

Konferans Raporu/*Conference Report*

Report on the Interim Meeting of the Ottoman Ego-Documents

Osmanlı Literatüründe Ben-Anlatıları Ara Dönem Toplantısı Raporu

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The 4th interim meeting of the Ottoman Ego-Documents, organized by Istanbul Medeniyet University in cooperation with Free University of Berlin, was held on the 13th of December 2024 at Istanbul Medeniyet University Ziraat Bankası Conference Hall. The event centered on the findings of the project titled "Ottoman Ego-Documents: Benefitting from German Libraries and Archives" which was supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. The project, led by Selim Karahasanoğlu in cooperation with Elke Hartmann, aimed to explore the Ottoman ego-documents held in German libraries and archives.

The meeting began with welcoming speeches from Selim Karahasanoğlu and Elke Hartmann. In their speeches, Karahasanoğlu and Hartmann provided an overview of the project. They also highlighted their satisfaction

with the outcomes of the project along with the strengthened academic ties between German and Turkish universities, emphasizing the valuable exchange of knowledge facilitated by this collaboration.

Following the welcoming remarks, Selim Karahasanoğlu delivered the opening speech titled “Ottoman Ego-Documents: Benefitting from German Libraries and Archives”. In his speech, Karahasanoğlu shared key insights from his research visits to several German libraries, including the Bavarian State Library (*Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*) in Munich, the Gotha Research Library (*Forschungsbibliothek Gotha*), the Berlin State Library (*Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*) and Library of Eberhard Karl University of Tübingen (*Universitätsbibliothek*).¹ Karahasanoğlu started with significant documents that he discovered in the Bavarian State Library. He particularly put emphasis on Nâbî’s (d. 1712) *Münşeat*, a rich collection that offers insights into Nâbî’s life and audience as well as his emotional and intellectual world.² Another important manuscript that was held in the library was Veysî’s (d. 1628) *Hâbnâme*, highlighting further personal narratives.³

In Gotha Research Library, Karahasanoğlu identified texts of great value, despite their limited autobiographical content. Notably, he pointed out a significant text⁴ concerning İbn Arabşah (d. 1450), and a *tezkiye* (correspondence) by the Grand Mufti Ebussuud Efendi (d. 1574), in which Ebussuud Efendi reflects on personal grievances, particularly in relation to his son.⁵ Another noteworthy document was a dream record by Kadızâde (d. 1635), which provided a glimpse into the personal thoughts and emotions of the author.⁶

In his visit to the Berlin State Library, Karahasanoğlu uncovered a *nâle* (plaint) written by Ahmed Münîb, in which he expressed deep yearning for his homeland and family.⁷ Karahasanoğlu also referred to *Mücerrebât-ı Zeki* by Münecimbaşı Mustafa Zeki (d. 1735), a work that offers a window into the emotional life and dreams of the author, reflecting his personal experiences and inner thoughts.⁸

1 For more details on Karahasanoğlu’s explorations in German libraries see Selim Karahasanoğlu, “Editör’den,” *Ceride* 2, no.1 (Haziran/June 2024): vii-xxviii and Selim Karahasanoğlu “Editör’den,” *Ceride* 2, no. 2 (Aralık/December 2024): vii-xxix.

2 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod.turc. 68, fols. 61b-82a.

3 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Cod.turc. 68, fols. 61b-82a.

4 Universität Erfurt, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. orient. A 94, fols. 62b-64a.

5 Universität Erfurt, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. orient. T 151, fols. 30a-31a.

6 Universität Erfurt, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. orient. T 17, fols. 1b-2b.

7 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. oct. 2617, fols. 28b-31b.

8 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. oct. 2277.

