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Araştırma Makalesi Research Article

Analysis of the Works Mi‘rājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis in Turkic

Türkçe Mirac-name ve Nehcü’l-Feradis Eserlerinin Analizi

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Öz

Bu makale, *Mirac-name* ve *Nehcü’l-Feradis* adlı eserlerin Türk dilindeki incelemesine ayrılmıştır. Makalede her iki eserin yazmaları, dilleri ve yazım tarihleri hakkında bilgi verilmektedir. *Mirac-name*, Timurlular döneminde kopyalanmış nadir bir kaynak olup, kendine özgü özellikleri hakkında bilimsel veriler sunulmaktadır. *Nehcü’l-Feradis*, 14 yüzyılın klasik edebi eserlerinden biri olarak kabul edilmekte olup, eserin incelenmesinin de belirli bir tarihi bulunmaktadır. Birçok Türkoloji bilgini bu klasik eser üzerinde bilimsel araştırmalar yapmıştır. *Nehcü’l-Feradis*’in Harezm ile bağlantısı, eserin Özbek metin yazarları için değerini daha da artırmaktadır. *Nehcü’l-Feradis* eserinde Peygamber Efendimizin hayatındaki önemli olaylardan biri olan Miraç meselesi, birinci bölümün yedinci ve kısmen sekizinci bölümlerinde ayrı ayrı ele alınmıştır. Bölüm boyunca, Hz. Muhammed’in bir melek eşliğinde Kudüs'teki Mescid-i Aksa’ya gidişi, diğer tüm peygamberlere orada namaz kıldırması, göğe yükselişi ve beş vakit namazın farz oluşu açık ve gerçekçi bir şekilde anlatılmaktadır. Klasik eserdeki cümleler metinsel bir bakış açısıyla analiz edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: metin analizi, birinci kaynak, Mirac-name, Nehcü’l-Feradis, Timurlular Devleti, Osmanlı Devleti, minyatür, Uygur yazısı, el yazması

Abstract

This article is devoted to the study of the works *Mi‘rājnāma* and *Nahj al-Faradis* in the Turkic language. The article provides information on the manuscripts of both works, their language, and the history of their writing. *Mi‘rājnāma* is a rare source copied during the Timurid era, and scientific facts about its unique features are presented. *Nahj al-Faradis* is considered a classic literary monument of the 14th century, and the study of the work also has a certain history. Many Turkological scholars have conducted scientific research on this classic work. The connection of *Nahj al-Faradis* with Khorezm further increases the value of the work for Uzbek textualists. In the work *Nahj al-Faradis* one of the important events in the life of our Prophet - the issue of the ascension - is separately covered in the seventh and partially eighth sections of the first chapter. Throughout the chapter, the events of prophet Muhammad going to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem at one point, accompanied by an angel, leading all other prophets in prayer there, his ascension to heaven, and the five daily prayers becoming obligatory are clearly and realistically described. The sentences in the classic work are analyzed from a textual point of view.

Key Words: textual analysis, first source, Mi‘rājnāma, Nahj al-Faradis, Timurid Empire, Ottoman Empire, miniature, Uyghur script, manuscript

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Introduction

The event known as al-Isrā and al-Miʻrāj occupies a central place in Islamic religious thought and literary tradition as one of the most profound narratives associated with the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Al-Isrā refers to the miraculous journey during which the Prophet was transported by divine will from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, while al-Miʿrāj denotes his subsequent ascension to the heavens. Within Islamic belief, this event is regarded not only as a historical and spiritual experience but also as a symbolic manifestation of divine wisdom and revelation. During this ascension, the Prophet is believed to have witnessed metaphysical realities beyond ordinary human perception and to have received important religious obligations, including the institution of the five daily prayers. For this reason, narratives concerning the Miʿrāj have held a distinguished position within Islamic culture and have inspired a long-standing literary tradition across different linguistic and cultural regions of the Muslim world (Gafforova, 2001, 10).

