely, features of different cultural backgrounds may be put together in order to emphasize the antithesis of the worlds they represent. Sometimes, a mere look at one or another aspect of the object will determine its degree of cultural integration. This is more implicit in the case of the casket: In previous research it had been suggested that the bird is interpreted through the lens and filter of the hunting scenes on the front and back panels and of the return of the victorious emperor to the capital scene on the lid. This way, the bird, although different in style, it will be perceived as a phoenix by the byzantine viewer of the middle ages. This is a way of thinking of a brain trained to focus on imperial depictions and to analyse everything along this track of his mind. Alicia Walker suggests a reading of the artifact also along the same imperial grandeur track of mind where the thought will broaden the sense of vision passing through the awareness of the historical conditions. The learned eye will guide to the interpretation of the bird as an allegory of the military conquests eastwards, allowing at the same time that its identity and cultural provenance remain intact: its allegorical identity is valid in both cultural contexts whereas its stylistic identity is safeguarded by means of physical appearance.

Things are simpler as regards the manuscript and the ivory triptych; in the latter, the cross, aided by the religious figures on the side panels, determines the artistic orientation of the item. Here the feng huang bird is incorporated in decorative ensemble of flowers and other birds, an earthly depiction of paradise. In that context though, common features of the feng huang bird with phoenix, a symbol of rebirth and victory of life over death may also evoke the Resurrection.

The few artifacts discussed here, combining iconographies of diverse cultural backgrounds attest that "the relative size of decorations, the degree of relief, the actual location of different kinds of motifs and other such organisational or compositional characteristics are attributes of a work of art that are logically independent of the subject matter yet which allow the viewer to identify, among other things, a hierarchy of importance in the use of motifs and in the shape of designs. Like the muscles of a body, these attributes manipulate the subject depicted and the
perception of the viewer” (Grabar (1992):30) how artifacts and monuments were received by the peoples of their time and how their past experiences, mentalities and collective memories intervened into their interpretation (Cutler (2009): 41-42).

Along this line of thought, after the portable objects the discussion will continue on monuments constructed in Asia Minor according to Iranian architecture under the patronage of the Seljuk Sultans.

**Seljuk architecture in Asia Minor**

The monuments built in Asia Minor under Seljuk patronage are descendants of those in Iran under the Great Seljuks, an inheritance of the ruling Caliphate of the previous years. The ancestor of these monuments is the ribat, a fortified space, enclosing a courtyard around which, there were halls and porticoes. The ribats functioned as military bases, hostels and monasteries along the frontiers of the Arabic conquests (some have been preserved in North Africa and Central Asia as far as Susa) (Grabar (1978): 128, 209).

Iranian art was quite distinctively perceived by the Seljuks of Anatolia and the material used is stone instead of brick (Stierlin (2006): 12-13). Very few monuments of the twelfth century remain, but they are compensated for, by discoveries of others dated to the thirteenth century. Architectural monuments are the major work of the Seljuks, even before they became an organised polity and they served on one hand practical necessities and on the other legitimization. The manual for the construction of urban centres followed by all Sultans, had been written by Nizam al Mulk, the vizier of the Great Seljuks, titled "The Book of Government" or "Rules for Kings" (Siyar al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama) (Yalman (2010): 229-30). Building for public use is dictated by one of the five pillars of Islam, philanthropy (zakat) (Ali, p. 456) so the funding was provided by the waqfs, endowments of permanent character according to a hadith (Ali, p. 699-700).

Once the Seljuks took over a town, they would first reinforce its fortifications. Following the usual practice of all ages, among the material used there was extended use of spolia - reuse of ancient material: stone and marble from ancient temples,
statues and churches. Apart from practical purposes, figural friezes, statues, inscriptions and so on could serve as symbols of power or they were thought to have apotropaic properties (Yalman(2010):110-6).

Following the fortifications, there would ensue religious and secular buildings. The elementary unit is the iwan; iwans were constructed in the Ummayad and the Abbasid palaces but the Seljuks were the first to use them in the mosque (Μπλαιρ -Μπλουμ (1999):157): they are symmetrically placed, one facing the other, in pairs, opening into the yards of the mosques and medreses - with the ablution fountain in its centre - and covered by a hemispherical dome. One of the iwans is bigger, bearing richer decoration on the façade. Its mihrab (the prayer niche) and minbar (the ambo) also bear exquisite decorations; it is where, the official Friday prayer (the kut’ba) is addressed in the name of the Sultan (Stierlin 28-29). Eventually, the four iwans came to be identified with the four major legal school of Islam, the Hanafites, the Malikites, the Safaites and the Hanbalites (Godard (1951):2, Stierlin (2006):39)

Other religious buildings are the theological schools (medrese) and the tombs. The origin of the medrese dates to the tenth century in the region of Khorasan, strangely enough among in Shi’ite populations. It was a private school organised at the professor’s own house. Almost a century later, medreses are established under Seljuk patronage as public institutions in Baghdad then in Nishapur, Basra and all over the territories conquered by the Seljuks (Godard (1951):1).

