Two Literary Genres, One Work:

A Chronogram Poem by Ḥaḳḳī in Rüknī's Versified Dictionary

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Context

The chronogram poem (*tārīḫ manẓūmesi*) by Ḥaḳḳī (d. 1894) presented in this article is found in the Ottoman-English versified (*manẓūm*) dictionary entitled *Lehce-i Lanḳıvic*[1] (dictionary of the language), a manuscript written by Rüknī (d. ?) in 1865. The only known copy of this manuscript to date is in the manuscript collection (No. AA. 6881) of the Deniz Müzesi Library in Istanbul. Measuring 205 x 130, 160 x 115 mm, this work contains 43 sheets (*varaḳ*), with sheets [1a, 1b and 42a-43b] being blank, and is written in *nesiḫ*. Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem is on [41b] and is written in *riḳᶜa*.

As Ottoman chronogram poems were formally composed according to the rules of Arabo-Persian prosody (*ʿarūż*), they are classified as a sub-branch of the "science of poetic adornment" (*ʿilm-i bedīʿ*), one of the three main branches of the Arabic "science of rhetoric" (*ʿilm-i belāġat*).[2] The act of composing a chronogram (*tārīḫ düşürme*) in the Ottoman Empire permeated almost every aspect of life, including birth, death, the enthronement of the sultan, the appointment of a statesman to a new duty or position, marriage, architectural construction, or the completion of a book.[3] Chronogram poems constitute a literary genre due to their distinctive formal and thematic characteristics. There are numerous examples of this extremely popular genre among the Ottomans over the centuries that have still to be studied systematically,[4] and the chronogram poem by Ḥaḳḳī examined in this article is just one.

To understand why Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem is found in Rüknī's manuscript, let us consider the sources and the manner in which such poems generally appear: the Ottoman chronogrammatic poets assembled these poems in their own poetry collection (*dīvān*) under a separate heading (or without a heading), for example under

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[1]   *Lanḳıvic* is the pronunciation of the English word *language* in Ottoman. In the dictionary, the English words are written in Arabic script (according to Ottoman orthography) as they are pronounced: (لنقویج).

[2]   Karabey, Turgut, "Tarih Düşürme", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi,* https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tarih-dusurme (10.04.2024).

[3]   Akay, Sedat, "Arap Edebiyatında Şiirsel Tarih Düşürme Sanatı ve Siirt Nezdinde Bazı Örnekleri". *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 28 (2022), p. 266- 283, p. 271.

[4]   Ambros, Edith Gülçin, *Ottoman Chronogram Poems: Formal, Factual, and Fictional Aspects*, Berlin: EB-Verlag (2021), p. 6.

the title "*tevārīḫ*" (pl. of *tārīḫ*).[5] However, Ḥaḳḳī's *dīvān* was published in 1875,[6] ten years after Rüknī's manuscript of 1865. In addition to these *dīvān*s, there were the chronogram poems collected in poetry miscellanea (*mecmūʿa-i eşʿār*) or included in manuscripts on the blank sheets at the start and end or even on any page of the works as "*fevāʾid kaydı*" (< *fevāʾid*: pl. of Ar. *fāʾide* "benefit"), a record of beneficial information.[7] In this regard, we can consider Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem as a "*fevāʾid* record", and suggest that it appears in Rüknī's work on page [41b], one of the blank sheets at the end of the manuscript, and after the concluding section on page [41a] of this versified dictionary.

Moreover, as there is no information on the compilation date of Rüknī's work and its copyist, we should ask the following interesting and important questions in the context of the history of Ottoman literary culture: Who wrote Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem as a "*fevāʾid* record" in Rüknī's work? Where did the copyist obtain this poem, which was likely one of Ḥaḳḳī's unpublished poems up to that point? Was it written or orally transmitted? More precisely, was the poem orally dictated to the copyist?

Yunus Kaplan, who recently found Rüknī's versified dictionary, analysed its structural and textual features and published his article in 2022,[8] transcribing the full text of the manuscript apart from Ḥaḳḳī's chronogramm poem. Kaplan noted in his article that the manuscript contains a "puzzle chronogram poem" (*taʿmiyeli tārīḫ manẓūmesi*) of six couplets by a poet with the pen name (*maḫlaṣ*) Ḥaḳḳī, in praise of the captaincy

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[5] Karabey, Turgut, "Tarih Düşürme", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tarih-dusurme (10.04.2024).

[6] See Tayşi, Mehmet Serhan, "Hakkı Bey, Üsküdarlı", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hakki-bey-uskudarli (26.03.2024).

