

## **The Policy of Balak the Artukids against Muslims and Crusaders. A Turkmen Identity dilemma in the Middle East 1090-1124**

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“It was said that Arslan b. Saljuq had three arrows and a bow. He said to his ally Mahmud the Ghaznavid d. 1030: ‘send this arrow to our troops in time of need, and a hundred thousand of them will respond’. Mahmud asked: ‘what if these numbers are not enough?’ Arslan took another arrow, gave it to him saying: ‘hurl this to Balkhan mountains, and you will receive another fifty thousand knights’. Then Arslan gave Mahmud his arrow saying: ‘dispatch this as a sign to Turkstan, and you will obtain two hundred thousand knights of us to your aid’”. (1)

This semi fictional story of the Turkmen Saljuqids of the early eleventh century, reflects the sheer size and the dilemma of Turkmen history. From that time down to the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Saljuqids, who were Oghuzz, led a vast federation of other Turkmen tribes, a dominion that stretched from Central Asia to the Middle East. Many ethnic groups of Turkmen elements of diverse tribal origins form part of the demography of the region today.(2) Following in the steps of Carole Hillenbrand’s marvelous study of Ilghazi, we examine the Turkmen chiefs who influenced the area.

Balak – Turkmen for fish implicating elusion – son of Bahram b. Artukd (1124), was one of the Artukid Turkmen chiefs of Doger tribe of the Oghuzz, who arrived in the Middle East with the Saljuq Turkmen. Balak who later held the title Nural-Dawla, “light of the state”, was the nephew of Ilghazi (d. 1122) lord of Mardin and parts of al-Jazira, in addition to Aleppo (1118-1122).(3)

Balak was a close confidant of Ilghazi, and served with him in many campaigns against the crusaders, and Muslim powers alike. He gained fame due to his humiliating capture of Jocelin of Edessa in 1122, and Baldwin II King of Jerusalem d. 1131, the following year. That said, “he received little attention by historians about his career from the beginning, and how he penetrated Eastern Anatolia. His priority between establishing himself as Turkmen leader and his aim to fighting the Franks as a Ghazi hero.

In this study I will examine two aspects: first, how Balak started his career, culminating in his control of Northern Syria and parts of al-Jazira, and his inner Muslim relations; second, how he managed his wars against the Franks, especially considering that his legacy occupied an important part in Latin sources, in addition to non-Muslim Eastern sources.

### **Balak and His Inner Muslim Relations**

The Artukid were descendants of Artuk b. Ekseb of Doger, a Turkmen chief, who served with the Saljuqid Sultan Malik Shah (d. 1092). By the end of the eleventh century, his sons Suqman and Ilghazi were allocated Iqta’ in Marrat al-Numan and Jerusalem respectively (4). The appearance of Balak in history is not clear, and he was mentioned for the first time by Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), the famous Iraqi historian, when he briefly noted that Balak held the Iqta’ of Sarruj in al-Jazira before the arrival of the first crusaders, which he lost to the Franks in 1097 (5). Apart from this, we know nothing about his date of birth, or upbringing. But one may assume that he was in the service of Ridwan, the Saljuqid (d. 1113), the lord of northern Syria. Was Sarruj his only Iqta’? We do not know, and his reaction towards the crusaders will be discussed later.

In 424/1100, during the long and bitter struggle for the Saljuqid sultanate between Sultan Berkyarunq (d. 1105) and his brother Muhammad (d. 1118), Muhammad was appointed Ilghazi [Turkmen for hero of the tribe or region] and a *Shihna* – military commander- of Baghdad and Iraq to help him control this region (this post has not yet been studied in a comprehensive way) (6). Ilghazi remained in that powerful post until 1105. It was during this period that Balak begins appearing in the sources as a capable commander and deputy to his uncle Ilghazi. In 497/1103, Balak attacked with his Turkmen forces in Iraq the towns of Haditha and Ana on the Euphrates. The latter he captured from the Arab tribe of BanuYa'ish. According to the tenth century Muslim geographer IbnHawkal, both places were of medium size in relation to inhabitants and annual income, if compared with similar places in Iraq (7).

