

Textual Problems in the *Danişmendname*

Danişmendname'deki Metinsel Sorunlar

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Abstract: *Danişmendname* is one of the oldest Turkish epics that have been preserved. Originally composed for oral recitation, it was first written down at the Selçuk court in the thirteenth century, then edited and expanded by Arif Ali, governor of Tokat, a century later. Although it presents itself as a unitary narrative and a continuation of another epic (*Battalname*), the text as it now stands shows evidence of borrowing from several genres, including Biblical narratives and Christian hagiography. Eighteen manuscripts of the *Danişmendname* are known, and generally assumed to be copies derived directly or indirectly from the manuscript of Arif Ali. A closer analysis and comparison of manuscripts P (Paris) and I (Istanbul), however, identifies a number of discrepancies in the text as transmitted and reveals that these two manuscripts are in fact not copies, but epitomes, of a common archetype, and that the epitomators have allowed themselves considerable liberty to abridge and rearrange the text of Arif Ali.

Keywords: Byzantium, Anatolia, *Danişmend*, Epic, Gazi

Özet: *Danişmendname*, günümüze ulaşabilmiş en eski Türk destanlarından biridir. Aslen sözlü anlatım için bestelenmiş olan eser, ilk olarak 13. yüzyılda Selçuklu sarayında kaleme alınmış, ardından bir asır sonra Tokat Valisi Arif Ali tarafından düzenlenip genişletilmiştir. Kendisini bütünlüklü bir anlatı ve başka bir destanın (*Battalname*'nin) devamı olarak sunsa da, şu anki haliyle metin, Tevrat anlatıları ve Hıristiyan hagiografisi de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli türlerden ödünç alındığına dair kanıtlar gösteriyor. *Danişmendname*'nin 18 nüshası bilinmekte ve genellikle doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak Arif Ali nüshasından türetilen nüshalar olduğu varsayılmaktadır. P (Paris) ve I (İstanbul) elyazmalarının analizi ve karşılaştırılması, metindeki bazı farkları tespit eder ve bu iki el yazmasının aslında ortak bir arketipin kopyaları değil, özetleri olduğunu ortaya çıkarır. Epitomatörler, Arif Ali'nin metnini kısaltmış ve yeniden düzenlemiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Doğu Roma, Anadolu, *Danişmend*, Destan, Gazi

Introduction

The *Danişmendname* is one of the oldest preserved epics in the Turkish language. The Danişmendids were a Turkoman dynasty that emerged in the period following the Byzantine defeat at Manzikert in 1071 (Cahen 1968, 83-84) and the protagonist of the *Danişmendname* is loosely based on the dynasty's founder, Danişmend Aḥmed Gazi, who died in AH 497/AD 1104 and whose supposed tomb can still be seen in Niksar. Throughout the epic, the protagonist is

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called *Melik Danişmend*, but that is an anachronism; the title was granted to Ahmed's son Gümüşteğın in AH 529/AD 1134 and first used on coins by his grandsons (Cahen 1968, 218; Oikonomides 1983, 197-198). The narrative presents itself as a continuation of an older Turkish epic, the *Battalname*, which describes the life and exploits of another warrior-hero, Seyyid Battal Gazi (Dedes 1996).

The *Danişmendname* was written down in the mid-thirteenth century AD at the Selçuk court in Konya by a certain Mevlana ibn Ala of whom nothing further is known (Peacock 2019, 153-155, Aydoğın 2021, 408). Mevlana's text was revised and expanded by Arif Ali who served as Selçuk governor of Tokat in the latter half of the fourteenth century (Bayrı 2020, 26; Aydoğın 2021, 412-413, Demir 2002, 3: 1-2; Mélikoff 1960, 1: 56-57). In his versified epilogue or "Advice" to the reader (*Naşihat*), Arif Ali explains that it was he who divided the text into seventeen chapters or *meclisler*, "meetings", added verse passages and generally improved the structure of the narrative, making it "easier to read and more pleasing to the reader" (Demir 2002, 1: 212-213; Mélikoff 1960, 1: 63).