In the classical literary traditions of the Islamic East, works commonly began with hamd, the praise of God, and naʻt, the praise of the Prophet Muhammad. These elements were not merely stylistic conventions but essential expressions of the author's worldview and religious orientation. Within this literary framework, naʻts developed thematic diversity: some focused on praising the moral virtues and exemplary character of the Prophet, while others emphasized specific miraculous events, particularly the Miʿrāj. Over time, the Miʿrāj narrative gradually evolved from being a thematic component within naʻt poetry into an independent literary genre. Works dedicated entirely to recounting the Prophet's ascension became known as Miʿrājnāmas. Initially emerging in Arabic literary culture, this genre spread into Persian literature and was later adopted into Turkic literary traditions, where it developed distinctive linguistic and stylistic characteristics. This process of transmission across languages and regions contributed to the formation of a rich and multilayered literary heritage centered on the Miʿrāj narrative (Akar, 1987, 7-61).

Following the widespread adoption of Islam among Turkic peoples, the theme of the Miʿrāj gained particular prominence in Turkic literary production. The narrative appeared in various literary forms, including both prose and poetry, and was represented in genres ranging from short poetic compositions to extensive narrative texts. Short references to the ascension were commonly called mirâciyye, while longer works devoted entirely to the detailed description of the Prophet's journey were referred to as Miʿrājnāmas. These texts sometimes existed as independent works and at other times formed parts of larger literary compilations. From the fourteenth century onward, especially within Anatolian and Central Asian cultural environments, the number of Miʿrāj-related works increased significantly. This continuity demonstrates the enduring influence of the Miʿrāj narrative in shaping religious imagination, literary creativity, and textual traditions among Turkic-speaking communities (Durgut, 2015, 133-147).

Among the texts belonging to this tradition, the Turkic-language Miʿrājnāma occupies a particularly important position due to its historical, linguistic, and artistic significance. Two principal manuscript traditions of this work have survived to the present day: one written in the Uyghur script and another in the Arabic script. These manuscripts are valuable not only because of their literary content but also because of their distinctive material features, including calligraphy, layout, and miniature painting. The Uyghur-script manuscript, in particular, contains numerous miniatures that reflect the refined aesthetic principles of manuscript production during the Timurid period. Consequently, the Miʿrājnāma manuscripts represent significant sources for the study of Turkic literature, manuscript culture, and the history of book art (Gruber, 2008, 337).

Despite the importance of the Miʿrājnāma within Turkic literary history, the question of its origin and translation history remains a subject of scholarly debate. According to a statement included in the

introductory section of the manuscript, the Turkic Miʿrājnāma was translated from a work titled Nahj al-Faradis. However, the translator does not specify the language of the original source, leading to differing interpretations among scholars. Some researchers have proposed that the Miʿrājnāma was translated directly from Arabic, while others have suggested the existence of an intermediary Persian version. The absence of a clearly identified Persian manuscript and the presence of textual ambiguities have contributed to ongoing uncertainty regarding the lineage of the Miʿrājnāma. In addition, similarities in titles between different works have occasionally led to confusion in the scholarly literature, resulting in the conflation of texts that differ substantially in structure, language, and content (Nadjip, 2007, 263-266).

Existing studies have provided valuable descriptive accounts of both the Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis, including information about their manuscripts, linguistic features, and historical contexts. However, systematic comparative analysis of these works remains relatively limited. In particular, questions concerning the exact nature of the relationship between the two texts, the possibility of shared textual sources, and the mechanisms of translation have not been fully resolved. Furthermore, the existence of multiple works bearing similar titles has complicated attempts to determine whether the Miʿrājnāma is directly derived from Nahj al-Faradis or whether the association between them reflects a more complex process of textual transmission. This lack of clarity constitutes a significant knowledge gap within the field of Turkic textual studies and underscores the need for careful comparative examination of available manuscript evidence (Nadjip, 2007, 264-266).

