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## Women's History at Crossroads: Quantification of Qualitative Data and Literary Analysis, Gender Equality, and Space in Battal Ghazi Texts

### Abstract

How efficient are computerised tools in studying women's history? Can the field benefit from highly technicalised approaches more than qualitative approaches? Is qualitative data quantified when we analyse literary texts for women's history with computerised tools, or are these in fact opposite? In this essay, I address these questions with examples from my research on Battal Ghazi texts from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries, especially looking at books written in the early 1940s and 1970s and their spatial references to Christian Greek women and Muslim men. I focus on the aforementioned methodological questions that have emerged from the ongoing research and argue that computerised data is only meaningful when in direct dialogue with textual and historical analysis of gender, thus cannot be understood in a vacuum.

**Keywords:** Literary texts, women's history, computer analysis, space, Battal Ghazi

### 1. Introduction

'The spirit of an amazing Turk who died fifteen years still haunts these spaces (*Burada hala on beş yıl önce ölen, Battal Gazi adındaki müthiş Türk'ün rubu dolaşıyor*).'<sup>1</sup>

Computerised tools can provide new perspectives into looking at women's history and can be used together with qualitative approaches in literary texts. As a part of an endeavour towards exploring this encounter, in this article, I address new questions with examples from my research on Battal Ghazi texts from different periods, namely from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries, with computerised tools. I specifically focus on two books written by Ziya Şakir Soko in the 1940s and Murat Sertoğlu in the early 1970s. These texts are important due to their popularity as texts that reflect the changes in gender equality perception in relation to nationalist transformations. Continuous references to Greek and Muslim men and women in building an Islamic identity in Anatolia in the ninth, twelfth, and sixteenth centuries, and again in the twentieth century, calls for new perspectives on the usage of space and place in these texts.

1 Sertoğlu 2007, 7.

I present my search for multiple understandings of religion and gender employing topographic words, like here and there (*burada/orada*, *burası/orası*, *burası/orası*), and space and place names and descriptions. With these topographic words, I try to understand the construction of religious identities, geographic spaces, and gender equality in the literary texts published in the 1940s and 1970s. My main focus will be such words of topography in imagining history as a way of revisiting twentieth century polarisations between men and women, and Christianity and Islam.

Thus, this paper interlinks three issues: one, the increased use of computerised tools in women's history and more specifically gender in historical literature; two, the popular literature on Battal Ghazi throughout centuries and its understudied contributions to women's history; and three, a step by which I bring the first two issues together through a brief demonstration of a simple bigram and trigram evaluation of certain texts from the perspective of someone who has read volumes of these texts throughout her academic career.

Seyyid Battal Ghazi (referred commonly as Seyidgazi in Turkey) is an important character who shone between the years 720–740, during Muslim raids against the Byzantine Empire.<sup>2</sup> Battal Ghazi's love towards Byzantine women is the main theme of the epic and most written forms of epic until the nineteenth century. He was said to be married to a Muslim woman (Zainab) in Malatya, and Greek princesses in love converted to Islam in Kayseri, Cappadocia, Afyon and Eskişehir regions. This ninth century story manifested itself in buildings during the twelfth century. Several tombs and *külliyes* were built by women from the ruling family, especially Ümmühan Hatun in his and his most significant lover Elenora's name. In the sixteenth century, the epics were written down. The written form followed the architectural constructions. Both the text and the tomb are, in a sense, similar forms of concrete constructions as opposed to the oral stories that preceded and continued along with these constructions.

The story of Battal Ghazi is that of a Muslim in a Greek land. He is an Arab in the original story, but from the twelfth century onwards, with Anatolian Selchukids and then the Ottomans, he becomes more and more Turkified, and is finally referred to as Turkish in the early Turkish republic, especially in the 1940s. Also, the multiplicity of Greek women who realise his beauty makes this story relevant for women's history throughout ages, and the tensions between the ethnic groups make it a story of particular importance for the twentieth century, the century of nationalisms. The different versions of the story before the twentieth century mention Islamisation, but the twentieth century stories that follow the Turco-Greek population exchange require settling accounts with the Greek existence prior to this exchange, which was mostly erased from history books. Gender is an important part of this settlement where the modernisation and westernisation of Muslim women became the main indicator of the success of the new Turkish republic. Yorgos Dedes implies that the previous oral historical stories must be telling more about the Greek Christian practices than the

first written account in the sixteenth century, as the state had already been settled by then and the very act of transferring multiple oral accounts into written form was an act of sealing the religion of the empire that was once the Eastern Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> By analysing the spatial demonstratives in different Battal Ghazi texts and contemporaneous texts from various periods, I hope to arrive at understanding how a multiplicity of Greek characters like Elanora/ Leonora, Ragas, Safiris, Fedon etc. were referred to as much as Battal Ghazi and his son, and his convert friend, Hammer, in some texts. In thinking about the relevance of these examples and stories in explicitly Greek spaces, such as the tavern, I would like to introduce the main themes of the texts in relation to their spatial aspects.