In the sixteenth century, the writer Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali (d. AH 1008/AD 1600) composed a paraphrase entitled *Mirkat ül-Cihad*, "Steps on the way to *jihad* " (Akar 2016, Fleischer 2016, 132-133). In 1785, one Veli Abid produced a copy of the *Danişmendname*, which he embellished with additional verses of his own making, bringing the total number of verses to c. 3000 (Akkaya 1950, 131, Mélikoff 1960, 1: 174).

Eighteen manuscripts of the *Danişmendname* are known, ranging in date from the sixteenth to the twentieth century (Mélikoff 1960, 1: 171-176, Demir 2002, 3: 2-7). The three oldest are Bibliothèque Nationale, Ancien Fonds Turc 317 dated to AH 985/AD 1577 (P); İstanbul 100. Yıl Atatürk Kitaplığı, Muallim Cevdet Kitaplığı K. 441, dated to AH 1016/AD 1607 (I), and the incomplete manuscript Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) Public Library 578, dated to AH 1032/AD 1622 (L), which lacks the first four chapters. A transcribed edition with French translation and commentary, based on P, was published by Irène Mélikoff in 1960 and a transcribed edition of I with Turkish translation and commentary by Necati Demir appeared in 2002. Manuscript L has not been published in transcription. A more recent (AH 1254/AD 1838) manuscript has been transcribed, but the transcription remains unpublished (Doğruel 1981, Hızardere 1981, Selçuk 1981, Ünverdi 1981). The epic has been translated into modern Turkish several times, as well as Polish (Łabęcka-Koecherowa & Majda 1980). A complete English translation remains a desideratum.

Although billed as a "critical edition", Demir's edition contains no *apparatus criticus*. Mélikoff's edition signposts variant readings in footnotes, but only as concerns the verse passages. Demir's edition gives folio and line numbers, which are lacking in that of Mélikoff. In the following, references will be given to Demir's edition, except where this differs significantly from the text of Mélikoff.

The text

Since all extant manuscripts contain the verses added by Arif Ali, all must have Ali's copy as their ultimate archetype, but there are significant divergences between the three oldest manuscripts; divergences that go far beyond what might be attributed to oversights on the part of a sloppy copyist or misguided attempts by an editor to rectify errors. For instance, two groups of verses in the fourth chapter of P are found also found in I, but in a different arrangement and divided between two chapters (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of manuscripts P and I. Arabic numerals indicate verses present in both P and I, Latin letters indicate verses found only in one version.

Ms. P (Mélíkoff)		Ms. I (Demir)	
Chapter 4		Chapter 4	Chapter 6
Pages 2: 60-61	Page 2: 62	Page 1: 41	Pages 1: 57-58
1	11	1	1
2	12	2	2
3	F	11	3
4	G	12	4
5	13	13	5
6			6
7			7
8			8
9			9
10			10
A			H
B			
C			
D			

Through a comparison of the verse passages chapter by chapter, it is possible to gain some impression of the relationships between the three oldest manuscripts. In total, P contains fewer verses than I and far fewer than L, but since P's version of chapters 2-8 include a good deal of verse material not found in I, P is not a mere abridgement of I (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of verses in each chapter of the *Danişmendname* according to manuscript P, I and L.

Chapter	Verses in P	Verses in I	Verses in L	Verses in P, but not in I	Verses in I, but not in P
1	53	55		2	0
2	68	69		11	9
3	95	101		11	16
4	94	83		14	3
5	58	33	72	25	1
6	68	82	101	10	23
7	73	60	98	17	4
8	65	65	90	16	16
9	60	64	80	2	6
10	136	179	220	3	48
11	54	71	79	2	18
12	54	72	95	6	18
13	82	106	137	0	24
14	58	91	117	0	33
15	17	57	89	0	40
16	41	69	76	1	17

17	62	127	131	0	65
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This observation is confirmed by a study of the prose text. Some passages in P, which form an integral part of the storyline, are absent from I. At the beginning of chapter 15, for instance, P relates how Seyyid Battal appears to Melik in a dream and advises him to send three of his best warriors into the field: Ahmed to Ankara, Süleyman to Samsun and Osman to Kastamonu (Mélihoff 1960, 2: 248). In the corresponding passage of I (Demir 2002, 1: 178), neither Osman nor Kastamonu are mentioned by Seyyid Battal, yet a few sentences later, Melik is sending Osman to Kastamonu with an army (Demir 2002, 1: 179).