[7] Karabey, Turgut, "Tarih Düşürme", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/tarih-dusurme (10.04.2024). See Orhan Bilgin, "Fevâid Kaydı", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/fevaid-kaydi (14.04.2024). The "*fevāid* records", often unrelated to and disassociated from the subject of the manuscript in which they appear, cannot be limited in terms of their contents. These records can be, for example, the dates of important days or events, a short poem, useful information extracted from other works, a medicinal recipe, or any kind of recipe.

[8] Yunus Kaplan, "Tuhfe Türüne Bilinmeyen Bir Örnek: Rüknî'nin İngilizce-Türkçe Manzum Sözlüğü (Lehce-i Lankıviç)", *Akademik Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi* 6/2 (2022), p. 485-531.

of Vesīm Paşa (d. 1910) on page [41b].[9] He also mentioned in the footnote that he did not see the manuscript himself. [10] Thus, he took the reference that the poem is a "puzzle chronogram" from the catalogue entry of the Deniz Müzesi Library. In this article, I will therefore check whether the poem is a puzzle chronogram and will also consider other possibilities.

Neither the work "*Lehce-i Lanḳıvic*" nor its author Rüknī is mentioned in the bio-graphical and bibliographical sources. Apart from the pen name "Rüknī" in the conclu-ding section of the versified dictionary, the only biographical information about the author is found in the introduction. Rüknī writes here that he travelled to England to get engines for the warships of the Ottoman navy and that he wrote the dictionary during this trip (to avoid wasting the time) with the help of a passenger who was familiar with English.[11] Thus, it can be assumed that Rüknī travelled to England on an official mission and was probably an Ottoman naval officer. This biographical information is important as it may provide a possible answer (apart from the explanation about the "*fevāʾid* record" above) to the question of why Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem was included in Rüknī's work: as Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem was written on the appointment of Vesīm Paşa as "the grand admiral"[12] (*ḳapudān-ı deryā*) in 1281 (*hicrī*), corresponding to 1864-65 CE, its content is closely associated with Rüknī as an Ottoman naval officer in the same military context and in the same year, 1865.

With reference to the literary identity of Ḥaḳḳī, in Faṭīn's (d. 1866) biography of poets (*teẕkire*) from 1853, Ḥaḳḳī's literary skills are described as "well versed in all the finer aspects of the poetry".[13] In the *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, it is written that Ḥaḳḳī

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9   Kaplan, "Tuhfe Türüne Bilinmeyen Bir Örnek" (2022), p. 496.
10   ibid., p. 496 (footnote 6).
11   Rüknî, *Lehce-i Lanḳıviç: Manzum İngilizce-Türkçe Sözlük,* Deniz Müzesi Komutanlığı Kütüphanesi; Yazmalar Koleksiyonu Nr. AA. 6881, (1865), f. 1b/3-8.
12   "The Grand Admiral" is common; however, in 1863 the title *ḳapudan paşa* (the grand admiral) was abolished and the *umūr-ı baḥriye nāẓırı* "minister of navy" took its place as commander of the Ottoman navy. See Bayerle, Gustav, *Pashas, Begs, and Effendis: A Historical Dictionary of Titles and Terms in the Ottoman Empire,* Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press (2011), p. 93.
13   Fatîn Davud, *Fatîn Tezkiresi (Hâtimetü'l-Eşâr),* (1853), ed. Ömer Çiftçi, T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Kütüphaneler ve Yayımlar Genel Müdürlüğü Kültür Eserleri Dizisi Nr. 469, (Ankara, 2017), p. 100, https://ekitap.ktb.gov.tr/TR-195831/fatin-tezkiresi.html (26. 03. 2024): "[...] *mezâyâ-yı şiʿri tedkîke muktedir bir şâir olup* [...]".

was "a powerful poet who could be considered equal to Nefʿī (d. 1635)", that he was described in the sources as "Nefʿī of the time" (*Nefʿī-yi zamān*), and that he became very famous in his day.[14] The inclusion in Rüknī's work of a chronogram poem by a famous and powerful contemporary poet, in praise of the naval commander Vesīm Paşa, would also increase the importance of Rüknī and his work. This may also explain why Ḥaḳḳī's chronogram poem was included in Rüknī's work.

