

“MANZIKERT TO LEPANTO, THE BYZANTINE
WORLD AND THE TURKS (1071-1571)”
(A SYMPOSIUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM, MARCH 23rd-30th, 1985)

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The Turks are sometimes faced With the to them surprising observation that the evocation of long-past victories and defeats may still rouse emotions, in the Christian World. The above-mentioned Symposium could have initially been planned, in such a mood, judging by this quotation, in the programme:

“White founts falling in the courts of the sun,
And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling, as they run;
There is laughter, like the fountains, in that face of all men feared
It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard,
It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his lips,
For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with his ships.
They have dared the White Republic up the capes of Italy,
They have dashed the Adriatic, round the Lion of the Sea.
And the Pope has cast his arms abroad, for agony and loss,
And called the kings of Christendom for swords about the Cross.
The cold queen of England is looking in the glass;
The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the Mass;
From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish gun,
And the Lord, upon the Golden Horn, is laughing in the sun.
Dim drums throbbing, in the hills, half-heard,
Where only, on a nameless throne, a crownless prince has stirred,
Where risen from a doubtful seat and half-attained stall,
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall.

.....
In that enourmous silence, tiny and unafraid,
Comes up, along a winding road, the noise of the Crusade.

.....
Don John of Austria is going to the war.

.....
Holding his head up, for a flag of all the free.
Love-light of Spain, hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!

(G. K. Chesterton, 1872-1936).

Although the aim of the Symposium was defined as an exchange of views, between Turcologists and Byzantinists, Turkish scholars appear to have been ini-

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tially excluded, perhaps to avoid provocation. The major themes of Turcology and Byzantine researches were distributed to non-Turkish scholars, including Greeks. These invited speakers were allowed half-an-hour or longer, to expound their views. The Turkish scholars were later solicited, but only given fifteen minutes, to read their papers. Professor F. Sümer, a well-known authority on Seljuqid history could therefore not attempt a survey of some scope. The author of these lines, a student of pre-Seljuqid Turkish culture, had not expected that her subject would equally be involved and reserved the fifteen minutes, allowed to her, to a limited Ottoman theme, within the given frame.

The non-Turkish Turcologists commented the Turkish subjects with an impartial and conciliatory approach. They dwelt upon the liberty of conscience granted to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, on the exemptions and level of prosperity, attained by the Christian churches, under Turkish rule. Dr. H. G. Majer of München used the term "Pax Ottomana", as a counterpart of the concept called Nizâm-ı Âlem¹ in Turkish sources of the Ottoman age (World-order; the establishment of order, through Islamic principles, generally defined in related texts, as the abolition of class distinction, the prevalence of justice and liberty of conscience, to all subjects, whatever their race or creed), Dr. M. Kiel of Holland particularly outlined these views, quoting the passages of the Ottoman Archives. Dr. Kiel could thus invalidate some contrary statements. Professor B. Slot of the Hague, who had equally consulted the Ottoman Archives, remarked that the Aegean islands had been a "Frankish archipelago", before the Turks. He added that the Archipelago had achieved prosperity under the Ottomans, thus causing an increase, in the influx of Greek immigration to the Islands. The theme chosen by S. Ellis of Oxford was a comparison between the divergent styles of Mediterranean and Turkish domestic architecture (the latter, related to eastern Asia).

Some of the Byzantinists had not remained confined within the bounds of their field of study, but intended to compare Turkish and Byzantine cultures. These attempts to analyze Turkish culture, the sources of which were obviously not consulted, were naturally bound to remain the echo of the accusations made against Turks, by their Byzantine detractors. The tendency to view the Turks as nomads, who ended a sedentary Byzantine civilization, to become finally its heirs, seems to have lately become repetitious, among those unfamiliar with Turkish culture. A refutation of this iterant argument was made, at the Symposium, by Dr. G. Rupprecht of Germany, who questioned the author of such a communication, on the Oriental sources to which he could refer. When the question remained unanswered, Rupprecht remarked that had the Turks not possessed a developed culture of their own, Byzantium could have assimilated them, as in the case of some tribes, on its western border. But Turkish culture had prevailed in Anatolia. Dr. C. J. Heywood of London made a parallel observation, when he stated that,

¹ See, O. Turan, *Türk Cihân Hâkimiyeti Mefkûresi* (Istanbul, 1969). The pre-Islamic form of this concept: E. Esin, "Türklerin İç-Asya'dan getirdiği universalist devlet mefhûmu", *First International Congress on the Social and Economic History of Turkey* (Ankara, 1980).

although F. Köprülü had indicated the way, little had since been done to investigate the origins of the Ottoman state.