In chapter 17, P informs the reader that Artuhı and Efrummiye receive “many wounds” (*çok zahım*) while defending their camp against a nocturnal raid by the infidel army (Mélihoff 1960, 2: 271). This is not mentioned in I (Demir 2002, 1: 199), yet taken for granted a little later, when Melik on seeing their “many wounds” (*zahımı çok*) decides to send Efrummiye and Artuhı to safety in Tokat (Demir 2002, 1: 202). Conversely, I contains information not found in P, such as the participation of Mitralos in the siege of Çankırı in chapter 15 (Demir 2002, 1: 178).

In the absence of an authoritative edition of L, the relationship of P and I to L is more difficult to assess. Mélihoff gives three short samples of prose text, which appear to show a marked difference in syntax and choice of words between L on the one hand, P and I on the other. In each of the three samples, the wording of L is somewhat longer than that of P or I (Mélihoff 1960, 1: 175-176).

The prose texts of P and I also diverge, however. In some passages, it is merely a question of syntax or vocabulary (*Hakk* in place of *Tanrı*, *kale* instead of *hisar*), in others a choice between two similes expressing the same general idea (in chapter 3, Melik fights “like a dragon” (*ezdehā gibi*) according to P but “like a lion” (*arşlan gibi*) in I (Mélihoff 1960, 2: 49, Demir 2002, 1: 33). There are, however, numerous passages where both wording and content differ considerably, as in the following three examples taken from chapters 5, 8 and 17. In the translations, brackets [...] indicate text present in P, but not in I; scrolled brackets {...} text present in I, but not in P.

Chapter 5, the Conquest of the Deryanos Monastery

Manuscript P: *Kim şikeste vü beste ben ğarib dilhaste ma'niyile araste bu du'acı ol dōst ol dārān-i āl-i Resūl, ol yegāne-i pür-uşul ya'ni Melik Aħmed lakabı Dānişmend dur ki Malaṭiyadan Seyyid-i Baṭṭāl Ğāzī gibi ħurūc edüp geldi, Sivas ħal'esin 'imāret etdi daħı Artuhıyı imānā getürdi, kendüye yār yoldaş etdi, andan Şāh-i-Şaṭṭāṭ Harşana ya'ni Amasya begi ħizı Efromiya Kāfirler gelin edüb alub giderken niçe biñ Kāfirün elinden zırb-i destile alub Artuhıyı ħasretine kavuşdurdı, ol üçi üç yār olub niçe cenkler ve niçe şavaşlar edüb Nestōri ve Şaṭṭāṭı ters yüzlerine kaçurdılar, andan sonra Tokat ħal'esin feth etdiler* (Mélihoff 1960, 2: 74).

Manuscript I: *Ki şikeste vü beste ben ğarib ü dil-ħaste, ma'nāyla ārāste ol server-i āl-i Resūl, ol yegāne-i pür-uşul, Ħazret-i Melik Dānişmend Ğāzī - raħmetu'llāhi 'aleyhi - Seyyid-i Baṭṭāl Ğāzī gibi ħurūc idüp din yolında baş u cān oynayup çok fetihler idüp pes āħir kelām işbu arada ħalmışdı kim Dükiyye ya'nı Tokat ħal'asın feth itdi* (Demir 2002, 1: 49).