In this literary genre, there are more than thirty different types of chronogram.[15] To ascertain whether Ḥaḳḳī's poem is a puzzle chronogram and how this type is composed, let us take a closer look at the last couplet of Ḥaḳḳī's poem:

"*Ṭuyunca bi'l-bedāhe söyledim tārīḫini Ḥaḳḳī*

Vesīm Paşa eḥaḳḳdur baḳ ḳapuādn [sic] [*recte ḳapudān*] *oldı deryāyā.*"

وسيم پاشا احقدر بق قپودان اولدى دريايه

230 + 51 + 163 + 102 + 313 + 304 + 116 = 1279[16]

The total of the numerical values of the letters in the last line is 1279, which is less than the required date (1281). In such cases, the poet gives the number to be added to or subtracted from the required figure in the previous verse of the last line.[17] Assuming that Ḥaḳḳī gives us the hint to add the letter "b (ب)" (= its numerical value 2) in the previous verse of the last line with the formulation "*bi'l-bedāhe*" (extemporaneously), we get the required date of 1281/1865. This can happen with the interpretation of the meaning of "*bi'l-bedāhe*" as "with one more b", which is obviously a daring and yet noteworthy interpretation.

Another possible and the better interpretation would be to assume that Ḥaḳḳī's poem is not a puzzle chronogram. The fact that the copyist misspelled the word

[14] Tayşi, Mehmet Serhan, "Hakkı Bey, Üsküdarlı", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/hakki-bey-uskudarli (25.03.2024).

[15] Demirayak, Kenan,"Osmanlı Dönemi Arap Edebiyatında Tarih Düşürme Şiirleri Ya Da Şiirle Tarih Düşürme", *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* 25/2, (2014), p. 87-124, p. 91. For information on types of chronogram, see Ambros, *Ottoman Chronogram Poems* (2021), p. 35-42.

[16] For table of numerical values of letters used in the calculation of chronograms and the rules for composing chronograms, see Akay, "Arap Edebiyatında Şiirsel Tarih Düşürme" (2022), p. 269ff.

[17] Yakıt, İsmail, "Yakut'un Kendi Seyahatlarına Düşürdüğü *Tarihler*", *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 39, (2009), p. 211-219, p. 212.

ḳapudān is a strong indication that he may also have misspelled other words.[18] This is also proven in the case of *baḳ* (بق) instead of *bāḳ* (باق) with the letter *elif*. And *ḳapudān* (قپودان) can also be written *ḳāpudān* (قاپودان) with the letter *elif*. If we add the numerical value of these two *elif* (1+1) to the total, we get the correct date 1281/1865. Thus Ḥaḳḳī's poem can be considered as *tam tārīḫ*, a type of chronogram in which all the letters in the *tārīḫ*-hemistich are added up.[19] The possibility that the poem may have been orally dictated to the copyist and therefore the two missing *elifs* may have been written by mistake indicates that this interpretation is more likely to be correct.

Transcription

[*mefāʿīlün – mefāʿīlün – mefāʿīlün – mefāʿīlün*]

1. *Ḥudā taḫtında dāʾim eylesün ʿAbdü l-ʿAzīz Ḫānı*
   Bütün erbābını taʿyīn ider cāh-ı muʿallāya

2. *Ḳapudān-ı mükerrem itdi şāhenşeh müşīrlikle*
   Vesīm Paşa dem-ā-dem nāʾil olsun luṭf-ı Mevlāya

3. *İdüb keştīleri rāyāt-ı gūn-ā-gūn ile tezyīn*
   Donanma ʿaskeri resm-i bihīni çıḳdı icrāya

4. *Hemān rabbü l-ʿazīzüñ lücce-i tevfīḳine ṣalsun*
   Yemm-i ʿadl ile ṭoplatdı pence-i fülk-i hümā-pāye

5. *Saʿādetle ide ol tā Ḫudāyī bādbān-pīrā*
   Hübūb itdükce bād-ı feyż-i Ḥaḳḳuñ dār-ı dünyāya

6. *Ṭuyunca bi'l-bedāhe söyledim tārīḫini Ḥaḳḳī*
   Vesīm Paşa eḥaḳḳdur baḳ ḳapuādn [sic] oldı deryāya

— 1281 —

Translation

1. May God keep ʿAbdü l-ʿAzīz Ḫān constantly on his throne,
   He appoints all the masters to the high positions.

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18   Misspellings in chronograms are very common. For the question of orthographic mistake frequency, see Ambros, *Ottoman Chronogram Poems* (2021), p. 25-35.

19   ibid., p. 35.

2. The Sultan of Sultans honoured the grand admiral with the marshal's rank,
   May Vesīm Paşa always attain the favour and grace of the Lord.

3. By adorning the ships with various flags,
   The naval soldiers started their duty with the best ceremony.

4. May the great favour of the Lord Almighty always be upon [them],
   With the sea of justice [he] summoned the power of the ship with a high rank.

5. May that God make the adorned sails [float] with happiness,
   When the wind of God's grace blows into the world.

6. Ḥaḳḳī, when I heard [this] I said extemporaneously its chronogram:
   Look! Vesīm Paşa is the most suitable, he has become grand admiral.

<div align="center">

— 1281 (= 1865 CE) —

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