The present study seeks to address these unresolved issues by examining the relationship between the Turkic-language Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis from a textual and historical perspective. The primary objective of the research is to clarify the nature of the connection between these works and to determine their respective positions within the broader development of Turkic literary traditions. In addition, the study aims to evaluate previously proposed interpretations concerning the origin and translation history of the Miʿrājnāma and to identify possible correspondences between the structural and thematic elements of the two texts.

To achieve these aims, the research employs methods of textual examination and comparative analysis, drawing upon available manuscript descriptions and previously published editions of the works under consideration. By systematically comparing structural features, narrative content, and linguistic characteristics, the study seeks to identify patterns that may indicate historical relationships between the texts. The findings of the study suggest that the relationship between Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis is more complex than previously assumed and that certain traditional assumptions regarding their direct equivalence require reconsideration. Through this analytical approach, the research contributes to a clearer understanding of the development of Miʿrāj narratives in Turkic literature and highlights the importance of precise textual analysis in reconstructing the historical transmission of literary works.

Methodology

This study is designed as a qualitative textual and comparative investigation aimed at examining the relationship between the Turkic-language Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical research design, as this approach is appropriate for the systematic examination of historical literary texts and manuscript traditions. A qualitative framework was selected because the primary objective of the study is not numerical measurement but the identification of structural, linguistic, and thematic correspondences between texts. This design enables a detailed interpretation of textual features and supports the reconstruction of possible historical relationships between the examined works.

The primary data sources for this research consist of available manuscript descriptions, published editions, and previously documented scholarly analyses of Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis. Particular attention was given to the known manuscript traditions of the Turkic Miʿrājnāma, including copies written in Uyghur and Arabic scripts, as well as extant manuscripts of Nahj al-Faradis. These sources were selected because they represent the principal textual witnesses currently available for scholarly investigation and constitute the most reliable materials for examining the structural and historical relationships between the two works. The selection of materials was therefore purposive rather than random, focusing specifically on those manuscripts and textual descriptions that contain relevant information about narrative structure, translation notes, and textual organization.

Sampling within the selected sources was conducted through focused textual selection of sections directly related to the Miʿrāj narrative. In particular, passages describing the ascension event and structurally comparable sections within Nahj al-Faradis were examined in detail. This targeted sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that analysis remained relevant to the research objective, which centers on identifying textual correspondences and evaluating the nature of the relationship between the two works. By limiting the analysis to relevant thematic sections, the study ensures both depth and precision in the comparative process.

The principal methods employed in this study are textual examination and comparative analysis. Textual examination involves close reading of the selected passages in order to identify linguistic features, narrative structure, thematic organization, and stylistic characteristics. This method is essential for understanding the internal composition of each text and for identifying elements that may indicate translation, adaptation, or shared literary sources. Comparative analysis was subsequently applied to systematically evaluate similarities and differences between corresponding sections of the two works. This comparative procedure allows for the identification of recurring motifs, structural parallels, and divergences that may reflect historical transmission processes. The use of these complementary methods ensures methodological consistency and supports the reliability of the interpretative findings.

Data analysis was conducted through a step-by-step interpretative process. First, relevant textual segments were identified and organized according to thematic and structural criteria. Second, these segments were compared across the selected works to determine the presence of shared narrative elements and structural correspondences. Third, previously published scholarly interpretations were reviewed and critically evaluated in relation to the observed textual evidence. This multi-stage analytical process enabled the study to integrate textual observation with scholarly discourse, thereby strengthening the interpretative validity of the results.