In the following year 498/1104 many Turkmen tribes revolted in Eastern Iraq and Western Iran damaging the commercial activities and trade route, as well as Ilghazi's authority. He found no one better than Balak to restore law and order to that region. Balak was widely praised in the sources for his rigidity and outstanding capability to save the region from riots. Balak's military capacity appeared later in Aleppo and Anatolia, as will be discussed. One may assume that he was at least in his mid twenties when he was instructed to crush the Iraqi-Iranian disorder. Having said that, we find him adding new Iqta' for himself at Khanijar (a few miles to the south of Kerkuk) from the Turkmen lord Surkhab (8). Controlling such key areas as frontier marches in Zagros region certainly added to his increasing power as a leading figure in Iraqi-Iranian politics, and as deputy to the military commander of Iraq, as mentioned. From evidence implicit in the sources, Balak continued to control the Iqta' he had held earlier on the Euphrates. As a result, he created a power base in the area to help him to interfere in Syrian affairs in 1110. In that year, the Saljuqid Sultan Muhammad ordered some of his leading commanders including Mawdud of Mosul (d. 1113), and Sugman of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Mayyafraqin (d. 1111) to march against the crusaders in fulfillment of their duty of *Jihad*. They were joined by Ilghazi lord of Mardin and his nephew Balak, according to Ibn al-Qalanisi (9).

While the Turkish armies were in Northern Syria, Ilghazi and Balak tried to use their forces outside Suqman's authority, looking for personal gains which exposed them to severe punishment. As a result, Ilghazi deserted the campaign and Balak was arrested by Suqman, who took him back to Armenia tied up in a leather bag, then freed him a few months later (10). The pragmatic behaviour of Balak made him focus on his own political agenda, and never took part in a Sultanate campaign again, which were ordered until 1115. His priority was to enlarge his dominions in the direction of the upper Euphrates; in 1113 he captured Balis on the Euphrates, north-west of his town of Ana, from another Turkmen commander. As Cahen stated, nearly a year later he managed to capture Khartpert in the heart of Eastern Anatolia from a Turkmen lord (11). Notably, in this period, a Turkmen Artukid Amir controlled Iqta' from Zagros in the East of Euphrates, middle and upper, and Anatolia with a thin line of communication between them. It should be added that the nature of the Turkmen Iqta' in the 12<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> centuries did not contribute much to confront the Frankish powers in the same vicinity, or create a cognate state in such overwhelming tribal persona.

Arguably, Balak's penetration into Anatolia was in the company of a substantial number of Turkmen tribes, making Khartpert his power base. In her study of Urfa (1118-1146), Isin argues that Balak married Princess Aish, of Malatya, widow of Qili' Arslan I the Saljuqid (d. 1107), in 1113 (Cahen and Afaf put that date five years later) (12). He became ruler of Malatya after capturing and establishing himself in nearby Khartpert, in 1114. The important point is that Balak became Atabek (regent) over Tughril Arslan, son of Aisha. Taking into consideration the power of the Atabek as de facto ruler of the state which was originally a Turkmen post (13), and the responsibilities and duties expected of him, one can see that Balak had a large military force to enable him to win Malatya peacefully and secure the loyalty of the military commanders there, in order to defend it against the other Turkmen Saljuqs of Rum, especially Mas'ud of Konya (d. 1156). Controlling the sphere of Malatya meant that Balak controlled vital commercial trans-routes in addition to the East-West Anatolian trade affecting the Saljuqs (14).

Although the sources do not furnish us with much information about Balak, it may be conjectured that he tried to expand his domains for himself and for his step son's interests. As a result, he made a pact with Gumushtakin (Turkmen for silver prince) the Turkmen Danishmandl (d. 1134) of Sivas and Amasya against another Turkish lord, Manjukank, who allied himself with the Byzantine lord at Trebizond in 1118 (15). According to Ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 1160) and Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233) "Balak had defeated Gavras al-Rumi Byzantine, taking him into captivity, and killing around five thousands of his soldiers of Surman castle near Andokan".

Regardless of the numbers, exaggerated or not, it was a heavy blow to the Byzantines, due to the cooperation between Balak and another Turkmen power. As a result, Balak established himself in the region as a key lord of Anatolia, with a large sphere of influence.