Finally the architectural structure of the mausolea reflects the burial cult of Central Asian tradition: the upper part of the mausoleum is a cenotaph, corresponding to the tent ceremony; the dead is buried underneath according to the second earth funeral. The decoration on the tomb as described previously are birds, after the belief that the soul of the dead transforms into a bird, double headed eagles or other (Otto- Dorn (1978/9):115, Androudis (1999):322). Traditionally, the tombs should be deprived of decoration. Still, the first decorated tomb was built in Samarra for the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustansir in 862-864, an order by his mother, a christian orthodox of byzantine origin (Stierlin(2006): 226).

Leaving the towns, the travellers usually tradesmen with their carriage and pilgrims they would come across buildings providing hospitality overnignt, along the major trading routes. Their names vary according to the degree of luxury from the humble
"hans" to the superior caravanserais or the latest bigger Sultan Hans of the reign of Alaeddin Keykubad. The latter may also provide musical entertainment while in the simple "hans" the guests got the opportunity to sit together at dinner and discuss their adventures and then go to sleep in dormitories or separate rooms while their carriage animals had been fed and let to rest in the neighbouring stables. Hospitality was free for the caravanserais in the countryside but guests staying in town hans were charged with entry and exit taxes. The average distance between these rest places was approximately 30 km which would take a camel, almost nine hours to transverse, making sure that every traveller would have a place to stay before dark (Talbot Rice (1961):100-3).

Finally, the palace was an attempt to combine living in the round tent with the pointed roof and the Iranian palaces of the Caliphs. So, the Seljuk palace consisted of a wall enclosing several separate and detached pavilllions to house the Sultan, the harem, people of the court, warehouses for their goods, cooking facilities, stables for the livestock (Talbot Rice (1961):95-6).

Decoration of buildings includes geometrical patterns and *muqarnas*, typical of Islamic architecture like honeycomb carvings in stone, above the gates and the prayer niche in the mosque. Tiles of various sizes and cuts were used to form mosaic decorations both in secular and religious buildings: doorways, fenestrations, mihrabs. The technique of cutting tiles was also a loan from Iran. The dominant colours are blue, white and black. There also exist cross, square and cross-shaped and octagonal figural tiles depicting the sultan and officials as well as animals, real or fictional ones - lions, peacocks, sphinxes, dragons, double-headed eagles - and the tree of life. Excavations in Konya and at lake Beyşehir, the sites of Alaeddin’s palace and hunting pavilion respectively, have revealed tiles and glazed pottery. The palace in Konya had been built by Kılıç Arslan II (r. 1156-92) and so, among the tiles discovered there, samples of the most ancient technique, minai or enamel glazing applied by the the Great Seljuks of Iran are found.

The formal description of an architectural monument or a work of art falls under one distinct literary genre of Byzantine Rhetoric, the “ekphrasis”. The authors were "accurate and detailed in their physical descriptions", always putting in such strenuous efforts to develop the appropriate language to convey the picture, so that the literary result would end up competing the very artifact they were trying to depict. (Maguire (1994): 22-23). One such text is located in Nikolaos Mesarites' "The palace revolution of Ioannis Komnenos" written in 1200. The book records the one-day revolt of John Axouch, the grandson of the Seljuk John Axouch (mentioned here in a previous chapter), who had grown up in the Byzantine palace with John Komnenos, the future emperor. When the action in the narrative peaks and right before the usurper is arrested, the author provides a description of the Seljuk palace, which had been built in Constantinople in the second half of the twelfth century. The building had a conical roof so it is called “Mouchroutas” after the Arab word "machrut" which means cone.

There also existed another “Muslim” pavillion, in the suburbs of Constantinople, the Bryas palace, which had been built by Emperor Theophilos and possibly "demonstrated a Byzantine ability to master the terms of Abbasid display ..."(Walker (2012):44). As regards the twelfth century, and despite its intense secular architectural activity, the Great Palace still maintained most of the admirative and ceremonial functions of Constantinople; consequently, its seize would be "the first concern of every insecure ruler", John Axouch in 1200 included (Magdalino (1978):111).