Among Karahasanoğlu's notable discoveries in Tübingen was the *mecmûa* (compilation) of Ali Yazıcı. While primarily a compilation of poetry, the manuscript also includes birth records and autobiographical details about Yazıcı. Karahasanoğlu also noted that the structure of the *mecmûa* closely follows the traditional *ceride* (diary) format.⁹ Besides Yazıcı's *mecmûa*, Karahasanoğlu discovered a number of other birth records in Tübingen, such as the birth records on *Şerh-i Pend-i Attâr* and *Tercüme-i Manzûme-i Vikâye-i Devletoğlu* (Translation in Verse of 'Protection' by Devletoğlu). Following the opening speech, the conference proceeded with three thematic panels featuring presentations from 12 researchers. These panels explored a wide range of subjects, with a particular emphasis on the Ottoman ego-documents and the ways in which they illuminate the personal and emotional dimensions of historical figures in the Ottoman Empire. The scholars presented their research findings, shedding light on various aspects of Ottoman self-representation and the role of ego-documents in understanding the social, cultural, and political history of the Ottoman Empire.

The first panel of the meeting, "Ottoman Ego-Documents in German Libraries: Berlin, Halle, and Gotha" chaired by Christoph K. Neumann, focused on the Ottoman ego-documents preserved in German libraries, specifically in Berlin, Halle, and Gotha. The panel featured four presentations, each highlighting significant findings from these libraries, and offered insights into the importance of these documents in understanding personal narratives and self-reflection within the Ottoman Empire.

The panel began with Christoph Rauch's presentation "Travelogues, Letters, and Other Ego-Documents in the Ottoman Collection of the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin* - and How to Find Them" where he provided an overview of the Ottoman ego-documents held in the Berlin State Library. Rauch's focus was primarily on the Diez collection which includes manuscripts, travelogues, letters, and other personal writings. Rauch emphasized the significance of Diez's coin collection, a lesser-known aspect of Diez, which had been overshadowed by Diez's more renowned contributions to manuscript collection. Rauch also discussed the advancements in cataloguing and digitizing manuscripts in German libraries, highlighting the *Qalamos* portal, an essential tool for researchers seeking access to

9 For more details on the *mecmûa* see Selim Karahasanoğlu "Editör'den" *Ceride* 2, no. 2 (Aralık/December 2024): xxxiii-xl.

these materials.

The second presentation by Güler Doğan Averbek titled, “Aşık Çelebi’s (d. 1572) Reproaches in an Unpublished Treatise Held at the Berlin State Library” focused on an unpublished manuscript by Aşık Çelebi (d. 1572), held in the Berlin State Library. Averbek introduced Klaus Schwarz, a prominent figure for the Oriental manuscripts collection at the library and explained the context of Aşık Çelebi’s work. Although the manuscript lacks a title and the addressee of the treatise is unknown, Averbek suggested that it might be an unfinished draft. She emphasized the self-styled nature of the work which provides insight into Aşık Çelebi’s personal reflections. Averbek concluded by calling for further research on the manuscript to uncover more about its content and historical context.

Metin Aydar and Canan Torlak Emir followed with a presentation, “Short Diary in the Holdings of Francke Foundations in Halle” on a manuscript titled *Ruz-name-i Muhtasar*, written by Za’imi Mehmed Gölevi, an Ottoman soldier who participated in the Siege of Vienna. The manuscript intertwines historical narrative with ego. Aydar and Torlak Emir discussed the manuscript’s portrayal of the siege of Vienna, seen through the eyes of a soldier, and highlighted its sincere and eclectic nature. They also questioned how this Ottoman manuscript ended up in Europe, opening discussions about the movement of Ottoman texts across borders and the cross-cultural connections of the period.

The final presentation of the panel was “Self-Narratives in Gotha: The Notebook (1718-1786) of Finân Family and Letters (1216/1801-2-1219/1804-5) Belonging to Yusuf veled-i Anton in *Forschungsbibliothek Gotha*” by İbrahim Halil Ayten that explored self-narratives. Ayten focused on two significant collections: the notebook of the Finân family (1718-1786) and a series of letters (1216/1801-2-1219/1804-5) belonging to Yusuf veled-i Anton Butrūs al-Mārūnī, a non-Muslim Ottoman. Ayten emphasized the substantial number of letters—around 100—that reveal family dynamics, personal connections, and social networks. Ayten indicated that these letters provide a unique perspective on the life of a Christian Ottoman and offer valuable insights into the personal experiences of a non-Muslim in the Ottoman Empire. Ayten also pointed out that these letters are part of a larger collection, linked to the same Christian family, kept in the manuscript collection of the Library of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*

Kütüphanesi), further demonstrating the transnational nature of the Ottoman ego-documents.