Ethical considerations were addressed through adherence to established academic standards in the use of manuscript-based materials and secondary scholarly sources. All textual materials used in the study were obtained from publicly available editions or documented manuscript records, and due acknowledgment was given to original authors and editors through proper citation practices. The research did not involve human participants or sensitive personal data; therefore, formal institutional ethical approval was not required. Nonetheless, scholarly integrity was maintained throughout the study by ensuring accurate representation of textual content and responsible interpretation of historical materials.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The analysis is restricted to currently available manuscript descriptions and published editions, and the absence of certain hypothesized intermediary texts particularly a possible Persian version limits the ability to fully

reconstruct the translation history of the Miʿrājnāma. In addition, variations between manuscript copies and the incomplete preservation of some textual elements may affect the precision of comparative findings. These limitations highlight the need for continued manuscript discovery and further philological investigation in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the textual tradition.

Overall, the methodological framework employed in this study provides a systematic and logically structured approach to examining the relationship between Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis. By integrating textual examination with comparative analysis and critical evaluation of existing scholarship, the study establishes a coherent analytical process that supports the investigation of historical literary connections within Turkic manuscript traditions.

Results

The manuscript catalogued as No. 784 in the Süleymaniye Library's Yeni Cami collection contains an introduction by Janos Eckmann and includes an account of the Miʿrāj corresponding to the seventh and eighth sections of the first chapter of Mahmud bin ʿAli al-Sarayi's Nahj al-Faradis. Comparative examination of these corresponding sections revealed structural and narrative similarities between the Miʿrājnāma text and the relevant portions of Nahj al-Faradis. The comparison demonstrated that the Miʿrājnāma narrative aligns with specific thematic units found within the first chapter of Nahj al-Faradis, particularly those describing the Prophet's ascension and associated events. The observed textual correspondences indicate the presence of shared narrative elements between the two works and suggest the use of a related textual source that has not yet been identified in manuscript form (Sertkaya, 1977, 12).

Further examination of the edition of the Miʿrājnāma published by Pavet de Courteille revealed additional textual features relevant to the transmission history of the work. At the beginning of the section describing the Prophet's journey through Paradise and Hell, the text includes the phrase: "Imam Bağavī, may God's mercy be upon him, included this hadith in his book Masābīh." Immediately following this phrase, a note appears stating "Farsi bitildi," meaning "written in Persian" (Courteille, 1882, 25). The presence of this notation was consistently observed in the relevant section of the text and represents direct evidence of reference to a Persian-language component within the transmission of the narrative material.

Comparison of textual structures also identified the absence of an Arabic version of the hadith that would traditionally precede the description of the Prophet's journey through Paradise and Hell. This absence was noted in the examined manuscript tradition and corresponds to observations recorded in earlier scholarly descriptions. The available text includes only the Turkic rendering of the relevant passage, without preservation of either the Arabic original or an extended Persian version. The omission of the Arabic hadith was consistently observed across the examined textual passages.

Additional textual comparison revealed that references to Persian language usage occur at specific points in the narrative sequence, particularly in sections associated with extended theological descriptions. These references coincide with structural transitions in the narrative and are accompanied by shortened textual markers rather than full reproductions of earlier language forms. The retained material consists primarily of translated narrative content presented in Turkic, with limited direct quotation from other languages.

Overall, the comparative analysis demonstrated consistent structural correspondence between the Miʿrājnāma narrative and selected sections of Nahj al-Faradis, particularly within passages describing the ascension, the journey through Paradise and Hell, and associated theological elements. The textual evidence revealed recurring narrative parallels, the presence of Persian-language references within the

manuscript tradition, and the absence of expected Arabic introductory hadith passages in the analyzed sections. These findings establish the presence of identifiable textual relationships between the examined works and document specific structural and linguistic features observed during the comparative analysis.

Discussion

The present study identified clear structural and narrative correspondences between the Turkic Miʿrājnāma and specific sections of Nahj al-Faradis, particularly those describing the Prophet's ascension and the journey through Paradise and Hell. The findings also revealed the presence of Persian-language indications within the manuscript tradition and the consistent absence of expected Arabic introductory hadith passages in the examined sections. These observations support the central objective of the study, which was to clarify the nature of the relationship between the two works and to reassess previously proposed assumptions regarding their textual origins and transmission.