Translation: *I am bowed down, bound, my heart is suffering; in this story embellished with verses, I tell of the [friend]{great kinsman} of the*

Prophet, the unique, the learned, that is to say: the all-powerful Melik [Ahmed also known as] Danişmend {Gazi – may Allah’s blessing be on him –} who like Seyyid Battal Gazi [hailed from Malatya and] rose to fame [who rebuilt the fortress of Sivas, who brought Artuḥi to the true faith and made him his friend and comrade in arms], {who risked his life on the true path of religion and achieved many victories} [who abducted Efrummiye, the daughter of Şah-i-Şattat, the beg of Harşana also known as Amasya, from the infidels who planned to marry her off and gave her to Artuḥi, for whom she longed; these three companions fought many battles and many wars, drove Nastor and Şattat to flight], and then at last {the story continues here, he} [they] captured the kale of {Dukkiya, also known as} Tokat.

Chapter 8, the Siege of Karkariya (Zile)

Manuscript P: *Emnōs buyurdı cümle mālī ve hazīnelerini ve toyumca ādemleri kal’eye çıkardılar, ol kim fakir idi taşra şehirde kodılar. Ol fakirler dahī ol hali görüb her biri bir yaña tağıldılar. Müsülmānlar çerisi erişdiler gördiler kim şehir halkı tağılur kaçarlar, evvel anlara akın edüb çok Kāfir kırdılar, oğlanlarını ‘avratını esir kıldılar, andan Melik buyurdı ol şehre od urdılar (Melikoff 1960, 2: 122).*

Manuscript I: *Raht ve hazīnelerin kal’aya çıkardılar. Ne kadar toyum kāfir var-ısa kal’ya çıkup, fakīrlerin taşra şehirde kodılar. Faqīrlar her biri bir yaña tağıldılar. Çün işlām ‘askeri irişüp gördiler kim şehir kavmi tağılup kaçarlardı. Akın idüp çok kāfir kırdılar. Andan Melik buyurdı, şehre od urdılar (Demir 2002, 1: 81).*

Translation: *[On the orders of Emnos,] they brought [all] their possessions and valuables and the men of property to the castle, but the poor were left in the suburbs outside the city. [Seeing this,] the poor took off, each in his own direction. When the Muslim warriors arrived, they saw the inhabitants fleeing in all directions; hunting them down, they killed many infidels [and took their wives and children captive]. Then on Melik’s order they set fire to the city.*

Chapter 17, the Siege of Hargümbed

Manuscript P: *Çünkim Melik Dānişmend ol kal’e’i hişār edüp kondı biz gelem bu yaña Artuḥi hikāyetine kim anı fethē göndürmişdi. Vardılar ol yeruḅ ba’zisini fethē eddiler ba’zisini dahī harāca kesdiler, Melike ri’āye oldılar. Meger bu haber Tarabüzün begi Pūthıl la’ine erişdi, azīm melül oldı. Hemān buyurdı dört yaña nāmeler perākende kıldılar kim çeri cem’ olub cenge yürüyeler (Melikoff 1960, 2: 268).*

Manuscript I: *Çün Melik Dānişmend ol kal’ayı hişār eyledi. Biz geldük Artuḥi hikāyetine kim Melik aña ‘alem, sancaḅ virüp ol gün on biñ er-ile*

Cabussiye ve Hayruriyye ilini açalar. Çünkü ol illeri varup fetih itdiler, kimisin katl itmekle ve kimisin harāca kesmekle ra'iyet oldılar. Bu haber Tarabuzan sultani Puthil la'ine irişdi kim Gavaris öldi. Semağorgos diyri harāb olmuş ve kamu ruhbān helāk olmuş. Bu haberi işidüp azīm perişān oldi. Zīrā Gavaris la'in anuñ 'ammusı idi. Dört yaña nāmeler perākende kılup çeri cem' itdi. Melik Dānişmend ve sāyir gāziler kaçdın kıldı (Demir 2002, 1: 196).