The second panel, “Captivity Narratives from Edirne to Vienna, from Dresden to Munich” chaired by Cemal Kafadar, focused on captivity narratives in the context of Ottoman history, highlighting how Ottoman captives, through their personal accounts, constructed their identities and navigated their experiences. The panel featured three presentations exploring different facets of the Ottoman captivity narratives across various geographic locations.

The panel began with Gülşah Taşkın’s presentation titled “The Captivity Days in ‘*Frengistan*’ from a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Poet’s Perspective: Hindi Mahmud and His *Sergüzeşt-name-i Hindi Mahmud*”. Taşkın focused on Hindi Mahmud (d. after 1579), a sixteenth-century Ottoman poet, soldier, and bureaucrat, and his work *Sergüzeşt-name-i Hindi Mahmud*. This text, Taşkın emphasized, provides an account of Mahmud’s experiences as a captive and offers a unique perspective on the events and figures of Ottoman history, particularly the Battle of Lepanto. Taşkın underlined that the *Sergüzeşt-name* stands out for its adherence to the traditional qasida rhyme pattern, distinguishing it from other first-person narratives of the time. She also noted the intermingling of the *gazavatname* and *sergüzeşt-name* genres within the work. Taşkın noted that *Sergüzeşt-name* is notable not only for its focus on captivity but also for providing insights into the daily life, beliefs, and perceptions of the people of “*Frengistan*” (the West) through the eyes of an Ottoman poet-soldier. Taşkın further explored the construction of ego in this work and questioned how this text fits into the broader category of the Ottoman ego-documents.

The second presentation by Metin Aydar and Jekaterina Merkuljeva, “Interviewing a Captive: Notes on the Polish-Ottoman Dialogue Book Found in the Saxon State and University Library Dresden” explored a bilingual *confessata*, a stenographed interrogation of a captive Tatar Turk presented in the form of a dialogue with questions and answers, found in the Saxon State and University Library in Dresden. The original text, written in Polish, was later translated into Turkish by Jan Charowski. Aydar and Merkuljeva provided an overview of Charowski’s role as a translator and then focused on the contents of the *confessata*. They questioned the extent to which this and similar texts could be considered ego-documents, noting that the sub-

jectivity of the captive was limited in these types of accounts. While acknowledging the constructed nature of the ego in such documents, they also highlighted the external influences—such as the interrogators and the translation process—that shaped the captives’ self-presentation. This led to a broader discussion on the construction of ego in captivity narratives, where the captives’ experiences and identities were often shaped by external interventions

The final presentation of the panel by Barbaros Köksal, “Ottoman Soldiers in Captivity According to Interrogation Records: A Perspective from the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv: Abt. Kriegsarchiv” focused on interrogation records preserved in the Bavarian War Archives (*Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv*), specifically from the period of the second siege of Vienna in 1683. Köksal examined the records of Ottoman soldiers who were captured during the siege, shedding light on their identities, motivations for joining the war, and their experiences as prisoners. He emphasized that these records provide crucial insights into the lives of Ottoman captives, offering a window into their world. However, Köksal also questioned whether these interrogation records could be classified as ego-documents, as they reflect a relative subjectivity rather than the full, introspective self-expression typically associated with the ego-documents. He noted that while these sources offer glimpses into the captives’ personal lives, their constructed nature as interrogations complicates their categorization as true ego-documents.

