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AHMEDÎ'S "GHAZÂNÂME" ON THE BATTLE OF KOSOVA

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Following the tradition of Leunklavius, it was to German scholarship with Friedrich Giese, Franz Taeschner, Franz Babinger and Paul Wittek that we owe the initial textual-critical analysis of the early Ottoman chronicles.[1]

In later Western scholarship the only exception in the scholarly analysis of the early Ottoman chronicles was Victor Ménage, a student of Paul Wittek.[2]

It is difficult to understand why the young generation of the Ottomanists, particularly in England where Paul Wittek taught in his last years of his life completely dismisses the tradition and embarked upon a campaign of vituperation against Paul Wittek.[3] Today it has become almost a fashion in our field to dismiss the early Ottoman traditions as mere legends without any attempt to establish reliable copies of the sources through textual criticism and a careful analysis. I believe that this tendency is basically due to a misunderstanding of the specific character of the early Ottoman traditions. Addressing to the unsophisticated frontier people, such popular Ottoman chronicles represented a combination of epic, folkloric, and at the same time, historical materials. The historian's task is to sort out carefully the material and to submit to a strict analysis of the text in the light of the contemporary Christian sources as well as the toponymic, topographic and archaeological evidence. With such a comprehensive approach it is possible to obtain quite a reliable picture of the early Ottoman history.[4]

We believe that the Ottoman chronicles relating the events leading to the battle of Kosova of 1389 have not yet been subjected to a close analysis. The *Ghazânâme* or *Menâkibnâme* (?), interpolated in his

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1 In particular see, "Zum Quellen problem der ältesten Osmanischen chroniken (mit auszügen aus Neshri)", *Mitteilungen zur Osmanischen Geschichte I* (1921-1922), 77-150.

2 V.L. Ménage, *Neshri's History of the Ottomans, The Source and Development of the Text*, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press 1964, see his Bibliography, IX-XII for further literature on the subject.

3 For example see C. Imber (The Ottoman Empire, Istanbul: ISIS 1990, 12: "An examination of Paul Wittek's writings shows that it is no more than an Eccentric, if ingenious, application of the tenets of romantic Austro-German nationalism to the Ottoman Empire".

4 For example see H.I. "Osman Ghazi's Siege of Nicaea and the Battle of Bapheus", E. Zachariadou (ed.) *The Ottoman Emirate*, 1300-1389, Rethymnon, 1993.

compilation by Neshrî,[5] constitutes undoubtedly the most detailed and quite reliable Ottoman account of the events. This surprisingly detailed story of the events about fifty pages from the conquest of the fortress of Nish down to the battle of Kosova is not included in 'Âshık Pasha-zâde' s compilation, or in other compilations including the anonymous chronicles. Those later compilations using Neshrî, such as Idrîs Bitlîsî's *Hasht Bihisht*, and then, Hodja Sa'deddîn's Tâcu't-Tevârîkh, which is actually a Turkish version of *Hasht Bihisht*, include the Ghazânâme extensively.[6]

I believe that, so far, the true value and authenticity of this source, contemporary of the events has not been duly evaluated. A recent investigator, Professor Stephen Reinert,[7] believes "to a large degree, the disagreements reflect how scholars have variously accepted, rejected or modified Neshrî's account of events arguably the most significant narrative of this interval, and one substantially unparalleled in the anterior or contemporary Turkish and Greek histories". Professor Reinert continues : "Certain historians, let us admit, have instinctively preferred the Serbian chronicles from a blanket distrust of their Ottoman counterpart" (178), and he adds : "Neshrî's account of events from Nish through Kosova evidently relies on an anterior source which may be of considerable value, and hence more cogent reasons must be advanced should one opt to reject its various elements. ..... His narrative diverges, to be sure, from that of other chronicles, and its wealth of detail (particularly vis-a-vis Ali Pasha's Bulgarian campaign) is striking.[8] To suppose, however, that it depends on an "eye-witness" report is entirely conjectural. Furthermore, needless to say, neither of these reservations is sufficiently compelling to warrant our wholesale rejection of Neshri's account" (179).