The extract upon which all research is constructed follows here (the original text followed by its translation both from Walker (2010):

"27. Ἡνεῳγμένα τό ἀπὸ τούδε τά τῶν ἀνακτόρων θύρετρα καὶ ἄφυλακτα, οἱ ἱουστινιάνειος τρίκλινος γεγυμνωμένος ἀνδρῶν.ἐπὶ τόν Χρυσοτρίκλινον ἡ ὑρμή καὶ σποράδην ἢ τῶν στρατιώτων βύμη ἐπὶ τάς γωνίας τῶν ἀνακτόρων, τούς τῷ φόβῳ σεσωρευμένους κατασκηνοθίζουσα τε καὶ κατακόπτουσα. ἀλλὰ δεδοίκει πάλιν ἢ
στρατιά τῷ ὀλιγαρίθμῳ τῶν ὑπαντιαζόντων αὐτοῖς κατὰ πρόσωπον. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ
συνεστέλλετο ἐννοουμένη, μή ποὺ ἐνέδρα τις ἔστιν ἐλλοχώσα, μή λαθραία τις σκέψις,
μή διαβούλιον. τοίνυν καὶ κατά πολλὴν τοῦ διώκοντος ἐρημέναν οἱ τῷ φόβῳ
kateilemennó toû Ἰωάννου ὑπασπιστά ἐπὶ τήν ἀνοδον προεχώρου του Μουχρουτᾶ.
ὁ δὲ Μουχρουτᾶς ἔστι τὶ δόμα τεράστιον, τοῦ Χρυσοτρικλίνου ἀπτόμενον, ώς πρὸς
dusmēn δiakēmennōn. aí πρὸς τοῦτον βαθμίδες ἐξ ὄπτης πλίνθου καὶ τιτάνων καὶ
marmáρων πεποιημέναι, ἡ κλίμαξ ἐνθεν κἀκεῖθεν ὀδοντωμένη περιγυρουμένη,
kekrwsmēn òu του κυανῷ, τῶν πυκνῶν λελευκασμένῳ, βεβαμμένῳ τῶν
χλοανῶν, ἐξανθοῦσα τῷ πορφυρίζοντι ἐξ ἐγκεκολαμμένων συμμίκτων βεβαμμένων ὀστράκων
"27. From that point on, the doors of the palace lay open and unguarded, the Triklinos
of Justinian [another hall in the imperial palace] being stripped of men. An assault was
made on the Chrysotriklino and the soldiers spread out as they charged the corners of
the palace, piercing with swords and cutting down to pieces those who huddled
together in fear. But the soldiers were still made nervous by the small number coming
out to meet them face to face. On account of this they held back, being anxious lest some ambush, or some secret scheme, or plot, was lying in wait somewhere. Therefore, because of the dearth of pursuers, the shield-bearers of John, seized by fear, proceeded up to the Mouchroutas.

The Mouchroutas is an enormous hall, next to the Chrysotriklinos, located on the westerly side. The steps to this hall are made from baked brick, gypsum, and marble. The staircase bears serrated decoration on either side and turns in a circle. It is painted with dark blue, shining with deep red, dyed with green, blooming with purple from mixed, cross-shaped tiles joined together.

The chamber was the work not of a Roman, Sicilian, Celt, Sybarite, Cypriot, or a Cilician hand, but rather of a Persian hand, because it bears figures of Persians and their various costumes. Everywhere on the ceiling are scenes of various types applied to the heaven-like ceiling made of hemispheres. The recesses and projections of the angles are densely packed. The beauty of the carving is extraordinary, the spectacle of the concave spaces is delightful; overlaid with gold, it produces the effect of a rainbow more colorful than the one in the clouds. There is insatiable pleasure—not hidden, but on the surface: not just for those who for the first time direct their gaze upon it, but also for those who visit it frequently [it evokes] amazement and surprise. This Persian hall is more delightful than the Lakonian ones of Menelaus.

28. This Persian stage—the work of the hand of John's kinsman from his grandfather's family-framed the actor John. Although crowned, he was not dressed royally, sitting on the ground, a symbol of the suffering that had seized the wretch, and of the unbearableness of his misfortune. He was gulping his drink quickly and courting favor with the Persians painted on the chamber and drinking to them. Running with sweat, he sometimes wiped the sweat with a towel, sometimes flicked the sweat away with his crooked finger; already he was passing into a very deep sleep."