The panel concluded with a question-and-answer session, during which participants engaged in a lively discussion about the genre of captivity narratives. The nature of captivity as a distinct genre was debated, with speakers exploring how captivity is often used as a tool for constructing identity in the narratives. Presenters noted that these texts are complex, and their role as ego-documents is multifaceted. The contributions of the ego-documents to the writing of history were also discussed, with the panelists agreeing that these documents provide valuable, nuanced perspectives for historians and offer a deeper understanding of the social, political, and personal dimensions of Ottoman history.

The third and final panel of the meeting, “Ego-Documents by Envoys, Monks, Shaykhs, and Women” chaired by Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, delved into diverse ego-documents from various figures within the Ottoman Empire, including diplomats, monks, Sufi shaykhs, and women. The panel

highlighted the multifaceted nature of ego-documents and the ways in which personal narratives shaped the cultural and intellectual landscape of the time.

The panel began with Tülay Artan's presentation, "28 Mehmed Çelebi's Reasons for Translating a Section of *Şehrezûrî's Resail fiş-Şecereti'l-ilâhiyye fî 'ulûmi'l-hakâiki'r-rabbâniye*" that focuses on 28 Mehmed Çelebi's translation of *Şehrezûrî's Resail fiş-Şecereti'l-ilâhiyye fî 'ulûmi'l-hakâiki'r-rabbâniye* from Arabic to Ottoman Turkish. Artan examined the translation which is preserved in the Ragıp Paşa collection and explored the potential motivations behind 28 Mehmed Çelebi's translation. She highlighted that Çelebi's personal library was extensive, though its fate remains unknown. Artan noted that one of Çelebi's reasons for translating this philosophical text might have been to popularize it among his contemporaries. Artan argued that the translation provides a different portrait of 28 Mehmed Çelebi who is typically known for his diplomatic work but also had a deep interest in philosophy, physics, and broader intellectual pursuits. Artan concluded by calling for more studies and editions to uncover the proto-cosmopolitan nature of 28 Mehmed Çelebi's intellectual world and to deepen our understanding of his multifaceted identity beyond his role as a diplomat.

The following presentation "An 18th Century Ottoman Ego-Document in Greek: *Kipos Chariton* (Garden of Graces) by Konstantinos Kaisarios Dapontes", done by Elif Bayraktar Tellan introduced the work of Konstantinos Kaisarios Dapontes, an eighteenth-century non-Muslim Ottoman scholar. Tellan emphasized that Dapontes' work is a rich ego-document that blends historical narrative with personal reflection. Tellan provided a detailed biography of Dapontes, emphasizing his Ottoman identity despite his Greek heritage. She further noted that the work itself reflects Dapontes' childhood, imprisonment, and travels, enriched by imaginary dialogues that enhance its historical value. Tellan focused on the self-reflective nature of the text, questioning the depth of this reflection and exploring the role of monastic experience in facilitating such self-reflection. She also discussed the significance of the non-Muslim Ottoman ego-documents, arguing for their integration into the broader study of the Ottoman ego-documents, as they offer valuable insights into the diverse experiences and intellectual contributions of the Empire's non-Muslim subjects.

The panel continued with İsa Uğurlu's presentation "When Hierarchy Disappears, Intimacy Occurs: Tracing Ego through Sufi Letters, the Correspondence between Seyh Murad Buhari and Damadzade Ebulhayr Ahmed Efendi". Uğurlu focused on the correspondence between Seyh Murad Buhari, a prominent *Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi* shaykh in eighteenth-century Istanbul, and Damadzade Ebulhayr Ahmed Efendi, one of his prominent disciples. Uğurlu explored how the content of these letters, which were preserved by Damadzade himself, offers a window into the personal relationships between the Shaykh and his disciples. He pointed out that when these letters were not meant to guide disciples spiritually, they became more intimate and sincere, revealing details about the shaykh's biography and persona. Uğurlu argued that these letters offer a glimpse into the ego of both figures, showing the breakdown of hierarchical boundaries between them, which allowed for a more authentic and personal exchange. This correspondence, he suggested, provides a valuable example of how letters can function as ego-documents, highlighting the more personal, human side of religious figures.

