

# From the Editor

## SELİM KARAHASANOĞLU

İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü  
Istanbul Medeniyet University, Faculty of Letters, Department of History

(selim.karahasanoglu@medeniyet.edu.tr), ORCID: 0000-0002-6112-730X

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With the humble intention of serving the realm of knowledge, I devoted many years of effort to bring this modest work into existence — by the permission of God. It had never crossed my mind to speak of myself by joining the ranks of the distinguished masters.

However, most of the esteemed individuals who showed me gracious favor insisted on the inclusion of a brief account of my life and a few of my poems. Reluctantly, I found myself obliged to mention my person and my works on these pages, and to include a few poetic lines of mine.<sup>1</sup>

İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal (1871-1957) begins his autobiography — titled "Kendime Dâir" (About Myself) — included in his work that presents the biographies of poets from the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, in this way. Although, like some of his predecessors who wrote autobiographies, he claims that he penned it reluctantly and only upon the insis-

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1 İbnü'l-Emin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Son Asır Türk Şairleri (Kemâlü's-Suarâ)*, ed. Ayşegül Celepoğlu, v. V (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2013), 2625. For a study on "Kendime Dâir", see: İsmail Alperen Biçer, "Abd-i Hakîrin Başına Gelenler: İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal'ın Kendime Dair Başlıklı Otobiyografisi Üzerine Dikkatler," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 62, no. 1 (2022): 1-16. With thanks to my colleague Nagihan Gür, who drew my attention to both "Kendime Dâir" and Biçer's article.

tence of those around him, the fact that he repeatedly included his own name in the titles of his works — *Ravzatü'l-Kemâl*, *Kemâlü'l-Kâmil*, *Nûrü'l-Kemâl*, *İzzü'l-Kemâl*, *Kemâlü'l-Kiyâse fî Keşfi's-Siyâse*, *Kemâlü'l-Hikmet*, *Kemâlü'l-İsmet*, *Kemâlü's-Safvet*, *Kemâlü's-Şuarâ*, *Kemâlü's-Sudûr*<sup>2</sup> — suggests that he had, as is natural to human nature, a character inclined to self-promotion. Clearly, like almost everyone, İbnülemin took pleasure in seeing and showing his name. This tendency to feature his own name in his book titles is described in the following words by İsmail Alperen Biçer, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on İbnülemin, in a study titled “Beyefendi ve Şair: İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal’da Benmerkezciliğin İzleri/Gentleman and Poet: Signs of Egocentrism in the Life of İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal Inal and His Works”:

He gave many of his works titles formed by combining the word “Kemâl” with other terms. The egocentric/self-centered aspect of İbnülemin, which reveals itself in the way he names his works, is also a dominant element in the content of his writings.<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, what drove İbnülemin to write his autobiography was not merely a human impulse to speak about oneself. His inclusion of his own biography among the more than 500 poets presented under the title *Kemâlü's-Şuarâ* also reflects a need for self-justification which is a common feature in many autobiographies. Indeed, İbnülemin wished to present how various issues appeared from his own perspective, particularly in response to the envy, intrigue, and many difficulties he encountered throughout his professional life. He recounts his early entry into the Babıali (the traditional hub of journalism and publishing in Istanbul) and the hardships he endured there. He comments on the hostility he faced in various official posts, his reaction to being portrayed as the mastermind behind the Committee of

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2 For the titles of his works, see: Ömer Faruk Akün, “İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ibnulemin-mahmud-kemal>. Accessed: 26.06.2025; İsmail Alperen Biçer, “Beyefendi ve Şair: İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal’da Benmerkezciliğin İzleri,” *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 21, no. 1 (2020), 90. See also: idem, “Tezkire Geleneğinin Son Temsilcisi: İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal” (PhD diss., Trakya University, 2019), 91 and footnote 208. There are additional titles in which the name “Kemal” appears—though not mentioned here—that can be found in the list of unpublished works in his autobiography; if these are also included, the total number increases further. See: *Son Asır Türk Şairleri (Kemâlü's-Şuarâ)*, ed. Ayşegül Celepoğlu, 2660-61.

3 Biçer, “Beyefendi ve Şair: İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnal’da Benmerkezciliğin İzleri,” 85.

Union and Progress, his incompatibility with Halil Edhem Bey, and his forced retirement from museum directorship by the efforts of his rivals. All are among the many aspects of his bureaucratic life on which he has something to say. “Kendime Dâir/About Myself” contains numerous details of his life — from his childhood and family to his repeated but unsuccessful attempts at marriage, the burning down of his home along with his books, and the performance of the pilgrimage. I will return to İbnülemin in closing, in connection with our cover image.

### **News from us and around the world:**

From April 24 to 26, 2025, a conference titled “1st International Egodocumental Network Conference: Egodocuments from Medieval Codex to Modern Media — Narratives, Presentations, Identities” took place in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. In addition to Vilnius University, two Polish universities — Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the University of Łódź — participated as partners in organizing the event. This conference was the first of the International Egodocumental Research Group and focused on the development of research on ego-documents as well as the changing perceptions of the subject in the twenty-first century. The event continued the series of symposia previously held: “Egodocuments, Life Writing and Autobiographical Texts” at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń in 2022 and 2024, and “Egodocuments and Privacy” at the University of Łódź in 2023.