Scholar references to the Mouchroutas can be traced in the book published in 1910, by J. Ebersolt, "Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des Ceremonies" and then in the article published in 1964, by R. Guillard "La porte des Skyla". The views expressed by both authors constitute, among others, the basis for Paul Magdalino's article "Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace" published in 1978. The author examines literary sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in order to explore
the arguments posed by these scholars: the changes at the Great Palace and the issue of the Mouchroutas; if it really existed as a building *per se* or if it was one of the names used to describe the same building: the Lausiakos or "the throne -room", which both Kinnamos and Choniates refer to or the "Manuelites Triklinos" in Pachymeres' work in the thirteenth century. By doing so he also provides aspects of its relative topography within the Great Palace.

The topography of the Lausiakos is described in the Book of Ceremonies: It was the main processional area in the western part of the Great Palace connecting the Triklinos of Justinian to the Chrysotriklinos. The mere absence of descriptions of any stairs in the sequel of these spaces contradicts Mesarites' narrative ("αἱ πρὸς τοῦτον βαθμίδες.... ἡ κλίμαξ..."). What's more, the imperial soldiers were suspicious or afraid of being ambushed, a statement meaning that they didn't have visual contact with the usurper and his followers. This data is a mere confirmation that, the topography of the palace had indeed undergone changes since the tenth century and also that it is rather difficult to identify the Mouchroutas to the Lausiakos.

As regards the identification of the Mouchroutas with the "Porphyromanuelatos triklinos", the evidence used to prove that it cannot be possibly true, is taken from the proceedings of the synodal sessions of 1166, in which the Emperor presided. These took place in the "Porphyromanuelatos triklinos" which overlooked the western wall of the palace and most probably the Mouchroutas.

Magdalino returns to the discussion on the Mouchroutas in 2002 in his book "The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143-1180":"it is likely that the Mouchroutas was built specially to accommodate distinguished Muslim visitors, who required special arrangements because their infidel presence could not be allowed to defile the icons and other consecrated objects which must have abounded in all other parts of the palace". However, it is not possible to establish a direct connection between the Sultan's visit (discussed here previously) and the building activity in Constantinople (Magdalino (2002):118).

During the time between Magdalino's article and book, in 1984, Lucy-Anne Hunt includes the Mouchroutas in her review of the palace decoration of Comnenian aristocracy, while she is tracing intercultural connection between Byzantium and the Seljuks, the latter as representatives of the Islamic world in the field of secular art. Like
Alicia Walker later on, she spots elements of juxtaposition in the description of architecture which are used as metaphors of the Byzantine imperial system of values. Amidst the plethora of information on Comnenian palace decoration and courtly life, she first refers to the Seljuk pavilion in Cilicia, the house of Alexius Axouch, the Protostrator of Manuel I Komnenos, who he had been appointed governor in that region. The palace is described by Kinnamos as being decorated with scenes from the military campaigns of Kılıç Arslan II a fact linked to the conspiracy, plotted between Axouch and the Seljuk Sultan in 1167, against the Byzantine Emperor. As Hunt agrees with Magdalino that, the Mouchroutas was built to house the Seljuk embassy during their visit to Constantinople in 1161 - both for political reasons and to avoid "contamination" of the palace by the Muslims - this leads her to the conclusion that the palace of Axouch in Cilicia must have been built approximately four years later. After a reference to the fictional palace of Digenis Akritas, the author concludes that if the Mouchroutas had been built prior to the visit of Kılıç Arslan II, to Constantinople then it means that this architectural style has probably been adopted by the Byzantines almost at the same time that it had been so in Norman Sicily. This is possibly the reason why, a closer examination of the architecture of the palaces built under Seljuk patronage might lead to a better understanding of middle Byzantine palaces (Angold (1984): 138-156).

Another article on the Mouchroutas is published in 2004 by Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger Asutay-Effenberger N., (2004) poses three major questions i.e. where was its exact position in relation to the topography of the Great Palace, who would have been its inhabitant(s) and what it looked like. Recalling Hunt’s work, that the tiles on the Mouchroutas must have had similarities to the ones used in thirteenth century Anatolia – the sultan’s hunting pavilion in Kabadabad and the palace in Konya – she agrees that the Mouchroutas must have been built in the second half of the twelfth century, and the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos deliberately used the mina’i tiles to imitate the decoration of the Seljuk kiosk at Konya. Then the author goes on to argue about the topography of the Seljuk pavilion in Constantinople based on two sources. The first one is the fifteenth century Weltchronik (Hartmann Schedel’s World Chronicle), where a drawing depicts a small kiosk with a conical roof near the sea walls of the city of Constantinople, at the time of the great storm in 1490 after which, the
Muchrutas probably collapsed. Another similar picture was drawn by the sixteenth century chronicler Onufrio Panvivio of a similar construction as viewed from the Hippodrome. Apart from the topography both depictions allow for assumptions on the size of the Muchrutas; an additional comparison with the current knowledge of the small mosques in the Seljuk Caravanserais of Anatolia and the kiosk in the Keykubadiye palace in Kayseri may lead to the conclusion that, the size of the Muchrutas may be estimated of an approximate surface of 6x6m. This is in line with the antithesis between two consecutive paragraphs in Messarites’ description: "an enormous hall" and then "a chamber". Consequently, it wouldn’t have been appropriate to house a Seljuk Sultan.