This story of an Islamic warrior that fought to convert Greek populations to Islam singlehandedly with the help of Byzantine princesses was popularly read by women and men at various places of gathering in the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The relationships between the Greeks and Turks, and men and women, in the twentieth century are quite different in the historical novel form that was written for a public remembrance of a distant past in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As it was characteristic of the general Turkish literature at this time, there was a unison of modernist and Islamist discourses in the novel genre, and this resulted in the popularization of a story that was already popular in oral form. Thus, the written and oral forms of epic storytelling converged at this moment. In fact, the popular novels of this period brought forth a form of Islam that was in less of a dialogue with Christianity and with women when compared to epic storytelling.

Greek Princesses' interest in the battles of Battal Ghazi, a particularly masculine man, in the ninth century, a story that sexualises this man from a woman's perspective immediately became a great interest of mine. Previously, I, like many people in Turkey, had encountered Battal Ghazi stories in the 1970s film that I had viewed sporadically on TV from the 1980s onwards. As I started to read these texts, I have discovered that they were quite numerous, starting from the sixteenth century, continuing in the nineteenth, and in the 1930s, 1940s, 1960s and 1970s, followed by films in the 1960s and 1970s, and parodies of these films in the 2000s, and now in Netflix in series such as Erşan Kunter and Kuru Murad. Although I wanted to skip some of the written materials and focus exclusively on certain selected texts, they were all intertwined, revealing women's relations to masculinity studies in ways that were not imagined in the scholarship before. Thus, historical feminist method has always been an important focus for me, but it became more important with time as I looked for answers to deal with the multiplicity of layers concerning these relations in the texts. These texts have attracted many historians and literature majors; however, their gender dimension remains understudied.<sup>5</sup>

The multiplicity of Battal Ghazi texts can enlighten our understanding of transformation of gender and ethnic geography in Turkish history. A thorough analysis of the

3 Dedes 1996.

4 Öztürk 2007.

5 Kaya 2010; Kaya 2001; Lord 1954; Tural 2014; Türkmen 2008; Ulutürk 2018.

words they use, with a focus on the way they refer to women and men from different religions and ages, is something that I have aimed to achieve until now by a reading and rereading of these texts. However, both the way these texts are placed in their respective time periods, and the invention and reinvention of the Battal Ghazi theme through different significant periods of Turkish history constitute different layers for analysis. Recent historical studies have embraced new methods of mapping multiple layers.<sup>6</sup> They are roughly presented in the following section on digital humanities, history, and gender. Additionally, my interest in history has perpetually enmeshed in my fascination with science fiction, which has led me to pursue a creative-technological reading of these texts from different time periods that belong in the same plethora. These fascinating texts have also constituted a problematic for the methodology I adopted through which I combine gender history and computational sciences. While the historical aspect is perhaps less applied (although there are many impressive examples that introduce international phenomena such as slavery via technology use, especially including maps), the gender aspect of an increasing number of quantitative studies in an originally more qualitative field that cherished and contemplated on subjectivity is observable.<sup>7</sup>

In the second and third sections of the article, I explore the meaning of textual material (or data) in the face of new technologies and the possible endgame in relation to Battal Ghazi texts. I describe these texts in a more detailed fashion and in relation to spatial demonstratives, as well as actual spaces, like Battal Ghazi's tombs. Finally, I conclude that both more traditional forms of discourse analysis and new technologies, such as searching for the most used groups of words within single and multiple texts, can coexist for humans to make sense of texts/discourses.

## 2. Beyond Data

I have founded and been (co-)editing an online academic feminist journal<sup>8</sup> for the last 14 years. In the course of these years, I have witnessed a radical increase in the number of quantitative studies in this area, while that of qualitative studies have not decreased either. While the number of studies focusing on women's issues have incomparably increased with the former trend, these quantitative studies are rarely on feminism or use feminist approaches – even though it is a feminist journal – thus, rendering the scope of some of these essays quite limited. They do not go beyond superficially affirming previously observed inequalities, such as the unequal approaches in work-life, the workload in both private and public spaces etc. Moreover, the scope of most quantitative essays is usually limited to specific questions addressed to a number of people and then presenting a premeditated/programmed analysis to these results. The programs, which correlate with the given data, provide intriguing results. However,

6 Yayıncıoğlu, Hadjikyriacou, Steiner, Ongoing.

7 Mullen 2014.

8 fe dergi: <http://cins.ankara.edu.tr>

without a well-thought approach, and a perspective that derives from a personal reading and analysis of the texts in question, the results repeat previously stated concerns about gender issues.

Currently, most social scientists passively incorporate computer programs into their research since they do not produce new programs. Combining programming and social scientific knowledge alternatively, can decrease the mis/understandings concerning the nature of these programs that are more bendable, rethinkable etc. than what we perceive them to be. However, there are also pioneering studies, once again including maps, such as those of Murat Güvenç.<sup>9</sup> It is in fact the dialogue between social scientific and more hardcore scientific approaches adopted by the likes of Sam Harris and Noam Chomsky, with mathematical linguistics, that have contributed greatly to the creation of these programs.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the discourse analysis approaches developed by the field of computational social sciences are now expanding horizons. In this field, texts can be maps, word groups can sometimes be new lands, or established countries. I will try to describe the process in the fourth section with words mapping cities and buildings.