The International Egodocumental Network was established in December 2023 by Michaël Green and Hadrian Ciechanowski through the Egodocumental Research Group at Nicolaus Copernicus University and the University of Łódź.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this network is to create a platform that brings together researchers from various disciplines working on ego-documents, facilitating discussion, collaboration, and the exchange of knowledge. The team has also reached out to us and is closely following our work. Michaël Green, one of the editors of Brill’s “Egodocuments and History” series, invited me as a guest on May 15 to the program “Historians in Conversation,” which he launched on the University of Łódź’s website and broad-

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4 <https://egodokumenty.umk.pl/?task=news&action=all>. Accessed: 21.06.2025.

casts across four digital platforms (SoundCloud, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube).<sup>5</sup> In this interview, we mainly talked about my life and career, and as historians working on ego-documents, we also shared our own.

### **In this issue:**

In this issue, we present four research articles. The first article is by İhsan Fazlıoğlu and is based on his opening speech delivered in May 2024 in Skopje. In his contribution, Fazlıoğlu demonstrates that elements of ego-documents can also be found in scientific books. As shown with examples from the works, it is possible to access information in scientific texts that belongs specifically to the authors and that may not be available in other biographical sources.

Şükran Fazlıoğlu's article is also based on the paper she presented in Skopje. In this article, we raise awareness of a completely new genre of ego-documents. Through texts called "sebet," which can be described as a type of curriculum vitae, we learn which teachers taught which works, as well as when and where the authors of the *sebet* studied them. Fazlıoğlu examines one of these *sebet* texts in detail, using the example of the scholar Bandırmalı Küçük Hamid Efendi, who lived in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Sadık Yazar's article was not among the papers presented in Skopje but was written specifically for this issue. The author contributes from a perspective that *Ceride's* readers have not seen before. He focuses on the ego-documents that appear in the revisions made by Mehmed Agah, a textual corrector born in Istanbul in 1825, originally from Bursa. For example, the poet-scholar, clerk, and imam Mahmud Agah, when revising a text from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is able to add a separate heading to the copy titled "Autobiography of the Humble Textual Corrector" and include a two-page autobiography. In addition to this work, Yazar places special importance on the autobiographical data presented in Agah's edition of the poems of İsmail Hakkı Bursevi. Although the work titled *Subhatu's-Salikin* was recorded by Bursalı Mehmed Tahir with the note "whereabouts unknown," its content is revealed in this article by Yazar. In this way, the author fills a gap in the literature regarding Agah's person and his revision work.

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5 <https://www.wydzielhist.uni.lodz.pl/epublikacje>. Accessed: 21.06.2025.

Tuğba İsmailoğlu-Kacıır's article is another one of the papers presented in Skopje. Therefore, three of the research articles in this issue are nourished by our Skopje meeting. With this article, we step outside the Ottoman sphere and contribute to the European history literature. Kacıır categorizes travelogues into two types: scientific travelogues and literary travelogues. She explains that in the first category, where objectivity is prioritized, personal elements of the author are hardly discernible. While exemplifying the literary travelogues in the second category, she notes that some of these works (such as those by Herder and Heine) "hardly contain descriptions of the places or people encountered. Instead, the texts are almost like an intellectual and spiritual journey." Successfully classifying travelogues from the perspective of our subject, Kacıır distinguishes between travelogues that contain ego-document content and those that do not (such as purely scientific reports exemplified by Seetzen). Just as a scientific report-type travelogue cannot be categorized as an ego-document, the travel diary of Elisabeth Christina, which records a four-day journey in 1708 kept not by herself but by an attendant, cannot be considered an ego-document either. Similarly, as I see it, the court diaries (*ruznames*)—daily records kept not by Ottoman sultans themselves but by their secretaries, which allow us to follow their daily activities moment by moment—should be excluded from this category.

In the translation section, we once again present a piece by Jacques Presser. In our first issue, as you may recall, İsmail Hakkı Kadı translated the article in which Presser first introduced the concept of the ego-document into Turkish. Here, Kadı offers another of Presser's texts from Dutch to Turkish readers. In this text, Presser places the diary form above other types of ego-documents. Emphasizing the immediacy of the diary, he argues that unlike memoirs, which reconstruct past events, this does not apply to diaries. In this respect, for Presser, the diary writer is considered more "reliable" compared to other forms of ego-documents. Presser makes a similar observation regarding letters and oral records. He defines these types—which are created instantly and have not passed through the filter of time—as the closest to raw reality, providing access to historical figures in their most unvarnished state. Among the forms of ego-documents, the one that interests me the most—perhaps because I have written a book on Sadred-dinzade's (d. 1736) diary—is the diary genre itself.

