

From the Editor

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No one brings a flower to your grave,
no one comes to visit.
So you, too, were alone in your life.
No one pitied you, no one
attached any importance to you. Now, to see you
alone beneath this moldy, this decayed,
dark-tinged earth does not grieve me.
Because one day, before long,
I too will come to your side as a companion,
I feel no sorrow at all.
Do you understand? None—none at all.

Fatma Safiye Hanım wrote this in the early twentieth century for the inscription on her gravestone at the Yahya Efendi Dervish Lodge in Beşiktaş. Why would a person wish to determine what will be written on their gravestone even after death? Is it because the gravestone is one of the few remaining objects that will endure as something belonging to them after they die? Through these words, Fatma Safiye shares her anxiety that no one may come to visit her grave after her death. Whatever may happen to her once she has died will not cause her much sorrow, for one day everyone will taste death; and if the matter is loneliness, she will not be the only one to experience that feeling—whether in life or after death.

In this issue:

In this issue, we present three research articles. The first, by Mustafa Beyazıt, is thematically in harmony with our cover image. Beyazıt questions the status of gravestones as a form of ego-document. Indeed, if a person, before dying, leaves a text or a testament stating “this is what should be written on my gravestone,” then the expressions we encounter are quite literally ego-documents. Beyazıt may not be able to prove that the inscriptions he examines emerged through such a will or act of transmission, yet the very act of questioning whether the words on gravestones truly originated from the individuals themselves—and turning this into a scholarly problem—is in itself a significant contribution. It should also be noted that some of the most intense expressions of emotion are to be found in the verses inscribed on gravestones.

In our fifth issue, we published letters to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk from members of his family, under the byline of Kemal Gurulkan. In this issue as well, I wished to continue examining issues from Republican history within the framework of ego-documents. Recep Karacakaya undertook the task of approaching *Nutuk* [The Speech] from this perspective. I prefer to publish articles that are not exclusively Ottoman-focused but that also encompass different pages of Turkish history. In my view, one of the most significant ego-documents of Republican history is *Nutuk*. In the year I taught the course *Atatürk’s Principles and the History of the Turkish Revolution*, I had my students read *Nutuk* for an entire term. While reading it, I realized that I was, in effect, reading a kind of defense written by the founder of the Republic. As he recounts his actions over the years, the need to present events from his own perspective, his own articulation of how these matters appeared from the viewpoint of his opponents, and his responses to the opposition amount quite plainly to a defense. Ego-documents of the defensive type are among the most frequently encountered. Scholars, too, feel the need to articulate their own ideas on scholarly matters, to legitimize their positions, and to clarify scholarly—and sometimes personal—issues in the first person from their own point of view. Bureaucrats and statesmen have felt this need just as well. As an example of a scholarly defensive ego-document published in the edited volume we previously prepared for

IJMES, one may cite İlker Evrim Binbaş's article on Saineddin Turka.¹ As an example of a scholar-bureaucrat's defensive ego-document, the first case that comes to mind is that of Feyzullah Efendi.²

The final research article revisits a text that had previously been examined by Kerima Filan in earlier issues of our journal: Molla Mustafa Başeski's *Mecmua*. By repositioning the text of the Sarajevo-born Başeski Şevki Molla Mustafa, within the literature on ego-documents, the article proposes a reading that focuses not on the content itself but on the patterns of the act of writing. Building on Kerima Filan's pioneering readings—philological, content-centered, and subsequently developed from the perspective of ego-documents—the study re-examines the text not so much to multiply the historical and cultural information offered by the mecmua as to turn toward the act of writing itself, aiming to discuss how the ego-document is constructed through the choice of subject matter, writing motivation, and the author's visibility within the text. It seeks to discuss how an ego-document is constructed through the selection of topics, motivations for writing, and the author's visibility within the text. In this respect, the article aims to offer a methodological contribution to the literature on Ottoman ego-documents by reading texts not merely as carriers of information, but through the patterns by which the subject positions and gives meaning to the self.