Within global gender studies, there are numerous more critical approaches that coexist with data analysis. Besides linguistics, especially the fields of education, psychology, economy, and even politics benefit from this coexistence.<sup>11</sup> Once novel approaches and programming languages are paired, historical approaches to gender studies will also greatly benefit from it. The collocation aspect is now the most popular way to analyse texts. For example, examining how word groups emerge from texts in python and MAXQDA, I will demonstrate some examples in the third section, following the next section on the stories of Battal Ghazi.

In the context of narrative-based fields, the usage of software programs, mostly limited to MAXQDA, that examine word groups as well as videos etc., have increased. Produced by VERBI Software, MAXQDA, named after Max Weber, is a computer program designed for qualitative and mixed methods data, text, and multimedia analysis.<sup>12</sup> The field of data analysis has encountered more critical approaches towards MAXQDA itself by its users and advocates. Hopefully, this critical approach will result in an increased co-occurrence for better analysis and data-usage. The novelty in graphics and the enhancement of the story telling aspect of academic approaches to women's history promise to better convey the undiscovered layers of women's historical issues. It is also important to note that coming from a third world country, as well as belonging to precarious groups in the first world, limit accessibility to this relatively expensive program, which constitute the number one cause for criticism.

Last, but not least, in my endeavour to employ artificial intelligence in the analysis of historical and literary sources using a feminist approach, I moved from MAXQDA to preliminary stages of using Python programming language to find more original

9 Güvenç and Kirmanoğlu 2009; Güvenç and Akdal 2020; Güvenç and Tulek 2020.

10 Harris 1991; Chomsky 1959.

11 For example, Lindberg, Hyde, Petersen and Linn 2010.

12 See <https://www.maxqda.com> for more info.

and creative approaches to tackle the multiplicity of Battal Ghazi texts. The problem of using computers to analyse historical literary texts cannot be completely separated from that of quantitative approaches using various levels of computer assisted data analysis and present itself when using MAXQDA and other more free-style programs based on Python. Even Excel, or as I will demonstrate in the following pages, websites such as <http://databasic.io>, now provide excellent tools for easy use.<sup>13</sup> Using these methods is sometimes challenging for texts in Turkish since the design of these programs are based on English. The thinking processes behind their analysis will hopefully provide basic lingual patterns. In fact, the question of whether literature can be considered as data can be addressed by the fact that linguistic studies have contributed to the development of programming languages more than statistical data in programming – and vice versa. There will also be less contextualised or rooted examples of analysis for Turkish texts as well as more ‘humane’ ones that combine theoretical analysis of texts with technological ones. In fact, being or not being ‘sentient’ is not just a problem for artificial intelligence but also for human intelligence. Moreover, not all theory is humane either. Participating in digital humanities by resisting the dehumanization of literary reflections and inspiring new frontiers in dealing with language is a valid goal, that, back and forth might actually serve to acquire analysis that contribute to the solution of human problems such as discrimination between men and women, and between nationalities. In this line, I found focusing on space indicators like ‘here’ and ‘there’ strategic to provide preliminary guidelines for both the analysis of Turkish language in general, and for Battal Ghazi texts and their periodic contexts in particular.<sup>14</sup> Examples provided in this essay are only approximations, which I hope to further develop in the future. In short, we must rethink whether literature is ‘data’ as the exploration of and using computerised tools in textual studies advances.

### 3. The Story in Battal Ghazi Novels

Written and orally exchanged forms of the epic tell us that Seyyid Battal Ghazi (720–740) raided the Byzantine Empire,<sup>15</sup> and conquered Byzantine women’s hearts. He was married to a Muslim woman in Malatya, but the epic underlines that this marriage did not stop Greek princesses from Kayseri, to Cappadocia, to Afyon and Eskişehir regions from falling in love with him. As Aptullah Kozanoğlu, one of the important Battal Ghazi novelists in the 1940s, puts it: ‘He has no illegitimate fondness for women. He gets what he likes by getting married.’<sup>16</sup> The first written story, which is from the sixteenth century, the relations between Byzantine princesses and Battal are quite short termed but they are all based on love – both for each other and for Islam.

13 Nelson 2022.

14 I am currently working with Geran Özdeş Çelik (2020) to tackle this periodization issue in light of previous and ongoing studies of her and mine.

15 Faroqhi 1986.

16 Kozanoğlu 1946, 49.

Love in these novels, however, centred on marriage and religion does not play as big of a part. As presented in the following sections, there is more space for modern institutions, and even equality in a story about his hypothetical son Ali from the 1970s. Ali experiences similar encounters with his father, in the steps of his father, visiting the cities he visited, and meeting Greek women resembling his mother. Even the names Elanora, Battal Ghazi's great love and Ali's love Leonora are similar.