Six years later, another article (Walker (2010)) was published in 2010 by Alicia Walker, which was to be later included in her book of 2012 on the imaging of middle Byzantine imperial power (Walker (2012)). The author focuses on the decorative tiles and motifs of the pavillion based on Mesarites’ ekphrasis and on arcaeo logical discoveries at the site of the palace of Kılıç Arslan II- the first building phase of what became later the palace of Alaeddin Keykubad - in Konya and also other sites around the Mediterranean, like Lucy-Ann Hunt. As the latter has done in her work, Alicia Walker expands on the issue of values of the Byzantine emperor as depicted in narrative and non narrative sources of the Middle Ages. The author concludes that, apart from being an indispensable complementary narrative source for Seljuk palace architecture and decoration, Mesarites also provides evidence of how distant and foreign, this culture was perceived by the contemporary viewer - almost as much as that of ancient Greece. The reader is guided to view the Mouchroutas as a metaphor for John Axouch, who is considered as unfit for the Byzantine throne; as Seljuk - Islamic art will never reach the grandeur of that of Byzantium of which the emperor is a fit analogue. In this context, the meaning of the word "incomparability" in the title of the article is used antithetically to parity; it "highlights the perception of irreconcilable differences between indigenous and foreign artistic elements and the cultures they represent" (Walker (2012): xxi).In the same book, there appears the alternative that, the name of the Mouchroutas, derives, not from the Arabic word makhruta which means cone, but from the Greek word mouchrouta (μουχρούτα) which means "a large bowl or vessel" in the eleventh and twelfth century. According to the author, this
might make reference to the round shape of the building or to the leisure activities in
the building, drinking included. The meaning and the etymology of the word "makhrut"
consists one of the basic arguments in Jeremy Johns' article, which is the latest opinion
about the Mouchroutas.

The article was published in 2016 (Johns 2016) to be later included in the book,
titled: “Art, Trade and Culture in the Near East ans India: From the Fatimids to the
Mughals” (A. Ohta, M. Rogers and R. Wade Haddon (eds)), published in the same year.
Johns attempts a completely different approach and his conclusions are quite
subversive. He starts his arguments, based on the examination of luxurious artifacts
that will be discussed later on, combined with a linguistic analysis of the word
“makhrut”, after which, the building took its name and has been largely accepted by
academics for decades, to describe the conical roof of the building. The word is the
passive participle of the verb “kharata – yakhritu”, which initially involved all the work
involved in wood processing, from “stripping a stem or branch of its leaves, bark, fruit
etc” to “planning”, “turning on a lathe” and “carving” and “polishing”. Eventually after
the use of the lathe, the result may be “a cone”, a good explanation for the use of the
word “makhrut” by medieval Arabic scientists, to describe objects shaped like
pyramids. As for the verb, its meaning had been gradually broadened, to include,
apart from wood, almost all material like glass, crystal, ivory, metal and also, almost all
its processing on any rotary device using abrasive powders etc. This is probably how
the “makhrut” evolved to include in its meaning, glass objects, decorated with carvings
in Arab sources of the tenth century onwards. The first use of that word, in Medieval
Greek, occurs in 1083 in the inventory of the Monastery of the Mother of God
Petritzonitissa in Bulgaria, compiled by Gregory Pakourianos: he uses it to describe
drinking glasses along with other valuable vessels of Islamic origin. The word
“makhrut” is used with the same meaning again in 1127, in another inventory of the
Monastery of St John the Theologian in Patmos, included in the will of the
“cathegoumen”. Finally, the word appears in the satirical poems, that
Ptochoprodromos addressed to the emperors of the Komnenian dynasty in his
depictions of elite luxurious leisure.

