



SRII lecture

Istiklal Caddesi 247

Friday, October 30, 2026, 18:30

The Landscape of Disaster

Absence and Presence of Physical Features in the description of the battle of Manzikert
by Michael Attaleiates (1071)

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The Battle of Manzikert (1071) is a crucial event in the history of medieval Anatolia. The armies of the Eastern Roman emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068–1071) and the sultan of the Great Seljuk Alp Arslan (r. 1063–1072) met in the area somewhere near the modern settlement of Malazgirt in Van Türkiye. The sources on the battle are many, yet only one author, Michael Attaleiates, was on the battlefield on the day of the Manzikert and provided some clues about the location of the battle. He included the description of the battle in his grand narrative, *Historia*, written nearly 10 years later, which became a basis of many other Byzantine narratives and is one of the sources used by recent historians reconstructing the battle.

The presentation will analyse the narrative of Attaleiates using the tools of narratology, treating Manzikert as an important element in the grand narrative of *Historia*. The focus of the presentation will be on a rare concentration of emotions that allows it to be read not only as the work of a historian, but as a survivor narrative. The combination of literary motifs and traumatic perceptions might help explain why Michael Attaleiates (who was particularly attentive to the landscape in his work) suddenly blurred his vision of spatial details. Finally, the presentation will analyze the complex relations between the scarce information present in Attaleiates' text, the landscape currently visible in situ, and recent results of the Malazgirt Survey Project that managed to produce tangible finds that can be associated with the battle and the events surrounding it.

Admission only after registration to event@sri.org.tr