The historical-fictional character also led a battle in the al-Cezire (including South-eastern Anatolia) and Syria regions. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (1992) links these battles to sources in Turkish, such as those of Evliya Çelebi, Mustafa Âlî of Gelibolu and Münecimbaşı, and argues that the legendary Byzantine struggles against the Abbasid period (750–1258) probably crystallised around the personality of Battal Ghazi. Eskişehir and Malatya are two cities with provinces named after Battal Ghazi, Seyidgazi and Battalgazi respectively. In another book, this time a children's book from Battalgazi municipality in Malatya summarises the historical storyline with drawings.<sup>17</sup> And the disappearance of women in the novel form are also reflected in these drawings.<sup>18</sup> The 1970 novel by Murat Sertoğlu also underlines this better known travelling aspect of him: 'He travelled from Malatya to Kayseri, from there to Ankara, and from Ankara to Eskişehir without resting much.'<sup>19</sup> These cities are both 'ours' (in the 1970s) indicated by 'here,' and theirs (in the ninth century), indicated by 'there' throughout the novel. 'Don't you know anyone here or at Byzantium?'<sup>20</sup> for example narrates the space and creates a point of view outside that of its Turkish-Muslim reader.

The ambivalent position of the cities became an important aspect of the twentieth century novels in contrast to their predecessors. As recounted by Fatma Aliye and Halide Edip, this epic was also a genre of heroism that Ottoman and Turkish women loved to read, at least in the twentieth century, since it had Greek, Arabic and Russian counterparts that also put women on the spotlight of religious conversion.<sup>21</sup> The first wave of these novels in the early years of the Turkish republic inspired a second wave of novels, and a single wave of films that started in the end of the 1960s and lasted throughout the 1970s. In between the two waves, the citizens' Islamic and Turkish identities were reformed in the post-war and post-population exchange with Greeks in the early republican era (mainly 1940s). Examples for the first wave are mainly Muharrem Zeki Korgunal (1912–1973) (1941), Aptullah Ziya Kozanoğlu (1906–1966) (1946) and Ziya Şakir Soko (1882–1959) (1943, 1853, 1955, 1957). Kozanoğlu was reprinted in the 1970s (8<sup>th</sup> edition 1965, 11<sup>th</sup> edition 1976). This period also brought many reprints and similar books by Murat Sertoğlu (1967, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1982).

17 Atak 2012, 4.

18 Atak 2012, 4.

19 'Malatya'dan Kayseri'ye, oradan Ankara'ya, Ankara'dan da Eskişehir'e hemen hemen hiç dinlenmeden yol aldı.' (Sertoğlu 2007, 8).

20 Sertoğlu 2007, 9.

21 Akşit 2011.

#### 4. Gender and Ethnic Geography in the Story of Battal Ghazi

The story of Sayyid Battal Ghazi received popular attention during the twentieth century. He died at Nakolea, today's Seyidgazi, the city named after the saint, at the Messiah Castle in 740. This Arab saint was Turkified when the Selchukids built his *türbe* in the twelfth century.<sup>22</sup> The epic of this warrior saint was emphasised with his tomb, which is nine metres long. On the hefty entrance door writes '*Esselâmün aleyküm ya Sultan Seyit Gazi,*' for 'salute Sultan Sayyid Ghazi.' On the main entrance, the words '*Bu mübarek makam Sultan Seyit Battal Gazi'nindir. Hak rahmet eylesin,*' for 'this holy site belongs to Sultan Seyit Battal Ghazi, may he rest in peace' are inscribed.

His tomb and *türbe* are located in the province of Seyidgazi, on the eastern skirts of the Üçler Tepesi, which is 150 metres high.<sup>23</sup> 'Language, myth, art, and science (...) function organically together in the constitution of spiritual reality,' says Ernst Cassirer, and adds, 'each of these organs has an individual assignment.'<sup>24</sup> This town has the *türbe* as well as the name of the saint, where people can visit and pray. The word *türbe* comes from *turbah/earth*, and it provides us with as concrete of a history as written stories do, for both the text and the *türbe* have survived until today. The town provides us with the dead body of the saint, and a monument after him. This monument is the embodiment of the saint's doings, and the different perceptions of these doings at different times. It is another way that the production processes of history are revealed. These spaces influence the ways people's minds are shaped. Consequently, the body of the saint that is central to the *türbe*, the concrete walls surrounding him, and the physical remembrance that the visitors of the *türbe* experience are all a part of the geography of Battal Ghazi, as these physical aspects of the *türbe* may not be completely separated. This space provides reminiscences of living history, as it is a part of its visitors' mind geographies. This relationship can also be read in relation to *habitus*, as this concept also implies a geography of the mind. *Habitus* is embedded in the agents' bodies in the form of mental dispositions, schemes of perception and thought that both create and therefore is apt to transcend the dichotomies which have shaped theoretical thinking about the social world. For instance, Norbert Elias uses the term *habitus* in his book *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* but Edmund Jephcott in the English translation eliminates it and uses phrases like 'personality makeup.'<sup>25</sup> Paul Connerton also argues that the past is sedimented in bodies as habitual memory.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the physical reminiscences of the saint, like the importance of gender relations

22 Faroqi 1986.

23 According to Hasluck (2000), places affiliated with Battal Gazi can also be found at İstanbul Maltepe, Seydi Battal Stone at Erdek and at Karacadag Castle, Cappadocia. It is possible that he has a second tomb at Kırkent, and a mosque after him at his birthplace, Malatya. Hasluck also relates the Kırkkız (or Kırkbakire) Mountain near Seydi Battal Tekesi to the forty princesses in his *Bektaşilik Tetkikleri*.

24 Cassirer 1946, 9.

25 Bourdieu 1995.

26 1989.

that can also be found in the genre of historical novels, also continue to exist in such spaces.

