

Summary

The Problem of the Conquest of Alanya: An Establishment

Although the subject on the conquest of Alanya has heretofore drawn the attention of many researchers, frequently dwelling on the chronicle of the conquest and its importance for political and military history, as well as its impact on the world trade of its epoch, the factual history of the conquest is still a matter of debate, and the most important of all, the means through which it was realized retains its obscurity.

As there is a disagreement over the date of the conquest of Alanya being whether the year 1221 or 1223, the information provided by the 13th century source İbni Bibi can provide a fix for the question.

It being the fact that Alâeddin Keykubat I conquered Kalonoros Castle as his first deed after ascending the Seljuk throne, and subsequently secured the constructions of Konya and Sivas Castles with contributions from State Emirs. If the inscriptions at Konya indicating the year 1221 are considered, then it can be stated that the conquest of Alanya was realized with same year. Consequently, if one recalls that Keykubat I, who took the throne towards the end of the year 1220, conquered Alanya during the winter season following a siege of two months, then it becomes obvious that this date should coincide with the winter of 1221 which at the same time became the first anniversary of his sovereignty.

Moreover, there can be found other evidence to impel us to accept 1221 as the date for the conquest. It is known that at Kayseri Devlethanesi (The State House) on 6th June 1223, the Sultan ordered the arrest and execution of some State Emirs who, in spite of their enthroning him, were still adamant in opposition. Soon after this event, revert to his palace in Alanya, this definitely shows that the city upon which he bestowed his name was conquered before 1223.

On the other hand, the campaign route trailed by the Sultan and his army for the conquest of Alanya has never been the subject of any research until today. As reported, the Sultan started from Konya, but allegations were that even Antalya Subaşı (Commander in Chief) Mübarizeddin Ertokuş accompanied him with his fleet by the sea. In effect, the involvement of the Seljuk fleet in the conquest of Alanya cannot be justified precisely. What is known is that during the siege the attacks were made from the direction of land only.

That the army and the navy of Seljuk forces advanced together over the land and the sea respectively is an exaggerated claim, and this cannot be accepted for it means that the two forces launched their campaign from Antalya. Had the conquest of Alanya been accomplished from the direction of Antalya, then by reason of its highly strategic position, the Alara Castle on the road between Antalya and Alanya should also be seized during this

operation. On the contrary, it was captured during the Sultan's return to Antalya after the conquest of Alanya was over.

In this case, the campaign route taken by the Seljuk land forces for the conquest of Alanya should naturally be passing through some place between Alara Castle and Alanya. In other words, it should be a course that offset the location of Alara Castle somewhere out of sight toward the west.

A comment by İbni Bibi could help to get closer to the solution of this problem. According to him, the Sultan's army approached Kalonoros by "crossing over a stream greater than an ocean, the depth of which no apprehension could fathom"; in the meantime Kyr Vart, the "owner" of Kalonoros Castle, learned the news from the reports of his scouts that the Sultan with a mighty army finally crossed the "bloody stream" and reached the castle without incurring any harm whatsoever from the "hills and dales".

It is most likely that the "bloody stream" mentioned here is the "Kanlı Dere" (Bloody Brook) by "Fığla Burnu" (Cape Fığla), and the other stream, which so amazed İbni Bibi by its splendor, is without doubt the Alara River. Thus, it may now be possible for us to retrace the campaign route trodden by the Sultan through a dissection of the features of these two streams and local roads that there since antiquity, beside the rugged topography of the region.

According to such a plot, The Seljuk army, equipped with 100 heavy-duty catapults and possibly a wide range of weaponry and supplies, departed from Konya and came to Bozkır, probably via Karahöyük; then continued onto the Susam Beli (saddle) by traversing the Geyik and Karaçal Mountains. After getting through these, the army turned toward the south at Başhan point and marching along the Gelesandra plateau reached the present Pembelik village. From this point, it must have advanced to the environs Narağacı.

Then, taken an ancient road which probably belonged to the Roman period and is called "Kırk Dönmeler" (the Forty Converts) today, and proceeding through "Demir Kapı Geçidi" (the Iron Gate Passage) and over "Kemer Köprü" (the Arched Bridge) in the vicinity of Gündoğmuş, it intersected the Alara River and arrived at Güzelbağ of today. Moving onwards, it crossed the waterway known as "Kanlı Dere" in the neighborhood of "Fığla Burnu" on the coast. Finally, we can say that the army then turned to the east, rumbling toward Kalonoros Castle.