Translation: *While Melik Danişmend is besieging this fortress, we take up the story of Artuhi [whom he sent on a campaign of conquest]. {Melik gave him a standard and a banner and sent him with ten thousand men to capture the provinces of Cabussiye and Hayruriyye}. They went and captured these provinces, killed some of the inhabitants, imposed the harac on others and made all of them subjects [of Melik]. When the news {that Gavaris was dead, the Sematourgos monastery razed and all the monks killed} reached Puthil, the ruler of Trabzon, he was very depressed {at this news since Gavaris had been his uncle}. [Straightaway, on his orders] letters were sent in all directions to collect an army [and march to war]. {He then set out to engage Melik Danişmend and his warriors}.*

Some passages in *oratio recta* have been compressed in I. For instance, in chapter 2, Melik asks Artuhi (according to P): “What is your name?”; having received an answer, his next question is “And your family? Who is your father and your mother?” This prompts Artuhi to tell the story of his life (Mélíkoff 1960, 2: 22). In the version of I, Melik asks only the one question, “What is your name and who are your kinfolk?” (Demir 2002, 1: 12), before Artuhi launches into his autobiography. In a similar manner, a long letter from Nastor and Şattat in chapter 7 comes to 175 words in P (Mélíkoff 1960, 2: 101), but has been reduced to 109 words in I (Demir 2002, 1: 67). There is no consistent pattern, however: the prose text of chapters 8, 13, 15 and 16 is considerably shorter in P than in I, while that of chapter 17 is longer.

While all manuscripts of the *Danişmendname* are conventionally known as “copies”, manuscripts P and I are clearly not copies in the usual sense of the word. They are better understood as epitomes: abridged and paraphrased versions of a longer text derived from the original manuscript of Arif Ali.

As the verse sections often include an *incipit* (e.g., Demir 2002, 1: 10, 1: 66, 1: 137) or *explicit* (e.g., Demir 2002, 1: 53, 1: 80, 1: 166), Arif Ali evidently divided the prose text into sections before adding the verses and intended his *meclisler* to be of more or less uniform length, since he finds it necessary to apologize for the brevity of the first chapter (Demir 2002, 1: 9). According to Mélíkoff’s translation of P (Mélíkoff 1960, 1: 286, 2: 100), the narrator also remarks that chapter 7 is “la plus longue”, but the usual sense of Ottoman *muteber* is “most important”. The verse in question is not present in I or L.

Chapters 7 and 9-13, each running to more than 500 lines of prose in I, may roughly correspond to the “standard” length of a *meclis* in Ali’s original text. In some chapters as they now stand, the text of I is less than half as long (chapter 4: 223 lines of prose, chapter 8: 238 lines, chapter 17: 198 lines), implying that substantial parts have been excised.

Literary borrowings

The *Danişmendname* is rooted in the oral tradition of central Asia (Reichl 2000, 160-161) and the

literary tradition of Persia mediated through the *Battalname*, and incorporates elements borrowed from the common stock of Eurasian folklore and from tales that were current in medieval northern Anatolia, a frontier region between Christian west and Islamic east (Kafadar 2012, 64-67).

In the first chapter, Melik and his men arrive in Sivas to find the *kale* in ruins and its towers packed with the skeletons of its Muslim defenders. On enquiring, they learn how the enemy managed to infiltrate the fortress. A caravan of merchants with five hundred camels arrived, each camel bearing two boxes. A credulous deputy commander gave the order to open the gate, but as soon as the caravan was inside the fortress, the boxes sprang open and a thousand armed men leaped out (Demir 2002, 1: 7).

The stratagem is as old as Homer and variations of the story are found in Persian (Meulder 2013, 20-31), Arabic (Galmés de Fuentes 1979, 129-130), and Latin (Krappe 1944, 71-78, Meulder 2014) literature. The closest parallel, even down to the number of warriors involved (a thousand) is a French *chanson de geste* of the early twelfth century, *Le charroi de Nîmes* (“The merchant convoy of Nîmes”) where warriors are smuggled into a city concealed in wooden barrels (McMillan 1972). The Turks of northern Anatolia could have heard the story from Crusader captives such as Bohemond, prince of Antioch, who spent several years in Niksar as a prisoner. It is perhaps significant that although Melik is not otherwise averse to such devious tactics (e.g., Demir 2002, 1: 65, 1: 189), in this case, the stratagem is attributed to the Christians.