Unexpectedly, Balak looped around a large area of Anatolia away from his power base in Kharpert and Malatya, in 1119, capturing the city of Jahan in the Taurus area from the Armenian vassal of the crusaders of Edessa (16). If one examines the geography of the region, it is evident that by crossing many rivers and mountains, then succeeding in capturing Jahan, he managed to control most if not all the area in between Kharpert and the south west of Taurus. How he managed to expand in such a relatively short time from the Black Sea in the north to Jahan in the south will probably remain unknown. A possible answer is that he managed to enlist thousands of Turkmen in his service to achieve such rapid expansion against Turkish, Byzantine and Armenian-Frankish powers and settled them in the area. One should add that Ibn al-Adim, the Aleppan historian (d. 1261), mentioned that Balak managed to control more than fifty castles and citadels in the area (17). Maybe through this carefully established net of communication, Balak was able to govern these scattered lands.

However, a question remains concerning Balak's participation with Ilghazi in 1119 in the famous Field of Blood against Roger of Salerno, lord of Antioch (d. 1119). Balak's military capacity could not cover many fronts in the same year, and he is not mentioned in the sources by name. Yet, Ibn al-Adim writes: "Ilghazi marched to Mardin, and wrote to all Muslims and Turkmen lords to join him, those who were near, and those who were distant" (18). The same question could be applied to the large Muslim campaign on Tbilis against the Georgians in upper Caucasus in the summer of 1121. Ibn al-Athir and Ibn al-Adim mention that "All Muslim lords in the surrounding territories had marched to take part in this fight" (19). In all probability, Balak sent some of his forces to take part with the other Artukid forces in this fight, as he was a major lord in the neighbouring area. Hillenbrand has stated that Balak was a constant companion of his uncle Ilghazi during his final year (1121–1122); this argument is based on Ibn al-Adim's opinion that Ilghazi called Balak that year for help, which was not normal (20). This story, as it stands, is unconvincing; we demonstrated earlier how Balak for the first decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century was in close partnership with Ilghazi in Iraq, Iran, al-Jazira and Syria. Soon after the Tbilisi campaign, we find that Balak was sent by Ilghazi to end the rebellion of Sulayman b. Ilghazi in Autumn 515/1121. Sulayman was deputy to his father in Aleppo. Balak managed to squash the rebellion swiftly, in order to avoid quick Frankish movement towards Aleppo (21).

### **Balak and His Relation with the Crusaders**

At this point, it is relevant to examine Balak's relation with the Franks, who interacted with the Muslims. After the winter had passed, and Balak had returned to his base in Anatolia, he was summoned by his uncle Ilghazi in the summer of 1122 to fight the crusaders. On 17<sup>th</sup> of Rabi II 516/July 1122, Balak crossed the Euphrates with Ilghazi and they were joined by Tughtakin lord of Damascus (d. 1128). Together they besieged Zaradna in the following month. Runciman stated that Balak urged Ilghazi to end the truce of 1121 between himself and the crusaders concerning Antioch, which had been made with King Baldwin II (22). However, there is no explicit mention of this in any Muslim or Latin chronicle; on the contrary, the Latin Christians reported that Balak was summoned as mentioned earlier. Balak quickly erected several Mangonels on Zaradna before Baldwin II arrived two weeks later. Walter, chancellor of Antioch, described the Turkmen army: "Ilghazi was regaining strength, have gathered as many Knights and infantry as possible, he returned to besiege Zaradna which had been fortified by the Kings hand (23). After weeks of waiting and few skirmishes, the two sides dispersed.

It is not known the reason why Balak departed from Ilghazi's camp, but it is believed that with no side keen to have a confrontation, Balak hoped to find adventure in another area, especially considering that many elements in the Turkmen army were seasonal, and not regular. According to Fulcher, Anon. Syriac, and Ibn al-Athir, Balak marched with a few thousand Turkmen and besieged Edessa in early September 1122 (24), probably on his way to his base in Kharpert. A few days later, Balak ended the siege and started looting the area knowing that Jocelin lord of Edessa was not in his principality. At RasKifa, Balak camped near Sarruj, where he was informed by his Yazaj – scouts – that Jocelin was on his way to his town of Sarruj with a small battalion (25). At once Balak led his 4000 soldiers, and attacked Jocelin and his cousin Galeran lord of Bira, after depriving their force of water, which caused them severe hardship. The whole Frankish force was showered by a barrage of arrows, and the crusaders were either captured or killed, with Jocelin and Galeran taken captive on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1122. Jocelin was put in a camel leather bag.