The parallelism between the preservation of the *türbe* and the preservation of a female culture is important in the analysis of the epic through different mediums: The *türbe* is visited frequently by women. This practice is hardly surprising, considering the fact that its founder is the mother of the leader of Anatolian Selchukids, Sultan Alâeddin Keykubat (1192–1237), Ümmühan Hatun, who built the *türbe* from 1207 to 1208. The *türbe* of Ümmühan Hatun was also built there after her death. Many other *türbes* were founded by mothers of Anatolian Selchukid and Ottoman rulers, or *Valide Sultans*. This foundation story that took place from 1204 to 1209 introduces us to the theme of women as supporters of heroic stories, and as readers of heroic texts before the twentieth century, to imply it was not only men.<sup>27</sup>

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak reports that his tomb was located next to an old Byzantine monastery where he was martyred and was discovered by the mother of Alaeddin Keykubad I (1220–1237) following a dream of hers.<sup>28</sup> As a matter of fact, I. Gıyâseddin Keyhusrev had a mausoleum and a maşjid built there upon the request of his wife. Ocak adds that Battal Ghazi was adopted and glorified in Anatolia, especially by heterodox groups (first Kalenderis, then Bektashis and Alevis) since the Seljuk era despite the fact that he was originally from the Umayyad dynasty, who raided Ali and his descendants. However, the Umayyad commander Battal Ghazi took his place among the heterodox Turkish groups as Sayyid Battal Ghazi, a descendant of Ali.

Another important theme in the scholarly literature in reference to the story of Battal Ghazi is that of *gaza*, a theme that gave birth to basic polemics concerning the foundation of the empire in Ottoman historiography. The role of the *ghazis*, or the frontier warriors in the foundation of the Ottoman empire is a much debated issue.<sup>29</sup> Especially in the sixteenth century, Ottoman statesmen valued this theme, and idealised themselves in imagining their position to be similar to that of *ghazis* who fought at the borders like Battal Ghazi.<sup>30</sup> His name was a war cry at the end of the sixteenth century ('Ya Battal' – the similarity between his name and the term battle itself is also worth noting).<sup>31</sup> Battal Ghazi is considered a spiritual hero who fought for Anatolian lands and sacrificed his life for the cause against Byzantium and the Crusader armies. Since both Arab and Turkish communities fought with the spirit of *gaza* for the spread of Islam, they are considered coexisting parts of the same faith community.<sup>32</sup>

However, despite the theme that made him popular throughout the twentieth century, the sixteenth century formulation of Battal Ghazi did not emphasise his role as

27 See Chartier 1992.

28 1992.

29 See Kafadar 1995; Köprülü 1993; 1988; Lindner 1983; Vryonis 1971; Wittek 1967.

30 Fleischer 1988.

31 Hasluck 2000. As an indicator of the continuities in the religious perception of leadership in culture, the founder of the Turkish republic also employed this theme in his name Gazi Mustafa Kemal.

32 Banarlı 1948, 301; Karahan 1978, 161; Öztürk 1992, 40, 42.

representative of Ottoman or Turkish heroism. In fact, similar to his tomb, where he lies together with King's daughter Elanora, the story of Battal Ghazi does not exactly present a story of Islam against the Byzantines. He was an Arab,<sup>33</sup> who was in love with a Greek woman. Although this is interpreted as an Islamic quest, love is not one sided and comes with mutual influence, a notion also supported by the original text of Battal Ghazi. In fact, many of the twentieth-century texts do not portray his Greek love as a love story of conversion – how is it portrayed instead, and how is the transition from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries.

In a book that he wrote for the Eskişehir municipality, Mustafa Özçelik (2009) argues that the ethnic identity of Battal Ghazi is not important. He doesn't approach the ethnicity issue from the lineage to the prophet, but from his name, Battal: 'Transforming *Diyar-ı Rum* into Anatolia and making it a Turkish-Islamic homeland; and the ideal of taking Istanbul, which the Prophet pointed out as the horizon, and spreading this belief to the West from there, is an ideal adopted by the Turks who fought for centuries for this cause.' In this respect, it is understandable to Turkify him by bringing him to the Abbasid era, even if he is of Arab origin, and to create such an epic around him in the Seljuk era. Therefore, Battal Ghazi was mostly accepted as a 'Turkish hero,' and with this acceptance, he was named 'Battal Ghazi' with a title suitable for Anatolian veterans, not the word Battal, which means 'hero' in Arab culture. Considering that the Byzantines also adopted the story and produced legends about it, we can say that every geography and every nation that adopted it added something of itself to it and shaped it according to its own characteristics. Özçelik thus makes sure Battal is the original story and not Digenis Akritis. Or that the two might be a product of a dialectic.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, the twelfth century Greek and sixteenth century Ottoman texts, along with the multiplicity of *türbes*, provide us with an understanding of Battal Ghazi that emphasises subtle differences in actions instead of a severe discourse on religiosity, which would have been a very convenient baseline for the emergence of the twentieth century storyline. Battal Ghazi is an early Muslim hero, who rests with his Greek love in their *türbe*, and *Battalname*, a text of curious entangling between not only Muslim but also infidel Turks, Greeks, Arabs, Indians etc.<sup>35</sup> For instance, when Battal turns himself into a beautiful Ethiopian and reads excerpts from the Bible, the faces of the people around him start to shine. He is reading the Qur'an in the Bible. His strong Islamic identity is based upon the very fact that he is in the margins of being a Muslim in his entanglement with a Greek woman and being the only Muslim in these new lands.