However, in his conclusion, Professor Reinert rejects certain basic points of the Ghazânâme in Neshrî ; he says "it is unlikely ... that Lazar

5 Wittek (Zum Quellenproblem, 107-109) was the first to discerne that this interpolation in Neshrî came from a menâkibnâme entirely independent from his main source, Ashık Pashazâde ; see Ménage, 13-14 ; as for the second important source interpolated by Neshrî in his complation, also referred to for the first time by Wittek is related to the reign of Mehmed I. I believe it is a menâkibnâme obviously dictated by the sultan himself at a time when he eliminated his rival brothers, Çelebis, and took the title of sultan as the sole ruler of the Ottoman realm (see "Mehmed I" : EI2). The "Oxford Anonymous History" or pseudo-Ruhî, Ménage believes (14), is reproduced "practically verbatim" by Neshrî.

6 Sa'deddîn's version of *Hasht Bihisht* is later on simplified in Solakzâde Mehmed's (d. 1657) history (Solakzâde Tarihi, Istanbul 1297 H.) in a simple Turkish. This popular version was widely employed by historians, including J. von Hammer. A critical edition of the original text of Idrîs is prepared by Zekeriya Erol, to be published by Turkish Historical Society.

7 Stephen W. Reinert, "A Byzantine Source of the Battles of Bileca (?) and Kosova Polje : Kydones' Letters, 396 and 398 Reconsidered" Studies in Ottoman History in Honor of Professor V.L. Ménage, C. Heywood and C.Imber (eds), Istanbul : ISIS Press, 1994, 250 : "If any eyewitness accounts of the battle were written,none has' survived ; and "From Nish to Kosova Polje : Reflections on Murad I's Final Years", E. Zachariadou (ed.), The Ototman Emirate (1300-1389), Rethymnon : Crete University Press 1993, 169-211.

8 See in the same volume 165-187 : M. Kiel, "Mevlana Neşri and the Towns of Medieval Bulgaria".

ever functioned as Murad's vassal, which Neshrî posits to commence this drama... (this) must be regarded as fictitious" (206). Professor Reinert also finds questionable the theory of a conspiracy between Djuradj and Lazar, and Murad's decision to campaign against the Serbian ruler because of Shahin's defeat in Bosnia, or Ali Pasha's expedition against Bulgaria in the winter of 1388.

In Professor Reinert's belief, the sequence of events was arranged in a composition or construction by Neshrî himself to impress "its Ottoman audience as a moving and aesthetically satisfying story". (206-207).

In this paper I will try to present the conclusions of my study of the so-called Ghazânâme :[9]

1. The text in Neshrî's chronicle appears to be a verbatim reproduction of a ghazânâme or menâkibnâme, plausibly written shortly after the battle of Kosova under Bayezid I (1389-1402) or under Süleyman Çelebi (1402-1411).

2. Narrating such great deeds of the sultans, the ghazânâme or menâkibnâme genre formed part of Ottoman historical literature already in the fifteenth century. A similar menâkibnâme or book of deeds called *Gazavât-i Sultân Murâd* dealing with the Battle of Varna in 1444, has recently been discovered and published.[10] Unlike the popular anonymous chronicles the menâkibnâmes relate a particularly important event with unusually precise details. This genre of history writing continued in later centuries under the names of ghazavâtnâme, Süleymannâme, shehnâme, *nusretnâme, hümâyûnnâme, Mohaçnâme*, etc. A. detailed analysis of the Gazavât-i Sultân Murâd shows that not only the main structure of the events but also the details can be verified as historical facts under other sources.[11] Another such *ghazavâtnâme* or *ghazânâme* on the ghazâ deeds of Gazi Umur Bey of the Aydın dynasty, exhaustively checked with Greek and Western sources by Paul Lemerle,[12] proved to be an unusually faithful source in its details. Our *Ghazânâme* of Kosova, interpolated in Neshrî, is clearly another example of this type of early Turkish historiography.