In relation to the research objectives, the results demonstrate that the connection between Miʿrājnāma and Nahj al-Faradis is neither straightforward nor limited to a simple direct translation. The structural similarities identified between corresponding sections confirm that the Miʿrājnāma narrative reflects material that aligns closely with the thematic organization found in the first chapter of Nahj al-Faradis. At the same time, the differences in textual scope and structure indicate that the Miʿrājnāma does not represent a complete rendering of the larger work but rather a selective adaptation focused specifically on the Miʿrāj narrative. This observation is consistent with the study's aim of determining the textual relationship between the works and highlights the importance of examining individual narrative segments rather than relying solely on title-based assumptions.

The findings of this study correspond in several respects with earlier scholarly observations, particularly those noting the frequent confusion between works bearing similar titles. Previous researchers, including Nadjip, emphasized that texts titled Nahj al-Faradis have often been mistakenly treated as identical despite substantial differences in structure and content. The present analysis supports this position by demonstrating that the textual parallels observed between the Miʿrājnāma and selected sections of Nahj al-Faradis do not indicate full equivalence between the works. Rather, the evidence suggests a more selective relationship, in which particular narrative elements were transmitted independently of the complete textual structure of the original work. Similarly, earlier observations by Eckmann regarding the absence of certain Arabic hadith passages are supported by the consistent lack of such elements in the analyzed sections of the Miʿrājnāma.

The occurrence of the phrase indicating that a passage was "written in Persian" represents an important textual feature that provides insight into the possible mechanisms underlying the formation of the Turkic text. The presence of this notation suggests that the Miʿrājnāma may have been translated from a Persian intermediary rather than directly from Arabic. This interpretation offers a plausible explanation for the absence of Arabic hadith passages, as such material may already have been rendered into Persian prior to its translation into Turkic. The use of a Persian intermediary would also account for the condensed format of certain narrative elements and the selective preservation of theological details within the Turkic version. These observations provide a coherent explanation for the structural patterns identified during comparative analysis.

The scientific implications of these findings extend to the broader field of Turkic textual studies and manuscript research. By demonstrating the importance of detailed structural comparison, this study highlights the necessity of examining individual manuscript features rather than relying solely on traditional assumptions regarding textual lineage. The identification of Persian-language references within the Miʿrājnāma contributes to ongoing scholarly efforts to reconstruct the historical processes

through which religious narratives were transmitted across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, the findings underscore the significance of Miʿrājnāma texts as valuable sources for understanding the development of Turkic literary traditions, manuscript culture, and translation practices in the medieval Islamic world.

Several limitations should be acknowledged in interpreting the results of this study. The analysis was restricted to currently available manuscript descriptions and published editions, and the absence of certain hypothesized intermediary texts -particularly a Persian version of Nahj al-Faradis- limits the extent to which the full translation history can be definitively reconstructed. In addition, variations among manuscript copies and the incomplete preservation of certain textual elements may affect the precision of structural comparison. These constraints reflect the broader challenges inherent in historical textual research and indicate the need for continued manuscript discovery and philological investigation.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide evidence of a meaningful yet selective relationship between the Turkic Miʿrājnāma and specific sections of Nahj al-Faradis, while also supporting the possibility of a Persian intermediary in the transmission process. By clarifying previously uncertain aspects of textual correspondence and highlighting the complexity of manuscript traditions, the study contributes to a more accurate understanding of the development of Miʿrāj narratives in Turkic literature. At the same time, the identified limitations emphasize the importance of continued scholarly inquiry to further refine knowledge of the historical pathways through which these influential texts were produced and transmitted.

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ETİK ve BEYAN BÖLÜMLERİ

		Onay
ETİK KURUL İZNİ *Ethics committee approval*	**Çalışmada herhangi bir etik kurul iznine gerek yoktur.** *There is no need for any ethical committee approval for the study.*	☒
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