In the twentieth century version of the story, the infidel Turks, as well as the reading of Bible-Qur'an is lost. Furthermore, the fantastic element is transformed and the relations between genders are more monogamous, whereas equality is implied more than before despite the conservative undertones of the texts. As a matter of fact, the

33 Faroqhi 1986.

34 Özçelik 1992, 9.

35 Dedes 1996.

nationalistic element starts to coexist with the modern life atmosphere of the same time. Yet the references to spaces somehow suggest an ongoing connection between the *türbe* and the story. In fact, the spatial demonstratives and indicators of space are especially important in the analysis of the text to indicate different nationalities as well as men and women. It is in fact possible to view historical texts as archaeological constructs much like the *türbe*. They are constructed as exercises of power as well.<sup>36</sup>

Although it is convenient to idealise the sixteenth century story of Battal Ghazi over the twentieth century versions, (or perhaps the opposite is also true, due to the equality discourses however faint they may seem), one should also be aware of the traps that arrived with the passage from oral to written mediums during this former period: The 'discovery' of writing, governmental control, and religion distinguish the history-book passage to civilization. In fact, the popular definition of prehistory is 'before writing or recorded history.' Although this definition does not point to a lack of personal histories or memories before writing, it signifies that writing, by providing a systematic manipulation of these reminiscences, determined whose history was going to be presented in this valuable new medium. In Ottoman historiography, the important passage to written history was experienced in the sixteenth century, as a reflection of state prosperity. The oral epic of *Battalname* was transcribed in the same climate, in which state histories took over more liberal forms of writing history.<sup>37</sup> However, the dialogic character of the original story also found its way in the monolithic world of the written epic.<sup>38</sup> Inherently different forms of the same epic, respectively when it was first written and first filmed, paves the way to understanding if the epic changes in novel and film, as well as understanding the extent to which established power hierarchies such as nationalism and patriarchy are preserved through different forms.

## 5. The Tavern, the Dungeon, and the Hippodrome: Greek Spaces and Newfound Turkish Civility

'It's a nice tavern there... The lower floor is a tavern, and the middle floor is a casino. On the top floor, there are very beautiful women. When someone wins at a gamble, what does fat Marika do, take her to the top floor. He makes beautiful and lustful women leak all the gold in their pockets.'<sup>39</sup>

This passage from Sertoğlu's 1977 book, reprinted in 2007, has many of the popular elements in the text. The tavern, a Greek space, is referred to as there. Apart from princess Leonora, repeatedly referred to in the novel (together with Greek soldiers

36 Umudum (2020) states that the signification logic in Arabic by the Ummayyad in the eighth century after which Battal Ghazi also emerges, was an exercise of power rather than an effort towards legibility.

37 Aşıkpaşazade (1332) is the last example of such history.

38 Bakhtin (1981) argues that 'the world has already opened up; one's own monolithic and closed world (the world of the epic) has been replaced by the great world of one's own plus 'the other's.'

39 Sertoğlu 1970 (2007), 90.

and gold), fat Marika constitutes the ‘other’ woman character. Battal Ghazi’s son Ali’s mother Minnet, a renamed Greek woman, who converted to Islam, initiates the novel but is not very popular according to the textual analysis. The main spaces are specifically Greek spaces such as the Hippodrome (12%) and the dungeon (*zindan*) (11%). The non-space words are a/an, her/his, soldier ranks, very, thing (*bir, bu, onun, yüz-başı, çok, şey*) As the computer-generated textual analysis graphic below demonstrates, these words, together with here (*burası*) and there (*ora, orası*) (62%), (as well as inside) make a good portion of the text. The door (*kapi*) (4%), the castle (*kale*) (5%) and the road (6%) follow them. The novel is in fact centred around Greek women, Greek spaces, and Battal Ghazi’s son Ali. The aforementioned observation by Dedes on the sixteenth century text that the Greek/Christian institutions are left out of the text despite the dominant human and physical geography still holds true in this case. However, as the importance of proselytization and religions fade, the nationalistic tone of the story remains to underline the strength of Battal against Greek soldiers and generals who are not even true to Christianity. Thus, these spaces become his spaces as he is at times closer to Christianity, because of his mother, and his lovers and friends, as seen in Graph 1: Spaces, which summarises the computerised analysis of unigrams (and I will be using trigrams for graph 3) (one- and three-word expressions) from the 1970s text. I have analysed the texts in a simple web-based application databasic.io (in June and in August 2022) for my analysis to be both reproducible and replicable by social scientists who are not familiar with basic computerised textual analysis tools and programs.

In contrast, in a 1943 book on Battal by Ziya Şakir Soko, Byzantium remains to be one of the main spaces, and so does the castle. Malatya is more important than, say, Eskişehir because Battal Ghazi was born here and acted from there despite the fact that his tomb can be found in both cities at the same time. More importantly, other most important spaces are the church, the monastery, and the palace. Interestingly, one of the prominent churches, monasteries, and one of the main antagonists of the novel, a witch, are all named Mary in this novel.