Moving on to Architecture, the author makes reference to the Capella Palatina in
Palermo as he thinks that it was built by the same group of artists who also built (or
decorated) the Mouchroutas. He argues that, they all belonged to the same workshop in Cairo under the patronage of the Fatimids; after the decline of the latter, they started working abroad, transferring their skills from Islamic architecture around the Mediterranean. They must have already finished working on the ceilings in Palermo by the time the Byzantines campaigned against Roger II and then moved on to Constantinople to work on the Mouchroutas during the reign of Manuel I. Having set the building during that period, ruling out its identification with the Lausiakos, in line with P. Magdalino, he also resolves – like the latter does – to the proceedings of the Synodal sessions of 1166 and the text by Mesarites, in order to determine its position.

He disagrees with P. Magdalino that, the Mouchroutas was built near the western edge of the palace between the walls and the louustinianos because there is not enough space. For the same reason, it couldn’t have been built to the southeast of louustinianos, where the Chrysotriklinos is found. Taking into account that, in Mesarites' narrative, the imperial army had entered into the Mouchroutas from the Chrysotriklinos, the only space available for its position is to the south west of the louustinianos. Also, the fact that troops and rebels move up and down stairs during the narrative, leads to the conviction that, the building that is considered to be the Mouchroutas, must have been erected on one of the terraces of the Great Palace, at a level higher than the Chrysotriklinos. In addition, there couldn’t have been any other building to the west, because the ground slopes steeply in that part and, the whole space is enclosed within the western part of the Nikephoros Phokas walls. Finally, the Council proceedings testify that, the view from Porphyromanuelatos Triklinos was the sea to the south and the walls of Nikephoros Phokas. The combination of all this data attests that, the Mouchroutas is the same building with the Porphyromanuelatos Triklinos. This is the building that, the artists of the Fatimid chaliphate had been commissioned to decorate, after the Capella Palatina as “this type of Islamic ceiling seems to have become established as a desirable accessory for palaces inhabited even by Christian members of the family of kings”.

The decoration of the Capella Palatina is described by Philagathos Kerameos; an extract of his text is included in the article. It is quite possible that, Messarites’ description is based on that of the eye – witness Philagathos of the Capella Palatina: both texts contain the same perception of the muqarnas decoration of the ceiling,
depicting its honeycomb appearance with words like “basket-like coffers” (Philagathos) and “hemispheres” (Mesarites). Both authors consider the vaults as carvings, whereas in fact they are compiled by very thin panels of wood. This perception though, is what drives Mesarites to use the word Mouchroutas, as a loan from the Islamic style carved glasses and other luxurious items mentioned above. His intention was, not to state that the building had a conical roof – which couldn’t support this kind of decoration anyway – but to describe the wooden muqarnas as what he perceived as carving on wood. The same “error” appears in other texts of the same period till the sixteenth century.

Still, Mesarites’ overall treatment of the issue of John Axouch, should raise the question, whether he deliberately performs this play on the words: he uses the Mouchroutas as the scenery where John Axouch fits. He needs to demonstrate that he is the Other and he must be cast away from the cultural context of Constantinople: its highly civilised and elegant society does not excuse physical distortions like extra weight (as it is mentioned in another source, the throne broke as soon as the overweight John Axouch had sat on it), human excretions like sweat nor vulgar behaviours like drunkenness. Not even his complexion is acceptable. This expression of Messarites' perception, is in line with the opinions expressed by Lucy-Ann Hunt and Alicia Walker and also taken a step further: Mesarites creates a quasi fictional setting within the Great Palace, which the reader is familiar with, avoiding even the mere mention of the name (Manuelites) of the building he substitutes for, thus attempting to alienate the Seljuk Axouch from his half byzantine (Komnenian) descendence, almost cast him away, enclosed in surroundings of his own oriental origin. Conversely, this literary creation may serve as a counterbalance of the “diminishing security” of the period, when it was written. The Seljuks have prevailed in Asia Minor, the pressure from the West is increasing and there is "weakness" in the internal affairs of the Empire (Treadgold (1997):667). It is possible that, under the offensive attitude, which aims to belittle Axouch and all of what he represents, a desperate defensive attempt is smouldering: to salvage an ideal and preserve an identity, which are collapsing under the burden in which the Turk and his people have long been involved.

Despite the practical implications on the topography and the size (possibly of a room, too small to house a sultan) even if it was used symbolically in Mesarites' description
to increase the dramatic influence of the narrative, the Mouchroutas remains a precious part of the "visual vocabulary", for the expression of the perception of the cultural other by the elite writers and readers of its time.
Conclusions

Light from darkness are a blink of the eye apart. Stimuli, entering and triggering the formation of the image stem from personal experience, collective memory and subconscious paths of thought. This is an approximation of how perceptions are formed, objects acquire a social meaning within a specific historical context and “functions acquire monumental forms”.