Balak turned down Jocelin's attractive offer of a huge ransom in return for his release, and the release of a large number of Muslim prisoners in his captivity. Balak demanded from Jocelin, in return for his release, the surrender of Edessa, which the latter refused (26). As a result, Balak ordered his troops to carry Jocelin tied up in a leather bag and paraded him before Edessa's gate, hoping that the locals and deputies there would lose hope when they saw their lord in such a state and surrender. In fact, they resisted. Finally, Balak brought his Frankish prisoners to his base in Khartpert (27).

One should evaluate the movement of Balak. He was a Turkmen leader with a vision, unlike most Turkmen leaders in the first two decades of the crusader states, who were unable to invest or use their victories politically, e.g. Tughtakin lord of Damascus who annihilated the Frankish army of Jerusalem in June 1113 at al-Sinnabra near Tiberias, capturing Baldwin I for a while, then withdrawing to Damascus, although Jerusalem was left undefended and the Turkmen forces were plundering as far as Jaffa to the west (28). Also, in the battle of *Ager Sanguini* – Field of Blood – in June 1119, Ilghazi killed Roger of Antioch, and destroyed his forces. However, he looked for quick booty and withdrew (29). Importantly, Balak wanted to seize Edessa, putting strategy before money. It is believed that he could not carry on attacking Edessa for the following reasons: the huge fortification of Edessa; the lack of a large city or *Iqta'* in the area under Balak's control to launch a long-term campaign on Edessa with supplies from the near base; and Balak was not yet in control of Aleppo. In addition to that, the very nature of the Turkmen forces meant that they were not used to assembling for a long time in one place, as Fulcher noticed. Ibn al-Athir brilliantly diagnosed the Turkmen character in 1119 after the Field of Blood, saying: "Ilghazi, lord of Aleppo, never stayed long in crusader territories, as his master the Turkmen, who joined his service out of greed. Each man who participated in the campaign had with him a sack of flour and a sheep for provisions. He used to count the hours hoping for booty, and then returned home; if the campaign lasted for long, the Turkmen would disperse" (30).

Such a description could be applied to all Turkmen forces; the sources are saturated with their description as *Mutatawaa*-volunteers. With harsh winter approaching, Balak retired to Khartpert, waiting to resume his military activity the next spring. But in Ramdan 516/ mid November 1122, Ilghazi died near Mayyafarqin. His Artukid dominions were divided between his amenable sons Sulayman in Mayyafarqin and his younger brother Timurtash in Mardin; Aleppo went to Ilghazi's nephew Sulayman b. Abd al-Jabbar (31). It should be pointed out that the sources do not mention who became lord of Artukid Harran. For unknown reasons, Balak did not object to such a division for a year. In 1123, Baldwin II lord of Jerusalem, Antioch and Edessa, took advantage of Artukid division and started attacking the vicinity of Aleppo, throughout the winter. According to the Aleppan chief chronicler Ibn al-Adim, Baldwin managed to make use of the powerless Artukid lord of Aleppo who was busy reorganising his inner affairs in Aleppo, with regard to the economy administration (32). Such Frankish pressure in the absence of firm Artukid leadership resulted in a truce between Aleppo and Baldwin on 10<sup>th</sup> Safar 517, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1123, due to severe economic hardship caused by the crusaders attacks. Sulayman agreed to surrender strategic al-Atharib (33).

Balak considered himself the true Ghazi-Mujahid; he had enjoyed victory over Jocelin, and long-trusted service under Ilghazi. Without hesitation, Balak marched to take his share of Ilghazi's dominions, especially considering that Aleppo was not governed by one of Ilghazi's sons. Heading southward from Khartpert, and aiming for Aleppo, he besieged the Frankish castle of Gargar, in the northern vicinity of Edessa. This area had witnessed frequent raids by Turkmen forces of Balak (34). As soon as the news reached Baldwin II, he marched to save Gargar. The vigilant scouts of Balak were alert enough to inform their lord of Baldwin's movements, and provide valuable time for an attack. Balak managed to ambush the king and defeat his forces taking him and his elite knights into captivity on 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1123 (35). According to Muslim, Latin and Syriac chroniclers, it was a disaster.