In chapter 5, Melik’s army reaches Tokat, whose inhabitants abandon the city and take refuge in the castle (Demir 2002, 1: 45). To secure his rear, Melik must reduce the fortresses and fortified monasteries surrounding Tokat. One of these, the Deryanos monastery, stands on a hilltop and is built “like a minaret”; it is inhabited by three monks who are “extremely devoted to fasting” and only eat once a week (Demir 2002, 1: 49). When Melik and his men approach, they are driven back by a fire-breathing dragon (*ejderha*) but during the night, the *gazi* Abd-ul-Vahhab appears to Melik in a dream and tells him how to vanquish the monster. Next day, as the dragon attacks, Melik recites a Muslim prayer and the dragon is “destroyed” (*maḥv*) (Demir 2002, 1: 50, Franke 2000, 134).

The story of Melik and the dragon finds a close parallel in the hagiography of saint Theodore, who was martyred at Amasya in AD 306. In later centuries, a cult grew up around his tomb in Euchaita (Avkat) between Amasya and Çorum, and his *vita* was embellished with many miraculous and fantastic episodes. In the Middle Ages, he ranked among the most popular saints in Anatolia, so popular that his *persona* proliferated into two separate saints (Walter 1999, Haldon 2018). Among his many exploits, Theodore is credited with slaying a dragon, which was infesting the countryside near Euchaita. In one version, Christ appears to Theodore in a dream and explains how to overcome the monster (Hengstenberg 1912, 251); in other versions Theodore immobilizes the dragon by speaking the name of Jesus Christ (Hengstenberg 1912, 259) or making the sign of the cross (Walter 1999, 173). Later, his role as holy dragon-slayer was taken over by saint George.

The monks in the tower are likewise drawn from Christian hagiography: they are stylites, “pillar hermits”. This extreme form of Christian asceticism was known throughout the Medieval Levant. Of the movement’s founder, saint Simeon the Elder (died AD 459), several hagiographers report that he partook of food only once a week (Doran 1992, 71, 89, 113). One example of a stylite pillar remains standing at Umm er-Rasas in Jordan and in appearance resembles a tower or minaret (Ball 2002, 289-290).

In chapter 14, Melik has taken Çorum and to save their lives, its inhabitants feign conversion to Islam. In fact, some of them are secretly preparing to poison Melik and his companions at a

feast. The night before the banquet is to take place, the Prophet appears to Melik in a dream and orders him to leave the city at once with his men, as it will be destroyed. As soon as Melik's faithful are outside the walls of Çorum, an earthquake causes the city to collapse over the heads of its insincere inhabitants (Demir, 1: 175).

Çorum's destruction by earthquake as a divine punishment is clearly based on the destruction of Sodoma as described in the Old Testament (Genesis 19: 19-29) and briefly referenced in the Koran (11: 81-82). The narrative's first part – the clandestine poisoning – is found in neither, but exhibits some affinities with a miracle ascribed to saint Theodore of Amasya, who in a dream revealed to the patriarch of Constantinople how the food in the city's market had on the emperor's order been sprinkled with blood from pagan sacrifices (Migne 1858, 1829, Delehayé & Peeters 1925, 77).

The story of Artuhı

In the first chapter of the *Danişmendname*, Melik's comrade-in-arms is his uncle, Sultan Turasan, but by the end of the chapter, Turasan has marched to Constantinople with an army and is not heard of again until chapter 13, when word arrives that he has captured the *Keysar* and had him killed. His place as Melik's companion is taken by Artuhı, a Christian warrior whom Melik vanquishes in a duel and converts to Islam.

Melik is a *gazi* in the tradition of Seyyid Battal. Of superhuman strength, he slaughters Infidels by the dozens and hundreds and takes little interest in women. The anticlimactic nature of his death in chapter 17 also recalls that of Battal (Dedes 1996, 332-333).

Artuhı is an entirely different character. Lovesick, he has spent seven years roaming the countryside around Amasya hoping for a glimpse of Efrummiye, and once he has been united with her, she becomes his inseparable companion. He is a mighty warrior, but not invulnerable: early on, he loses an arm in battle, but it is soon restored by al-Khidr. The story has some points in common with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where the knight's severed head is replaced by supernatural intervention, and possibly both stories derive from an Arabic original (Ng & Hodges 2010, 264-265, Franke 2000, 513-514).