In the book reviews section, we have three pieces. Although *Ceride* leans toward history due to our academic backgrounds, it is not solely a history journal. It is open to writings from any discipline that fall within the broad field of ego-documents. Included within this scope is a book review by Yaylağül Ceran Karataş, who presents a study on the production of photographs as autobiographical narratives. Taking a photograph of oneself (a selfie) or sharing one's own photo is undoubtedly an expression of selfhood. The publication Karataş discusses emerged as a result of the project titled "2 Ben Anlatıları/2 Ego-Documents"<sup>6</sup> carried out by the Istanbul Photographers and Cinema Amateurs Association (İFSAK). The book represents 14 photographers through 10 of their photographs. Undoubtedly, a person can reflect their identity not only in their autobiographical text but also in their photograph. In this respect, I found this study extremely interesting. The second book we review belongs to Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon from the University of Iceland. Magnússon had been a guest of honor in Skopje and gave a talk titled "Egodocuments and Microhistory: The Story of BÍbí in Berlin/Ben-Anlatıları ve Mikro Tarih: Berlin'de BÍbí'nin Hikayesi."<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, his book addressing the issues raised in this talk was published this year. Considering Magnússon's productive contributions combining disability studies and ego-documents, I deemed Kamuran Şimşek who conducts research on the history of disability in the Ottoman Empire, to be the right scholar to review this work. Bibi (Bjargey Kristjánsdóttir, 1927-1999) was a mentally disabled individual from northern Iceland who grew up on a farm named Berlin and spent a significant part of her life in a small cabin there. The book focuses on Bibi's autobiography, detailing her disability that emerged during her primary school years. In this work, Magnússon merges his extensive knowledge in microhistory and ego-documents with disability studies. In the last book review, Ahmet Musa Öztürk examines the memoirs of Ertuğrul Osman Efendi, the grandson of Sultan Abdulhamid II. This memoir covers almost the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. The book contains excerpts from the author's 97-year life in Istanbul, Europe, and America.

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6 The publication is available in full text to the public on the İFSAK website: <https://www.ifsak.org.tr/dijital-yayinlar/2-ben-anlatilari.pdf>. Accessed: 25.06.2025.

7 See: <https://benanlatilari.medeniyet.edu.tr/documents/benanlatilari/21-mayis-uskup-program.pdf>. Accessed: 25.06.2025. For the abstract, see: *OLBA 2024-Skopje, Ottoman Ego-Documents, Abstracts*, 77. <https://benanlatilari.medeniyet.edu.tr/documents/benanlatilari/21-mayis-ozet-kitapcigi.pdf>. Accessed: 25.06.2025.

On December 13, we held a meeting with colleagues from Germany, in partnership with Istanbul Medeniyet University and Berlin Free University. We documented the meeting with reports prepared in three languages: Turkish, English, and German. The reports are not translations of one another; each was independently written by different authors. Canan Torlak authored the Turkish report, Talha Murat the English, and Barbaros Köksal the German report, each using the notes they took on the day of the conference.

In the ego-document from the archive section, with the contribution of Kenan Yıldız, we stepped slightly outside the format used in our previous issues and included commentary from the author. In his brief article, Yıldız examines a letter written by Şeyhülislam Ebuishakzade Ataullah Mehmed Efendi (d. 1811). Coming from a career as a judge and ultimately holding the position of *şeyhülislam* (chief religious authority) like his ancestor, Ataullah Mehmed Efendi composed this emotionally charged letter in 1809 during his years of exile, addressing a friend from the scholarly community.

As you may recall, in our previous issues, we preferred to publish documents without commentary. We continue this practice with Kemal Gurulkan. In this issue, Gurulkan contributes three letters addressed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. As can be inferred from Gurulkan's footnotes, two of these letters (sent by his mother, Zübeyde Hanım, and Ali Emiri, a book enthusiast and the founder of the Millet Library) are being shared with the public for the first time.

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On the cover of this issue, you see a photograph of İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal. It was Elmin Aliyev who drew my attention to the cover photo. Bringing İbnülemin to the cover holds significance for me in several respects. My first academic publication was a translation of Madeline Zilfi's article on the diary of Sıdkı Mustafa (d. 1790-1). This particular diary is housed in the İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal collection at Istanbul University's Rare Books Library. İbnülemin's interest in autobiographical materials belonging to others is evident; he himself also authored ego-documents. Those who have followed previous issues of *Ceride* will remember that we introduced his book about his dreams.<sup>8</sup>

8 Fatih Demir, "İbnülemin'in Rüyaları, İbrahim Öztürkçü," *Ceride* 1, no. 2 (Aralık/December 2023): 200-4.

When we placed İbnülemin on our cover, the İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal Foundation which is named after İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, and the Biography Institute operating within the foundation where I also serve on the advisory board, generously provided support to cover the printing costs. It is my pleasure to thank the esteemed president of the foundation, Ahmet Samet Yapar, board member Erol Erdođan, and the Biography Institute's Secretary General, Rıdvan Kaşıkçı. The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) continues to support us in this issue as it did in our previous two. I extend my thanks to YTB, especially to its esteemed president Abdullah Eren, for their support.

İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal wrote the following under the photograph on the cover, expressing that his outward appearance—his face—is sufficient to reflect his morals and inner character, making the search for another witness unnecessary: "My visage is witness to my character; seeking another witness is superfluous."

Looking forward to meeting again in future issues where we explore faces and essences.

Göztepe, June 2025