Fulcher wrote: "King Baldwin did not expect this to happen, and was not prepared for it. Nothing brought more joy to the Saracens than this, and frightened the Christians". The Anonymous Syriac historian wrote: "When Balak knew that the King was in small force, he ambushed him. The Turkmen surrounded him like hungry wolves from all sides, or like a bracelet around the wrist. They were thirsty for booties. They took the King and his nephew as prisoners among many others" (36). With clear objective and determination rarely found in Turkmen leaders since they arrived in the Middle East in the eleventh century, Balak sent his prime prisoner back to Khartpert to join Jocelin, and moved towards Aleppo (37).

It is relevant to ask why Balak did not attack the fragile crusader territories, with the king in captivity. Also, how did Balak act differently from his uncle Suqman (d. 1105) of Mardin, who in 1104 captured with the Turkmen lord of Mosul Jakurmush – Green Rat – the same prisoners, Jocelin of Courtney, the lord of Talls Bashir, and his lord Baldwin of Bourge then lord of Edessa?

Dealing with the first question, one cannot agree with Runciman, who criticised Balak for not attacking the Frankish principalities. His understanding was that the crusaders were not affected by their losses, and that Jocelin, after he escaped to Antioch, was told by Bernard the caretaker and Patriarch of the principality that they possessed a very humble force (38). We believe that Balak could not count on his remote base in Anatolia in dealing with the Franks, and had to secure a closer and stronger one in Syria in order to confront them, like Aleppo. Sometimes a city is more important than a whole province, like in 1149, when the Sunni Kurdish prime minister of Egypt, Salar invited Nur al-Din (d. 1174) to take collapsing Egypt (39). But the latter declined, because Saljuqid Damascus was not under his control yet, cutting his route between Syria and Egypt. Also, arguably, Balak wanted to seize such an opportunity before other Muslim lords tried to capture Aleppo, especially the Artukids, or as Muslim leaders were used now to sudden arrival of fresh waves of pilgrims or crusaders.

Balak was determined to seize Aleppo first. As regards the first and second Artukid capture of Baldwin in 1104 and Jocelin, and 1122, 1123, the Muslim commanders in 1104 were satisfied with quick booty and plunder in addition to seizing small marginal towns (40). This may have been due to the long bitter civil war in Iran and Iraq at the time between the two Turkmen Saljuqid sultans, Berkyaruk (d. 1105) and Muhammad (d. 1118), which affected the other Turkmen vassals, geopolitically. Moreover, there was no trust between the lords of Syria and Artukids. The second capture was more humiliating and wider in echoes due to the status of the Frankish lords at the time.

It is astonishing that the sources are silent on any correspondence between Balak and the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustarshid (d. 1136), who represented himself as true Mujahid of Islam, or the Abbasid Caliph, bestowing upon him the robes of honor. Perhaps such correspondences were lost, or the Caliph was involved in a civil war in Iraq in that year (41). Consequently, no attention was properly paid to such news.

After capturing Gargar on 25<sup>th</sup> April, Balak moved to Aleppo for two months, and launched an economic war against his cousin, the lord of Aleppo. Ibn al-Athir wrote: “Balak besieged Aleppo, caused hardship and cut off all supplies to the city. He burned all the fields around it” (42). Ibn al-Adim described in detail the movements of Balak, and how he met resistance from the locals around Aleppo with severe punishment, burning hundreds of them, and taking hundreds of others into captivity. He also gave permission to his Turkmen troops to loot most villages in the vicinity. Sulayman the Artukid was no match for Balak, and Aleppo was captured on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, and its strong citadel was taken four days later (43). It is understood from the sources that while Balak was attacking Aleppo, he dispatched some of his forces which managed to capture Harran. At once, Balak made the citadel his residence, and increased its fortifications (44). Now, with a major city like Aleppo in his hands, Balak continued a few weeks later his expanding project by attacking and capturing Frankish towns in the vicinity. He started with al-Bara on 9 August, 1123. One should stress that, although central Syrian cities like Hims and Hamah were suffering from collapsing rule, by other Turkmen lords, Balak confined himself to northern Syria, agreeing a *modus operandi* with his ally Tughtakin of Damascus, and never attempted to interfere in his sphere of influence (45).