“People are disturbed not by the things as they occur but by their opinion about the things”. The cognitive approach suggested for the reading of artifacts and monuments, which may be definitely extended to all sources, narrative and non narrative ones included, is a conscious tracing of all processes involved in their perception. The brief review of the articles on the Mouchroutas confirms that, the sources will always deserve multiple readings, open mindedness, multidisciplinary approaches and a critical eye. Conceptions and perceptions still en filigrane, await to be made prominent.

Along this line there is the work of Peter McClary on "vertical vs horizontal emphasis" in Rum Seljuk architecture in the early thirteenth century; of Scott Redford on portable palaces, where he integrates the question of reception and perception also at the popular level – besides the elites – and he suggests a whole new way of viewing architectural monuments, parallel to the proposal by Alicia Walker and Eva Hoffman of “privileging portability over fixity and reception over provenance”. This latter article is published in a book which explores the mechanisms of transmission in Art and Architecture around the Middle Ages Mediterranean. Scott Redford has also discussed the establishment of "a grammar of the ornament" contributing to Davis' "close reading of artifacts".

Artifacts and monuments may be produced under the patronage of a certain polity for reason of self-identification, self-empowerment and legitimisation will eventually testify of their perceptions of the other; the Middle Ages, very distant from the invention of the European nation state and the Westphalian sovereignty, is fertile grounds for research on self identity by means of perception of the cultural other. At the same time though, the mixed iconography of the artifacts demonstrates the
common acceptance of a visual language, suggestive of a common cultural past of indoeuropean provenance. So, polities may clash but civilizations will not.

This fresh trend in research is expected to set it free from longterm bonds and polarities stretching from nomad versus sedentary, barbarian versus civilised to the very relation of humans to nature and all its other living components. Most importantly, it is expected to chart a wise way to study and interpret historical events, safeguarding them from the "winner - loser" simplifications of an erroneous, retrospective, secure viewpoint; also from practicalities such as, political obstruction of excavations, new discoveries that may reverse secure chronologies and so on.

This is probably a good time to state that it is not about substituting archaeology and art history as we know them, with "armchair archaeology". Nor is it about eliminating cultural identities Quite on the contrary, traditional scientific research will consist the basis for a new way of viewing and interpreting the data collected.

Alicia Walker suggests that a new vocabulary is adopted: the term "minor arts" to be replaced by "decorative" arts is one sample to this direction. For the time being, an intersciplinary approch - social sciences and literary theory- may be adopted such as the “Theory of Reception Aesthetics” of Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss - there are also echoes of Barthes’ death of the author detected, which may be more appropriate for the present analysis. She also traces several degrees or levels of integration as has been discussed in the case of the feng huang bird depiction on several arifacts; also in her book "The emperor and the world these levels range from "emulation" to "incomparability". Along with Eva Hoffman they are for "a cross-cultural, cross-temporal, multimedia, and multidisciplinary approach" beyond the "studies of medieval art which tend to divide along boundaries of media, religion, geography, and chronology".

The incentive for such an approach, dates back to Oleg Grabar’s suggestion to study the “anthropology of the object” as a parametre of "the shared culture of objects". To Anthony Cutler's work on "how artifacts and monuments were received by the peoples of their time and how their past experiences, mentalities and collective memories intervened into their interpretation". Such notions have been included in the words of "one of the leading Byzantine historians in America, Professor Speros Vryonis, jr." who "honored the conceptualisation of the exhibitionfor approaching" the art of Byzantium
as a window through which to examine not only its guiding principles and rich variety of forms (and thus to gasp its essence) but also to see it as an expression of the complexity and intensity of Byzantium's relations to its neighbors (not only those forming a component part of Byzantine civilisation but also those "belonging" to different civilizations or to border regions between civilisations" (Pevny (ed.)(2000):viii-ix).
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Appendix