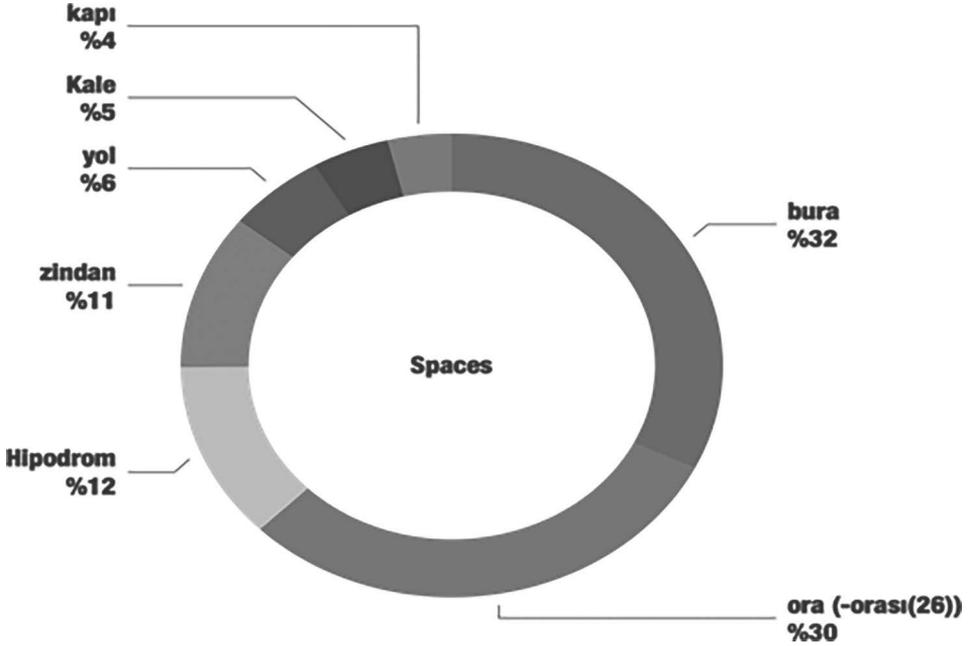
The horse (Aşkar), together with gold, make the hero’s travels possible (indicated by Battal Ghazi’s many symbolic tombs), present the multiplicity in the language of storytelling.

His horse wasn’t bad. Their weapons were brand new and of the best kind. Its quiver was carved from boxwood, and its ends were filled with iron arrows. In a purse on his belt, he had five hundred gold freckles. He travelled from Malatya to Kayseri, from there to Ankara, and then to Eskişehir, almost without rest. He would go down to the biggest inns and give generous tips to those who served him and those who looked after his horse.

When he arrived in Eskişehir, he went down to the biggest inn there and rented the most beautiful room. And he rested for two days. After having found a guide, he went to the Castle of the Priest two days later.

The castle was in a state of ruin. No one lived in it anymore. When asked why, they replied:

Graph 1. Most used spaces and space indicators



- The spirit of the great Turk named Battal Ghazi, who died fifteen years ago, still lives here. That's why no one dares to stay there. For this reason, those who used to live there migrated to nearby villages and settled there. This answer touched Ali very much.<sup>40</sup>

These cities and women constitute a double character of belonging and difference. These significant cities of Turkey today are referred to as Byzantine cities. Similarly, the women are simultaneously Christian and in their love towards Battal, Muslim. Even a quick textual analysis demonstrates the centrality of this double character in both books from 1943 and 1977, by bringing forward the cities and women as the

40 *Atı fena sayılmazdı. Silabları yepyeni ve en iyi cinstendi. Sadağı şimşirden yontulmuş, uçları demirli okla dolu idi. Kemerindeki bir kesede ise çil çil tam beş yüz altını vardı. Malatya'dan Kayseri'ye, oradan Ankara'ya, Ankara'dan da Eskişehir'e hemen hemen hiç dinlenmeden yol aldı. En büyük hanlara iniyor, kendisine hizmet edenlere, atına bakanlara bol bol bahşiş veriyordu. Eskişehir'e varınca, oradaki en büyük hana inerek en güzel odayı kiraladı. Ve iki gün istirahat etti. Kendisine rehberlik yapacak bir kılavuz bularak iki gün sonra Keşiş Kalesi'ne gitti. Burası hala bir harabe halinde idi. Kalede artık hiç kimse oturmuyordu. Bunun sebebini sorduğu zaman kendisine şu cevabı verdiler:*

*- Burada hala on beş yıl önce ölen, Battal Gazi adındaki müthiş Türk'ün ruhu dolaşiyor. Bunun için de hiç kimse orada kalmak cesaretini gösteremiyor. Eskiden orada yaşayanlar bu yüzden yakın köylere hicret edip oralara yerleştiler. Bu cevap, Ali'ye çok dokunmuştu (Sertoğlu 2007, 7).*