While besieging Frankish Kafr Tab on 11 August, 1123, the news reached Balak that Khartpert was taken by the leaders of the crusaders, who had been held captive in a pit inside its citadel. They were helped by local Armenians around the city (46). At once Balak marched with his army, and covered the 18-day distance, according to the geographer Ibn Hawkal, in just 10 days, and crossed difficult rivers in the area. He laid siege to the city with Baldwin II and Galeran inside; Jocelin escaped after collective agreement between the prisoners to call for help (47). After two weeks, Balak captured the city, without the citadel, which housed not only Baldwin and his followers, but Balak’s wives (harem), in addition to his valuables.

Balak, according to the Syriac chronicler, besieged the citadel for ten more days. He offered Baldwin safe conduct, and his life, in return for surrender. The latter refused, and the Turkmen engineers destroyed a wall in the citadel, and pushed their way in on 11 September. Balak angry over the treatment of his harem, spared no one but Baldwin, his nephew and Galeran, who were sent at once to Harran prison. Everyone else was put to the sword.

Balak even skinned some Armenians alive, cutting others in two by sword (47), as punishment for their conspiracy with the crusaders. Such highly aggressive behaviour may explain how Frankish prisoners were treated during their captivity, which is little mentioned in the sources. However, Walter, chancellor of Antioch, himself prisoner in Aleppo in 1120, described, in highly emotive language how the Turkmen had fantastical rituals of blood used to restore youth like an eagle (48).

What was the situation in Aleppo with Balak's absence? Jocelin, who "did swear before leaving Khartpert that he will not taste meat, or drink before assembling a force to salvage his fellow prisoners", sent urging messages to the Byzantines and the Armenians for help. After gathering forces from Jerusalem, Tripoli and Antioch, he learnt near Tall Bashir that Balak had retaken Khartpert (49). With Balak absent in Anatolia until February 1124, Jocelin tried to plunder the Aleppan countryside from all directions. He even avenged his captivity by burning and unearthing many graves in the area. Balak's deputies in the city kept Aleppo's well and were engaged in daily skirmishes against the crusaders until November 1123. The aim of Jocelin could not be understood as capturing Aleppo, but launching an economic war, which was a common tactic of both sides, especially that Balak was busy organizing his Anatolian *Iqta'* and the crusaders widened their attacks to other Kurdish and Turkmen areas in al-Jazira (50). A sign of distracted raids. In February 1124, Balak arrived in Aleppo and joined forces with al-Bursuqi –Turkmen for badger – of Mosul, and Tughtakin of Damascus, who were probably contacted earlier by him for help. They besieged Azaz, but were repelled by the crusaders. Muslim forces with bigger capacity dispersed more quickly than they gathered (51).

### **The Death of Balak, its Echoes and Evaluation of his Policies**

After reorganising the state of Aleppo, Balak ordered his cousin Timurtash – hard rock – in April 1124 to join him to take Manbaj from its Turkmen lord Hassan b. Gumushtakin – silver prince. He had a wider plan to capture crusaders' Tall Bashir. The Turkmen in Manbaj showed stubborn resistance, but contacted Jocelin offering to surrender the place (52). As a result, two weeks of siege allowed Jocelin to confront Balak's army on 5 May. The crusaders were heavily defeated, and Geoffrey the Monk, the caretaker of Edessa was killed in battle. Jocelin preferred to flee to Tall Bashir after his forces of Jerusalem and Tripoli were destroyed (53). Not much we believe, as the siege of Tyre was, at its peak by the Franks.

The following day Balak executed all Frankish prisoners in his camp, then resumed his military activity, in order to capture Manbaj. While he was looking for an ideal spot to position his mangonels, a Turkmen arrow from inside the town struck him in the neck. Despite this, he pulled out part of the arrow, and spat at it, saying: "this arrow had killed all Muslims." He died soon after, and was brought by Tamurtash to Aleppo (54). The sources mentioned that Balak, after his victory the previous day, intended to leave Tamurtash in charge of the siege and head southward to help his ally Tughtakin against the crusaders who were attacking Tyre (55).