3. Setting aside its religious and epic style and expressions, common to all such menâkibnâmes, the story which begins with the conquest of Nish and ends with the death of Sultan Murad and Bayezid's election to the sultanate, appears to be a detailed narration of events by somebody close to the court. Therefore, the sequence of the events leading to the battle of Kosova and the details about the martyrdom of Sultan Murad can be accepted as a whole a reliable story.

9 We are in the process of preparing a critical edition of the text with a detailed analysis.

10 Gazavât-i Sultan Murâd bn. Mehemmed Hân, H. Inalcık and M. Oğuz, (eds), Ankara : Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1978.

11 See H. Inalcık, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*, Ankara : TTK, 1954.

12 L émirat d'Aydin, Byzance et l'Occident : Recherches sur la Geste d'Umur Pacha, Paris 1957.

4. On the evidence of the fact that the verses inserted in our Ghazânâme are found in Ahmedî's *Iskendernâme*, with changes in their arrangement, we believe that the *Ghazânâme* of Kosova is the work of the prolific writer Ahmedî.[13] Obviously, no one else can make such changes. Poet Ahmedî was first in the service of Bayezid I (1389-1402), and then a musâhib of his son Emîr Süleyman Çelebi.[14] In the part of *Iskendernâme* dealing with Mîr Süleyman (1402-1411) Ahmedî says: "We shall start writing another book in which we shall relate the deeds of Mîr Süleyman"[15]

5. Among Ahmedî's lost works a *Cenknâme* (Book of Combats) is mentioned by Kâtib Çelebi. If Kâtib Çelebi is correct text interpolated in Neshrî may be *Cenknâme*. However, recently it has been argued that this so-called *Cenknâme* is actually the Çengnâme of Ahmed-i Dâ'î.[16]

6. A second important Ottoman account concerning Ottoman-Serbian encounters under Murad I is included in the Düstûrnâme by Enverî, an Ottoman book of exploits at sea, dedicated to Grand Vizier Mahmûd Pasha in 869/1465. Apparently, Enverî belonged to the literary circle under the patronage of Ahmedî.[17] Enverî mentions Ahmedî in his Düstûrnâme (p. 91) as an influential favorite companion under Süleyman Çelebi. For the battle of Kosova Enverî is another important source independent from 'Âshık Pasha-zâde (Aşpz.) and Neshrî. Enverî talks about an invasion of Serbs into Thrace in the year 765/1364. The Serbs then, he says, penetrated as far as Sazlu-Dere beyond Adrianople on the way to Constantinople. Plausibly, this particular Serbian attack is seemingly confused in Aşpz. and others with that of the battle of Črnomen (Çirmen) of 1371 (in Aşpz. "Sırp Sındığı", or "Meriç" battle). Sultan Murad on his way to meet the Serbs in 1371 saw it necessary first to capture the strong Byzantine fortress on the peninsula of Biga (today Kara-Biga) to make safe his rear. Byzantium was in alliance with the Serbian princes at that time.[18]

13 Ahmedî (Tâcüddîn Ibrâhîm bn. Hızır), *Iskender-Nâme, Inceleme, Tıpkıbasım*, Ismail Ünver, (ed) with an introduction 1-46, Text in facsimile: Manuscript, Istanbul Üniversitesi Library, Ty. 921, Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1983.

14 "Ahmedî hem hizmetine erdi anun" (Text 68a, couplet 1862); on Ahmedî's biography see T. Kortantamer, *Leben und Weltbild des altosmanischen Dichters Ahmedî unter besondered Berücksichtigung seines Diwans*, Freiburg 1973; also see in his introduction to *Iskender-nâme* edition I. Ünver. 3-4.

15 "Bir kitaba dahi bünyâd edeyüz
Mir Süleymân nitdi anda eydeyüz"
(68a, couplet 7849).