The final presentation "A Forgotten Ottoman Activist: Naciye Hurşit Hanım" was by Vildan Türkan who focused on Naciye Hurşit Hanım, an intellectual and activist woman in the late Ottoman period. Türkan provided a comprehensive biography of Naciye Hurşit, who was not only well-educated but also active in philanthropy, intellectual circles, and public life. Türkan noted that Hurşit Hanım wrote articles for newspapers, participated in cultural exchanges, travelled to New York, and formed intellectual ties with other prominent women of her time, such as Samiha Ayverdi and Naciye Neyyal. Türkan also explored various sources where Hurşit Hanım's thoughts and activities were documented, emphasizing how her writings provide a personal narrative of her life. Notably, Hurşit Hanım's visit to the Afghan palace and her contributions to the intellectual and cultural life of the Ottoman Empire were also discussed, illustrating her role as a pioneer in advocating for women's intellectual involvement in the late Ottoman period. Türkan's presentation highlighted the importance of including such forgotten figures in the broader study of Ottoman ego-documents, as they offer unique insights into the lives of intellectual women and their contributions to the socio-political landscape of the time.

Following the conclusion of the third panel, a roundtable discussion was chaired by Elke Hartmann, bringing together Suraiya Faroqhi, Barbara

Henning, and Christiane Czygan to reflect on the key themes and insights of the conference. Hartmann began the discussion by addressing the central question of what constitutes an ego-document. She emphasized that while ego-documents are often understood as texts from a first-person singular perspective, this eye or narrative perspective need not always be confined to the first person. She pointed out that other perspectives could also serve as valid forms of self-narration, particularly when they provide insight into the personal experiences and identities of individuals. Hartmann also stressed that the perspective of an ego-document is shaped by historical conditions and the social environment, noting how external factors influence the way people express themselves and how they relate to the world around them.

Following Hartmann, Christiane Czygan discussed the concept of persona as a valuable tool for historians working with ego-documents. She explained how the notion of persona allows historians to analyse the constructed identity of individuals in these documents. This approach, she noted, is essential for understanding the nuances of personal narratives and bridging the varying perspectives within ego-documents. Czygan also emphasized the importance of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches in studying ego-documents, as they provide the necessary tools to engage with these complex, multilayered texts in a systematic way. Barbara Henning noted the conference's demonstration of the richness of Ottoman history through ego-documents. She pointed out that the conference had uncovered many valuable insights and highlighted the vast untouched potential within the field. Henning concluded that there is still much more to discover and explore within the Ottoman ego-documents, and the ongoing research will continue to enrich our understanding of the Empire's diverse social and cultural history.

Finally, Suraiya Faroqhi emphasized the significance of the ego-documents in moving beyond state-centric historical narratives. She noted that while traditional Ottoman history often focuses on the state, ego-documents provide a more nuanced view by offering voices from marginalized groups, including non-Muslims, women, and prisoners. Faroqhi argued that these documents allow us to hear directly from individuals rather than solely from the perspective of the state, enriching our understanding of the Empire's social dynamics. She underscored the importance of this shift in his-

toriography, highlighting how ego-documents contribute to a more inclusive and productive approach to Ottoman history.

The roundtable discussion concluded with a shared recognition of the importance and potential of ego-documents in historical research. The participants emphasized that these documents offer valuable insights into personal experiences, identities, and social contexts, making them crucial for understanding Ottoman society in its complexity and diversity. The discussion also indicated the need for continued exploration of ego-documents, particularly those from marginalized voices, as part of an ongoing effort to expand the field of Ottoman studies.

As a final note, the conference participants visited the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library in Istanbul on the 14th of December. They were provided with detailed information about the library and its extensive collections. The visit gave participants the opportunity to engage directly with the library's holdings and further enrich their understanding of the Ottoman intellectual and cultural heritage. The experience underscored the importance of preserving and studying primary sources as key to advancing research in Ottoman ego-documents.