The crusaders were very relieved by such news, and their sources improvised fictional stories which are very interesting, reflecting Balak's status. Fulcher mentioned that Jocelin had cut off Balak's head and sent it to Antioch, then to the crusaders attacking Tyre, for celebration. This did not happen. Fulcher expressed his joy: "we did thank the lord, that Balak the raging dragon who oppressed and trampled over Christianity was finally had his breath throttled" (56). Furthermore, William of Tyre wrote: "Balak is slain at Manbaj. The news causes great joy in the Christian army. Jocelin immediately charged a young man to carry the head of the prince – Balak – to the army that it might rejoice over the news, in Antioch" (57). It is important to mention these Latin sources in order to determine how the crusaders perceived Balak, especially considering that King Baldwin II was still a prisoner of Balak inside Aleppo. This view is similar to Balak's own, who saw himself as representing all Muslims.

What happened to the dominions of Balak, who was barren or childless? Tamurtash took Aleppo, while Sulayman b. Ilghazi took Khartpert. The Saljuqs of Anatolia seized the rest of the dominions. The immediate reaction of Jocelin was to attack the castles of Balak in upper Euphrates, but he was repelled by Balak's deputies (58). Tamurtash, after long negotiation with Jocelin, set free King Baldwin at the end of August 1124, in return for Azaz, and military assistance against other Muslim lords (59).

Balak was accurate in representing himself as hero of Islam, as no one achieved in such a short time the success he had against the crusaders. The legacy of Balak in Muslim, Latin and Syriac sources was not only due to his confrontation with one enemy, the crusaders, but also other Turkish and Armenian lords.

Balak is believed to be the only Muslim lord prior to Zangitid control a vast area of northern Syria and al-Jazira, and, at the same time, had clear agenda and was prepared to take heavy casualty like Zangi, and Saladin after him. With his death, an era of Jihad and pragmatism ended, and a new Turkmen one was about to start under Zangi.

Although Balak never controlled all Artukid dominions directly, he was in command of the rest of the Artukid lords, as, for example, Tamurtash. The secret of Balak's success could be attributed to his high mobility, in addition to his network of communication, which contained over 50 castles in Anatolia, al-Jazira and Syria. Such a network was always maintained and renewed by Balak (60). This is why his scouts managed to inform him about Jocelin, and Baldwin's movement. It is also the reason why Jocelin failed to take Aleppo, while Balak was at Khartpert, or tried to attack the Turkmen force sent by Balak, transferring King Baldwin II to Harran, then to Aleppo, after Khartpert. Balak was praised in his final year for restoring law and order to his vicinity in Northern Syria, and punishing any bandits, which helped the economy.

Balak was a fanatic of Islam. Upon his orders, the Qadi of the city had forced local Christians to rebuild two mosques in Aleppo from the treasury of the Church of the Orthodox and Malkite. When their leaders refused, Balak transformed one of Aleppo's churches into a mosque after thousands of Muslims attacked several others (61). Ibn al-Adim mentioned that the gate of Aleppo remained open day and night due to Balak's firm action against robbers – such exaggeration by medieval sources was always constructed to reflect mastery and security. This was due to his firmness, and the change he made to the city's *rais*, despite a dry season and high prices (62). Balak showed great ability in using his other resources to cut the pressure on Aleppo.

As a Sunni fanatic, he expelled all the Shi'i followers from Aleppo, who were hated by the majority of the locals for their violent deeds (63). Like all Turkmen commanders, he put realpolitik before faith, especially that Islam did not pierce through affectively, for those tribes arriving recently from central Asia. Even on a personal level, he became close to his uncle's widow Farkhinda b. Ridwan, having a relationship without marriage in March 1124 (64), which was forbidden according to Islamic law.

### Notes

To the memory of Claud Cahen, a true pioneer of Turkmen studies.

Ibn al-Nizam Muhammad, *al-Irada al-Saljuqiyya*, tr. A. Hasanain, Baghdad, 1979, p. 25.