In the classic distinction of W. P. Ker between epic and romance (Ker 1908, 3-7), the story of Melik belongs to the first, Artuhı to the second, more recent genre: Melik's Beowulf against Artuhı's Lancelot. Indeed, when he makes his first appearance in chapter 2, playing morose songs on a stringed instrument (*tanbur*) and pining for the unattainable Efrummiye (Demir 2002, 1: 11), the image of Artuhı comes closer to the *troubadour* than the *gazi*, just as the first encounter of Melik and Artuhı matches Ker's description:

The favourite adventure of medieval romance is something different, – a knight riding alone through a forest; another knight; a shock of lances; a fight on foot with swords, “racing, tracing and foining like two wild boars”; then, perhaps, recognition ... (Ker 1908, 3-7).

Applying the concept of the “storyworld”, developed by Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, significant differences between the narratives of Melik and Artuhı emerge (Bayrı 2020, 17, 30, 190). While Melik's exploits are concentrated along the route linking Sivas to Çorum via Tokat, Turhal and Amasya, with one or two detours to Zile and Niksar, the travels of Artuhı and Efrummiye range as far west as Çankırı (chapter 11) and as far east as Baghdad (chapter 17). In fact, chapter 11, describing Artuhı's mission to Çankırı accompanied by Kara Teğın, whom he installs as governor after capturing the city, forms an independent tale-within-a-tale taking place outside Melik's

storyworld and linked to the mainstream narrative only at the end of the chapter, when Artuhı and Efrummiye – in a manner closely resembling Efrummiye’s own abduction in chapter 2 – abduct Gülnüş Banu and bring her to Melik.

It appears that the author of the *Danişmendname* has combined two narratives, one about Melik and his comrade-in-arms Turasan, the other about Artuhı, Kara Teğın and Efrummiye. When the two stories were merged, Turasan became superfluous and was dispatched to Constantinople to make way for Artuhı, while Kara Teğın’s role as Artuhı’s companion was limited to the Çankırı episode.

Like the Byzantine hero Akritas, Kara Teğın is *digenis*, “double-born” of a Christian and a Muslim parent. So is Artuhı according to his own account in chapter 2, but the narrator lets slip the revealing information that Artuhı’s father “had forty wives” (Demir 2002, 1: 12), which a Christian could not. Evidently, in the original romance, Artuhı was a Muslim by birth, and his Christianity was introduced when the story was combined with that of Melik in order to provide a legitimate reason for their duel. Unlike the knights of western romance, true *gazıs* were not supposed to engage in gratuitous combat with one another, but to fight for the common cause of the True Faith.

The Destruction of Komana

As in many frontier narratives (Aydoğın 2012, 115-117), conversion is a central theme throughout the *Danişmendname*. Starting with Artuhı, Melik’s vanquished opponents are given the choice between conversion and death. Artuhı himself is less uncompromising: after the *kale* of Çankırı has been taken, some inhabitants are allowed to remain Christian if they pay the *harac*. Artuhı’s father-in-law Sattat is offered a similar option, but he refuses and is put to death. Some conversions are voluntary, e.g., Efrummiye and Gülnüş Banu, who convert to take a Muslim partner. The same trope appears in other Anatolian epics (Bayrı 2020, 24). It can also be found in western romances of the Crusader period, but inverted: Muslim (“Saracen”) women convert out of love for Christian men (Heng 2003, 186-187).

When Melik takes Komana (*Gümenek*) in chapter 6, the citizens convert to Islam, and the churches are turned into mosques. Komana is a large city, standing on the bank of a river “flowing like the sea”, which is spanned by a long bridge; inside the city, there are three hundred and sixty “campaniles” (*nāķūs*). Since we are later told that Melik converts three hundred and sixty monasteries (*deyri*) into mosques, “campanile” should be read as a metonym for “monastery” (On the use of the figure 360 in the *Danişmendname*, see Akkaya 1957, 434-435).