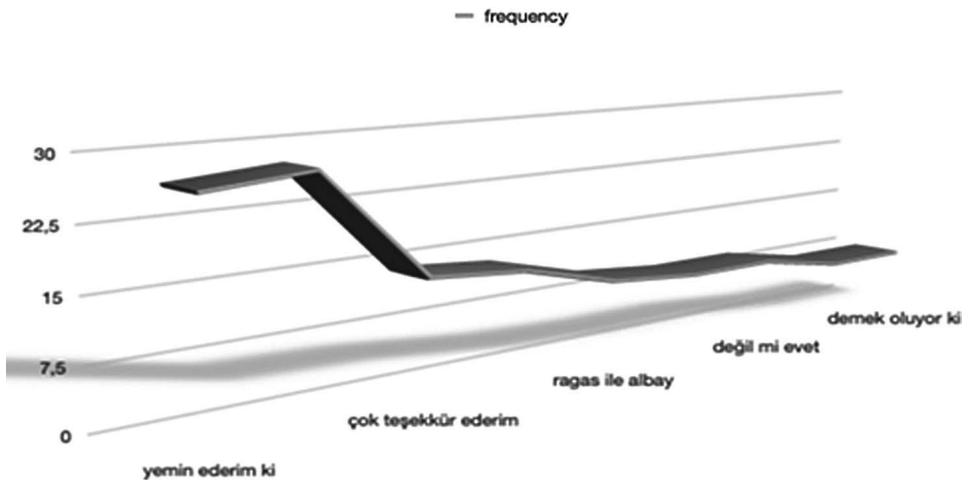
Graph 2. Spaces and Gender Usage in the 1940s

## Soko Battal



prominent spaces and people. Better developed programming to examine the positionality of the spatial demonstratives will contribute to a better analysis of this complicated phenomena in future studies. References to time together with space could also make this endeavour worthwhile. Before finishing, I would also like to share the need for persuasion and the primary role of civility in these novels that were written by and for a Turkish-Muslim and increasingly male audience, and state that the equality principle in defence of monogamy was supported by continuous attempts to civility from this nationalistic and conservative point of view. The relational word-maps demonstrate that swearing about the truth (*yemin ederim ki*) and thanking (*teşekkür ederim*) are the most common meaningful trigrams in the 1977 text in contrast to references to grandiosity (*büyük bir*) the most popular bigram within the trigrams (53 times) in the 1943 text. In contrast word groups that are not even listed in the 1943 text such as *yemin ederim ki* was used 27 times (*yemin* just as a word is 7 times but it is much more than what is present in the 1977 text, and *teşekkür* is not used even a single time in bigrams and *teşekkür ederim* was used 15 times as a word group within the text. Battal Ghazi as a Muslim man had to convince the Greeks of his sincerity and was

Graph 3. Civility and its contents



thankful for their acceptance. Using twentieth century language in a ninth century story by the beginning of the seventies indicate that the feminist movement that has carried on from the Ottoman empire was invisible to a certain extent (see Sarıtaş and Akıllı in this volume) perhaps had larger impacts that we previously considered. In this case, whereas the language of equality was not visible much in the 1943 novel, it had started to prevail even within the nationalistic novels by the 1970s. This was no surprise as Fatma Aliye, Halide Edip and Nezihe Muhittin, who have all been prominent writers as well as defenders of monogamy and women's issues, had a great impact on society with their works being printed and reprinted – despite the fact that they were all heavily critiqued publicly. Moreover, the nationalist roots of feminist activism made it possible for issues like monogamy to prevail within nationalist discourses even though all these women were harshly marginalised from nationalist agendas.<sup>41</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

The use of highly technicalised tools with literary texts or computational literary studies are increasingly used in gender history studies. The efficiency of these cognitive computerised tools in looking at women's history requires perspective-building processes that concur not only the usage, but also a creative interpretation of them. In this article I explored how spaces convey oral stories, and how stories convey spaces. For example, the written form of the epic followed the architectural construct of its hero, and when the novel followed the written form, other spaces, such as cities and dungeons in these texts, existed both as Byzantine and Turkish structures. Data

41 Akşit 2010a; 2010b.

analysis, in a sense, is a form of reverse-engineering to understand the nature of such constructs.

Thus, the quantification of qualitative data is not an adequate way to describe this development. This process indicates a higher affinity, which I aimed to describe albeit briefly with the possible use of spatial demonstratives and space indicators, between literary texts, and computerised tools. Whereas the occurrence patterns of certain bigrams and trigrams were quantitative in nature, these quantities only made sense when interpreted along with a comparative analysis of texts from different periods. In short, computer analysis, whether generated specifically for the purpose of analysing certain texts, or pre-shaped programmes, do not mean anything by themselves without the proper frameworks and analysis. However, these programmes do map words in their relationality to inspire more in-depth analysis – as it is not possible to see the common word-groups in texts with human eyes. Even this simple computerised tool allows for not only to analyse several texts at once but also to repeat the analysis for tens or hundreds of literary texts, once certain patterns are detected. Despite the fact that this was a conservative nationalist text, the proselytising aspect of religion was turned into a civil dialogue between Muslim men and Christian men and women, somehow equalizing the participating genders. Therefore, civility became more important than being a Christian, a convert, or a Muslim. Similar to the cities that Battal Ghazi resided in while being visited by his son Ali, which shifted from there to here, there was 1100 years between the stories, and not only the Roman but also the Ottoman empire had faded.

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