C. Bosworth, *The Islamic dynasties*, Edinburgh 1980, pp.116-118.

C. Cahen, "DiyarBakr au temps des premiers Urtukids", *Journal Asiatique*, 1935, pp. 219-72, 230 – Art Balak, E. I. 2.

Ibn al-Adim, k, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. II, ed. S. al-Dahhan, Damascus 1954, p. 488.

Ibn al-Athir, I, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. X, Beirut 1972, p. 368.

Ibid, X, pp. 338, 356.

Ibid, X, p. 368; IbnHawkal, *Surat al-Ard*, Brill 1939, pp. 219, 228.

Ibid, X, p. 395.

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- C. Hillenbrand, "The career of Najm al-Din Ilghazi", in *Der Islam*, Band 58, 1981 Berlin, pp. 250-292, 282; Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 567; I. Khalil, *al-Imarat*, p. 260.
- Demirkent, Urfa, p. 34. Ibn al-Adim mentioned that William moved quickly and refortified Zaradna, II, p. 563. Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 567, 568; Khalil, *al-Imarat*, p. 260, I; S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusaders*, 1983, II, p. 159.
- Walter the chancellor's the Antiochene wars*; Tr. T. Asbridge and S. Edington, Aldershot, 1999, p. 170.
- Anon. Syriac chronicler, tr. S. Zakkar, Damascus 1986, p. 482; Ibn al-Athir, X, p. 515; Fulcher, *History of Jerusalem*: Z. Asaly, Beirut 1992, p. 192.
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- Cahen, Diyar, p. 256; Khalil, *al-Imarat*, p. 104.
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- Anon. Syriac, p. 483; Ibn al-Athir, X, p. 611.
- Ibid, p. 483; Ibn al-Athir, X, p. 611.
- Fulcher, p. 195; Anon. Syriac, p. 484; Ibn al-Qalanisi, p. 332.
- Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 575, Ibn al-Qalanisi, p. 332.
- Runciman, II, pp. 163, 164.
- Al-Maqrizi, Ittaaz, ed. G. Shayyal, vol. III, Cairo, 1996, p. 199, 200. It was the Egyptians in May 1123 who made use of Baldwin's captivity, and attacked Jaffa, as soon as they knew of the news; Nicholson, *The growth*, p. 421.
- Al-Fariqi, *Tarikh*, ed: M. Zaki, Beirut 1990, p. 274.
- Ibn al-Athir, X, pp. 607-8.
- Ibid, X, p. 611.
- Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, pp. 277, 278; Anon Syriac; p. 484.
- Ibid, II, p. 576.
- SibtIbn al-Jawzi, *Mirat al-Zaman*, vol. 8. II, India 1951, p. 111.
- Fulcher, p. 204; Azimi, ed: Cahen p. 391; Ibn al-Athir, X, p. 613.
- IbnHawkal, *Surat al-Ard*, Beirut 1990, p. 210; Anon. Syriac, p. 486; Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 577, 8; Runciman, II, p. 164; Fulcher, p. 205. Most sources mentioned that the governor of the citadel was drunk, and busy entertaining some of his guests. Perhaps this had contributed to the full of such high secure place.
- Walter, p. 161, 162.
- Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 577; Nicholson. *The growth*, p. 420.
- Fulcher, p. 206, 207; Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, pp. 578, 579.
- William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, 1962, I, p. 450; Azimi, p. 390.
- Ibn al-Athir, X, p. 619; William, II, p. 15; Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat* II, p. 582.
- Ibid, p. 619; Runciman, II, p. 165; Nicholson, *The growth*, p. 422.
- Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 583; Azimi, p. 394; Ibn al-Athir, X, p. 619.
- Ibid, II, p. 583.
- Fulcher, p. 213.
- William, II, p. 16.
- Cahen, Diyar, p. 260; M. Koprulu, *TheSeljuks of Anatolia Utoh* 1992, p. 28.
- Ibid, p. 261, Nicholson, *The growth*, p. 423.
- Mathew of Edessa, *History*, III, London 1959, pp. 89, 99. Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 580.
- Anon. Syriac, p. 484; Runciman, II, p. 165.
- Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 581; Azimi, pp. 393, 394.
- Azimi, pp. 393, 394; Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 581.
- Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat*, II, p. 581.