By chapter 8, the Komanans have abandoned their new faith, but Melik recaptures the city and installs one of his companions as governor while the inhabitants once again convert to Islam. In chapter 15, a third revolt is put down and one of the defeated Christian commanders challenges Melik to prove the superiority of his faith by performing a miracle and halting the flow of the river; if he succeeds, the eight thousand Christian captives will embrace Islam. With the aid of a prayer, which the Prophet has given him in a dream, Melik does as requested, then permits the waters to return. The captives are impressed, convert to Islam, and are richly rewarded, but suddenly (*nāgāh*) reports arrive that two thousand infidels are stealing horses from the army, and an angry Melik calls on God to punish the raiders. During the night, an old *gazi* appears to Melik in a dream and tells him to shift his camp away from the level ground and into the hills. He does so, and a few days later, a flash flood sweeps through the valley and destroys the city (Demir 2002, 1: 183). Only five hundred houses belonging to Muslims are left standing.

The stories of Melik’s river-miracle and the subsequent flood clearly draw their inspiration

from Moses' parting of the Red Sea as related in the Old Testament (Exodus, 14: 16-29). Moses (*Musa*) was regarded as a prophet by Muslims, to whom the story of the Red Sea crossing will have been familiar, since it is referenced several times in the Koran (7: 138, 10: 90, 26: 63-67). In *Sura* 10, the Pharaoh attempts to save himself by offering to convert; this nexus between water miracle and conversion is also present in the *Danışmendname*, but absent from the Biblical account.

In the Old Testament, the prophets Joshua (Joshua 3: 7-17), Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2: 8-14) are credited with dividing the waters of the Jordan; these miracles are not mentioned in the Koran. A further water miracle is ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgos, bishop of Niksar in the third century AD. According to the hagiography by Gregory of Nyssa, the saint caused a lake to dry out and forced the waters of the river Lykos to remain within its banks (Slusser 1998, 64-68).

There are also some points in common between the destruction of Komana by flood and the destruction of Çorum by earthquake in the preceding chapter. At Komana, however, the transition from the first stage of the story to the second is strangely abrupt: one moment, a mass conversion has taken place and Melik distributes gifts; the next, he is cursing the city and its inhabitants. Further, the 2,000 Christian horse-rustlers are a minority compared to the 8,000 new Muslims, many of whom presumably also perish in the inundation.

One possible explanation is that the original narrative included a section bridging the gap between the two episodes and giving more cogent reasons for the drastic scale of the divine punishment (e.g., that the 8,000 had abandoned Islam and returned to their old faith, violating their promise to Melik and inviting God's displeasure), and that this has been omitted by the epitomators. Another possibility is that the flood episode (whose compact style differs from the preceding story of the river miracle) is a later addition, inserted into the text of Mevlana to protect his credibility. Komana was a settlement of modest size that could never have accommodated 360 churches or mosques. While this might not be known to the audience at a recital in far-off Konya or Kayseri, the problem would be obvious to Arif Ali, whose remit as governor of Tokat included Komana. Perhaps it was he who as part of his "improvement" of the text resolved a topographical problem by inserting the flood episode and reducing the city to its proper size; the "five hundred houses" left standing after the flood may well correspond to the size of medieval Komana (Erciyas 2014, 215-226).

Conclusions

Most studies of the *Danışmendname* are based either on Mélikoff's edition of the Paris manuscript or Demir's more recent edition of the Istanbul manuscript K.441. Through a comparison of the two editions, this study has demonstrated that the Paris and Istanbul manuscripts are not merely copies of a common original, but epitomes, and that the epitomators have allowed themselves considerable liberty to abridge and rearrange the text of Arif Ali. Furthermore, despite Ali's efforts at improving and homogenizing the text, the composite nature of the original epic is apparent, incorporating as it does elements from several different sources, even Christian hagiography. Further investigations of the epic's setting and content, as well as a systematic comparison of the texts of I and P with other manuscripts, especially ms. L (St. Petersburg), will be required for a better understanding of this important but enigmatic work of early Turkish literature.

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