Fig 1: "Mounted bowmen were the formidable and very mobile force of the Turkic armies. It was in the middle of the first millennium that the use of the rigid saddle with stirrups first became common. Accurate shooting on the run became possible for the first time when a rider could stand in his stirrups absorbing in his legs the unsteadiness of his galloping steed." (Lawton (1996):44-45)
Fig. 2 Plate with lovers, Probably northern Greece or Eastern Thrace, first half of 13th century glazed earthenware with champlevé decoration, Archaeological Museum of Ancient Corinth (https://www.nga.gov/features/byzantine/byzantine-ceramics.html accessed Nov 17, 2018 at 13:45)
Fig. 3 Double-headed eagle. Ceramic tile, Turkish, 1200-1250. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum fur Islamische Kunst, Berlin
Fig. 5: A pair of confronted horsemen fighting a winged dragon and a lion. Relief frieze from the pavilion of Qılıç Arslan II (Alaeddin Köşkü), Konya (Kuehn(2011):plate 23)
Fig. 6 An emblem with a pair of addorsed *regardant* dragons with forelegs, wings and entwined bodies on a late Byzantine image of an enthroned Christ. Coin (reverse) of Qara Arslan (539/1144–562/1167), the Artuqid ruler of Hisn n Kayfā and Khartpert. Copper alloy. London, British Museum. Photograph by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum. b. Detail: after van Berchem and Strzygowski, 1910, p. 84 (Kuehn(2011):plate 51)

Fig. 7 (drawing of a detail on the coin). An emblem with a pair of interlaced addorsed *regardant* dragons with wings and forelegs on a late Byzantine image of an enthroned Christ. Coin (reverse) of Qara Arslan (539/1144–562/1167), the Artuqid ruler of Kayfā and Khartpert (Kuehn(2011):plate 51)
Fig. 8: Cast bronze mirror diametre 27.3 cm from Khurasan Persian; Mesopotamian Seljuk 12th–13th century The Boston Museum of Fine Arts no.67.815
Source: https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/bronze-mirror-22393, accessed
Fig:9  Composite body (quartz, clay and glass frit), lustre decoration Diameter: 18.9 cm from Seljuk Iran Boston Museum of Fine Arts no. 31.727

Source: https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/dish-17754 accessed
Fig. 10: Star tile from north western Iran length 32 cm. Fritware, with whitened glaze, with on which the decoration is in luster pigment reduced in a second firing. Boston Museum of Fine Arts no. 11.40

Fig. 11: Artukid bowl (obverse). Byzantine (?), 1114-44. Cloisonne enamel on copper, with guilded partitions: Diameter, 27 cm; height, 5 cm. Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck (Steppan in Pevny (ed.) (2000): 85).

Fig. 12 Artukid bowl (reverse) (Steppan in Pevny (ed.) (2000): 86).
Fig. 13: Lamp or perfume - burner in shape of domed building. Southern Italian (?), end of 12th century. Silver, partly gilt. height 360 mm, width 300 mm (Tesoro, no.142 - adapted after 1231 (?) to serve as a reliquary of the Holy Blood and listed thus in the 1283 inventory :no.1) (Buckton D.(ed.), 1984) :238-239)
Fig. 14: The Ivrea Casket (short side panel with plaque and lid). Byzantine 11-12th c.; metal additions, gilded bronze, 12th-13th century (?), 51x25x15 cm, Cathedral Treasury, Ivrea, Italy (photo: Saverio Lomartire) (Walker (2008):100-1)
Fig. 15: Cup, Byzantine, tenth or eleventh century. Silver, height 6 cm, diameter at lip 10.6 cm. Historiska Museet, Stockholm, 6849:5. From Andersson, *Mediaeval Drinking Bowls*, pl. 15a (Walker (2010):201)


Fig. 18: Headpiece, Byzantine, tenth century. Pigment and gold foil on parchment, folio 26.5 x 29.6 cm. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, Cod. Phillips 1538, fol. 41r. Photograph courtesy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preusischer Kulturbesitz (Walker (2010): 204)

Fig. 19: Back side and outer wings of a triptych, Byzantine (Constantinople), tenth or leventh century. Ivory, height 25.2 cm, width 33 cm (open). Museo Sacro della Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican City, 2441. Photograph © Collection of the Museo Sacro of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Walker (2010): 205)
Fig.20: Casket, Byzantine (Constantinople), tenth or eleventh century. Dyed ivory, height 13.4 cm, width 26.4 cm, depth 13 cm. Cathedral Treasury, Troyes, France. © Tresor de la cathedrale de Troyes – Photograph Didier Vogel (Walker (2010):205)
Fig. 21: Gilded and painted glass bowl, silver - gilt, stones. height 170mm, diam. 170 mm, overall width 330 mm (Tesoro, no. 109 - listed in the 1325 inventory:V, no. 3) (Buckton D.(ed.) (1984): 181)
Fig 22: Silk triple cloth- textile fragment with hare in interlaced octagons Persian (Seljuk) Seljuk Dynasty 11th–12th century Width x length: 19.7 x 14.6 cm (7 3/4 x 5 3/4 in.)
The Boston Museum of Fine Arts no.51.252