
The Anatolian Seljuks were precursors to the Ottomans, and their enterprise lasted from the last quarter of the eleventh century through the end of the thirteenth. The rulers originally ruled from Nicaea, taken from the Byzantines within a decade after the Seljuk victory at Manzikert in eastern Anatolia (1071); after the victorious march of the First Crusade, the dynasty ensconced itself in Iconium, today’s Konya, in the south center of Lycaonia, and established a power and culture both rich and varied even after their defeat by the Mongols in 1243. It was probably the arrival and establishment of the Mongol troops that tipped the demographic balance between Greeks, Armenians, and Turks in the direction of Turkification and Islamization.

The study of medieval Anatolia has been slow to mature. One of the possible reasons is the variety of source languages; another is the lack of sources themselves, when compared to the volume of material available for Ottoman studies. A third may be the wounds experienced in traversing the thicket of nationalist literature. Many scholarly works on the Anatolian Seljuks discuss their lands as if they encompassed today’s Turkey. When works on medieval “Turkey” do not include Byzantium, Trebizond, or Armenia, one can only wonder at the power of anachronism.

One of the difficulties surrounding the field is that of nomenclature. Since using the name “Turkey” to refer to Seljuk territory bears anachronistic connotations, what do we use? Professor Paul Wittek once prepared a wonderful study in which he suggested that “Rûm,” with all its redolence of a cosmopolitan past, would do well; however, he got nowhere with this proposal. It is a pity. If one needs a shorthand expression for the lands in which the Turks settled, Rûm is a wise choice. “Anatolian,” which I use as an adjective, still implies the totality of the peninsula; “Rûm” includes the sense that much of the area in central Anatolia ruled by the Seljuks still contained a large, probably majority, Grecophone population for some time. Wittek’s article, originally published in French, has just appeared in a carefully annotated English translation, and it still deserves careful study as a lesson in the development of political vocabulary.¹

The first Anatolian Seljuk studies came from travelers, archaeologists, and historians of architecture. Friedrich Sarre’s *Reise in Kleinasien* (1896) was among the first books to reveal the riches of the plateau. Another rather different researcher,

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whose activities crossed a number of fields (and businesses), was Julius Harry Loytved-Hardegg. A German consul in Konya early in the twentieth century, Loytved-Hardegg published a book on the local monuments, was involved in the early recovery of Seljuk textiles, and both copied and produced a translation of the “chronicle” of Şikari. After World War I and the establishment of the Atatürk state, there was a flood of publication in the Turkish language, much of it the work of diligent local historians. These works appeared in regional cultural journals, such as Konya and Anıt, and are still well worth reading. The most prolific of the local historians was İbrahim Hakki Konyali, whose many books fill at least four feet of shelf space and include selections from hundreds of documents, many published more than once.

In the late 1960s two landmark books appeared, each complementing the other: Claude Cahen’s *Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (that word again!) and Osman Turan’s *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye* (and again!). Professor Cahen’s book later appeared in a revised French translation, and a slightly revised second English translation came later. Cahen had a great deal to offer on social and cultural matters, while Turan’s treatment was more detailed and dependent on a political narrative. In a different manner, Speros Vryonis’ lengthy study of the Muslim conversion of Anatolia provided an enormous amount of material on the Seljuks. Since that time many books on the Anatolian Seljuks have appeared in Turkish, but few in European languages. There are book-length bibliographies listing hundreds of Turkish articles on the Seljuks, but far fewer, again, in European languages, even including the history of art and architecture. In 2005, Gary Leiser, one of the standard-bearers of Seljuk studies, edited a volume of the medievalist journal *Mésogeios* dedicated to the topic, with thirteen articles, most of them dealing with the thirteenth century, for which the greatest body of evidence survives.

This particular book, *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*, originated from a conference held in Istanbul in 2009. The editors and authors are all well known for their studies in Anatolian Seljuk history, literature, and art. The introduction, by Professors Peacock and Yıldız, contains a *tour d’horizon* of the state of the field and places the subsequent articles in context. The authors comment on the nationalist focus of much prior work and introduce the reader to some of the problems of Seljuk history and the opportunities for profitable further research.

The book consists of three sections, each containing a few articles. The wide panoramas revealed by the authors, as well as their use of comparative materials, means that to benefit fully from the book’s broad scope, the reader should not limit the inspection to one article or the other but enjoy the whole.

The first section discusses three examples of the relationships between the leadership of the Seljuks of Rûm and the “Great” Seljuks farther to the east.