16 For Çengnâme see I.H. Ertaylan. Ahmed-i Dâî, Hayatı ve Eserleri, Istanbul 1952.

17 "Ahmediyle dem-b-dem 'işret eder": *Düstûrnâme*, M. Halil Yinanç, ed. p. 91; On art patronage with the Ottomans see my coming "Poet and Patron". Enverî tells us that he wrote another book entitled *Teferrücnâme* for the sultan. (Introduction by Yinanç, 4-5). Thus far this manuscript has not been discovered. Enverî took part in Mehmed II's campaign against Wallachia (Eflak) in 866/1462.
Çün Teferrücnâmeyi kıldım tamâm
Pâdişâh adına edüp ihtimâm

18 Aşpz. 49. Bab.; Neshrî, I, 202; in his sketch of the chronology of the Ottoman conquests in the period 1300-1481, C. Imber (*The Ottoman Empire* 1300-1481, Istanbul: ISIS, 1990, pp. 26-36) there is no reference to these major developments which entailed the subjugation of the Macedonia as well as Byzantium. Actually these states then become tributary of Murad I; for D. M. Nicol (*The Last Centuries of Byzantium*, 1261-1453, second edition, Cambridge 1993, 276, the Emperor signed only a "peace" treaty, not a pledge of payment of a tribute, making Byzantium as "tributary state" of the Ottomans.

Enverî's source on the battle of Kosova might be story from a certain Hoca Ömer, a contemporary eyewitness who was sent by Murad to Lazar as an envoy just before the confrontation. Hoca Ömer is presented in the Düstûrnâme as "one who knew all the languages of the Christian peoples and travelled to many countries".[19] It can be argued that the details conveyed from him, and included in the *Düstûrnâme* by Enverî, can be accepted as an eyewitness account by someone near the sultan in 1389. Here is a summary translation of the account in the Düstûrnâme: "Jigmun (Sigismund), the Hungarian king sent to Lazar an auxiliary army of seventy thousand soldiers and told him to fight against the Turk. Also, troops from Albania, Bosnia, Wallachia, Czechs and Kıfchak joined them, making an army of 200 thousand in Laz-ili. Lazar then sent an envoy to Murad challenging him to fight. The sultan returned the challenge sending a letter by his envoy Hoca Ömer... To the Sultan's army joined soldiers from Kastamoni, Germiyan and Karaman including volunteers from Iran and Arab countries... Lazar had a cavalry army of one hundred thousand and infantry of one hundred thousand under four thousand Bans... The Sultan moved from Edirne to Vilk-ili. In the gathering of the Bans there was a ban called Ban Milosh This Milosh was once one of the pages in the Sultan's court, and then fleeing, had abjured Islam. Upon the sultan's calls he always promised to come back, but never did. At the gathering of the Bans he rejected the accusations that he was a traitor and replied that he would prove that he was not (I omit here the story of the battle).... Lazar was captured and then Milosh approaching the Sultan, said: 'I am Milosh Ban, I want to go back to my Islamic faith and kiss your hand'. People around the Sultan thought he was approaching to kiss his hand. Murad was riding a black stallion. All of a sudden Milosh, pulling the dagger he was hiding in his cuff, struck the Sultan. As (Milosh was) clutching and pulling Murad down from the horse, the Sultan's men rushed and cut him to pieces with strokes of swords and axes."

This is an account of Milosh's attack which is somewhat different from that in Neshrî or *Ghazânâme*. In Neshrî, Murad was killed by Milosh who had lain wounded and hidden among the dead, and (then) came along pretending to kiss the sultan's hand and struck him with the dagger hidden in his cuff.

19 Düstûrnâme, p. 84:
Şah Murad'ın var katında nâmver
Bir bahadır er kim adıydı Hoca Ömer
Kâfirin cümle dilin bilür idi
Her ile azm-i sefer kılar idi
"Laz ol il (yıl ?) hana vermişdi harâc" For Murad's sending Hoca Ömer as an envoy to Lazar just before the confrontation see Düstûrnâme, p. 85; Hoca Ömer appears to be an important figure under Murad I; a quarter in Iznik (Nicaea) bears his name.

To conclude, I would like once more to emphasize the point that it is time for Western and Balkan orientalism to abandon its recent perfunctory attitude toward the Turkish sources and to resume the scholarly critical scrutiny of the early Ottoman traditions.