I tried to summarize the early history of Turkish culture, as defined after decades of research in the fields of medieval Turcology and of Altaistic, during the discussions. What was then said should perhaps be supported by some references, in this account of the Symposium. The Turks were never real nomads, but cattle-breeders who transhumed, between fortified winter quarters and estival pastures. The relays of transhumance were not altered, as some of them such as Ötüken-yış, the wooded mountain in present Mongolia, were regarded as charismatic residences.² The tendency towards sedentary existence started in the sixth century, when the Kök-Türk Qaghanate extended its rule over the cities on the Silk Route, in Central Asia and the encounter with multinational religions such as Buddhism and Manicheism.³ It is noteworthy that most of the Central Asian cities were rebuilt, by Kök-Türk princes, in the sixth to eighth century, to facilitate the flow of caravans, along commercial thoroughfares. The prohibition to kill animals, enjoined on the Uyghur Turks, in 762, through the conversion of the reigning dynasty to Manicheism, brought about agricultural activity and a complete switch to sedentary conditions. Buddhism, the religion of large groups of Turks, from around the sixth, down (in eastern Asia) to the fifteenth century, increased the same tendency. The still extant ruins of Uyghur⁴ cities in Northern Asia and Eastern Turkistan witness to a high level of civilization. Their literary and artistic productions⁵ have enriched many libraries and museums. The more western Oghuz Turks, from whom descend the Seljuqids and Ottomans, had also cities, in which archaeological researches have been conducted. Islam,⁶ propagated in western parts of Central Asia, since the eighth century, tended to encourage city life, through the weekly congregational service, in a cathedral mosque. It was in these circumstances that the Central Asian Turkish Muslim philosopher, Muhammad, son of Tarkhan, son of Uzlugh, surnamed Fârâbî the Turk (Fârâbî'ut-Turkî) (ca. 870-950) wrote his celebrated apology of the city, *Ârâu Ahli Madînatî'l-fâqîla*.⁷ The conversion to Islam, in ca. 926, of the ranking Turkish dynasty, the Khaqanids (or Qara-Khanids) united Western Turkistan under their rule. The first major Turkish Islamic civilization rose, on the background of earlier national culture, adapted to Islamic principles.⁸ The Khaqanid culture, expressed in literature,

² See, T. Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* (Indiana, 1968), s. v.

³ For sources, see E. Esin, *A History of pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Turkish Culture* (Istanbul, 1980), fourth chapter.

⁴ S. P. Kiselev, "Drevnie goroda Mongolii", *Sovetskaya Arxeologiya* (1957/2). (Northern Asia). E. Esin, "Balık and Ordu", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 37/3-4. (Wiesbaden, 1983) (Turkistan).

⁵ S. P. Tolstov, "Goroda Guzov", *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* (1947/3).

⁶ See, Esin, *A History...*, *op. cit.* in note 3 supra, fifth chapter.

⁷ On Fârâbî, see Ibn Abî Uşaybi'a, *'Uyun'ul-anbâ fi Tabaqât'il-e'tibbâ*, (Beyrut, 1965), pp. 603-609.

⁸ Sources in Esin, *A History...*, sixth chapter.

architecture, the arts of the book, determined ideological tenets which were to be valid for all the generations of Muslim Turks. The Seljuqid and Ottoman Turks came to Anatolia, imbued with Khaqanid culture, further enriched by their passage through southern areas of Central Asia.

Yûsuf Khâşş Hâjib of Balasagun⁹ (western Turkistan), the author of along versified allegory, written a few years before Manzikert, depicted Khaqanid society, as composed of professional associations (*qutu*), among which were the *begs* (princes, or high dignitaries); the *er-at* (army); the *qara-budun* (the people); the *bilge 'âlimler* (the learned scholars); the *otacılar* (the physicians); the *yulduzcılar* (the astronomers); the *tariğcılar* (the agriculturists); the *satığcılar* (the merchants); the *uzlar* (the craftsmen and artists); the *iğdişciler* (the cattle-breeders) (distiches 4031-4475). It seems to be an advanced degree of over-simplification to reduce the whole of Turkish mediaeval society to this last profession, as apparently thought by some Byzantines and Byzantinists.

There were also, during the Symposium, some attempts to go beyond the given historical frame and to draw into it the problems of current international politics. There was however no Turkish historian of the modern period, in the gathering and the subject remained unsolved.

⁹ See the translation by R. Dankoff, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Qutadghu-bilig)*, (Chicago, 1983).