In the translation section, Şaban Bıyıklı brings an important article into Turkish. For quite some time now, we have been engaged in productive discussions with Bıyıklı on ego-documents. He has been conducting extensive readings in the field and regards it as a duty to share some of these readings with the Turkish readership. In this context, he had previously published a translation in the journal *Dil ve Edebiyat* as well.³ The article translated here sheds light on the biography of the originator of the term "ego-documents" and on various aspects of his personality. It also shows how Presser's treatment of ego-documents in his courses reflects his approach to them as a historian. In these classes, Presser defines the princi-

- 1 İlker Evrim Binbaş, "Autobiographies and Weak Ties: Sa'in al-Din Turka's Self-Narratives," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, 2 (2021): 309-313.
- 2 Ahmed Türek-F. Çetin Derin, "Feyzullah Efendi'nin Kendi Kaleminden Hal Tercümesi," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 23 (1969): 205-218.
- 3 Rudolf M. Dekker, "Hollanda'da Ben-Anlatıları: 1500-1814," trans. Şaban Bıyıklı, *Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları* 26 (2022): 355-367.

pal characteristics of ego-documents, while also emphasizing the difficulty of defining them; he speaks of the proximity between self-narratives and literature, and even of their relationship to music. In this context, he discusses with his students theoretical issues such as the diary versus the novel, and reality versus fiction. He dwells on the history of diary writing and the diversity of diary genres, examines famous diaries, and speaks of forged diaries. It is particularly striking that he emphasizes that even these can be of use. Another issue Presser addresses in his courses is human reliability within the framework of ego-documents. Ultimately, this article is of a kind that will enrich the perspective of researchers interested in ego-documents in the Ottoman field. In this short biography of Presser, the authors succeed not only in introducing him through his various psychological and intellectual dimensions, but also in clearly and traceably presenting the intellectual contexts in which he addressed—and developed—the concept of ego-documents that he himself originated.

As for the review essays: I am a regular follower of *Kıyı*, a journal published in Trabzon. While there is a strong cultural milieu in Istanbul and Ankara, I find the effort to sustain all kinds of cultural and publishing activities in Trabzon particularly noteworthy. Even after its editor moved to Ankara and editorial work began to be carried out from the major centers, the journal persisted in being published with a Trabzon address. While reading one of *Kıyı*'s recent issues, I came across an interview there with Yasemin Uzun, a literature teacher at Sürmene High School. In the interview, she spoke about her book *Bir Mavi Perdelik Zaman: Humurgan*. From her teaching career to her life, from her students to oncological tales, *Humurgan* is a genuine ego-document by Uzun. I am quite familiar with this series of Heyamola Publishing ("*Trabzon'dur Yolumuz*"), and by the time this twenty-sixth volume appeared, I had already read many of the books published in the series. As I wondered who might write a review of this book, my mind immediately turned to Gamze İlaslan Koç, who is currently pursuing her doctorate at the University of Regensburg and whom I knew to have graduated from Sürmene High School before coming to Boğaziçi University to study history and literature. As it turns out, during her high school years she and Yasemin Uzun had together published a literary magazine called *Tekne*. This proved to be a very pleasant surprise for both of them—and for me as well. You will read an enjoyable review es-

say written by a student about her teacher's book. As for the second review essay: what is happening with ego-documents in the Arab world also greatly interests me. We closely follow developments in Europe and bring the work done there into Turkish, but presenting to our readers what is taking place in other regions is also a responsibility. In this context, when I consulted Mehmed Osmanlı, he introduced me to Tarif Khalidi, and we decided to present his book *The I and the Books* to the Turkish readership. The essay approaches the autobiography of the Palestinian historian Khalidi through the deep relationship he establishes with books. Khalidi positions books as the fundamental element that shaped his "intellectual self," from his childhood in Jerusalem through his academic career across different times and places. The book stands as the testimony of an Arab intellectual who moves between languages and cultures, and who is engaged with questions of knowledge, identity, history, forced migration/exile, and personal memory.

I asked Michaël Green, one of the organizers of the conference titled "1st International Egodocumental Network Conference: Egodocuments from Medieval Codex to Modern Media: Narratives, Presentations, Identities"—recently held in Vilnius—to prepare the conference report for this issue. Green has recently been among the most active figures worldwide in the field of ego-documents. Through the podcasts he produces, the conferences he organizes, and the egodocumental network he has established, he strives to integrate scholars working on the subject from all over the world. With his newsletters, which incorporate not only his own activities but also developments elsewhere, he makes an important contribution to the field. I have emphasized in previous issues that *Ceride* is not a journal devoted exclusively to Ottoman studies. In this respect, we consider it important to announce any event in the field of ego-documents, wherever in the world it may take place.

In our "An Ego-Document from the Ottoman Archives" section, as usual, we include a contribution by Kemal Gurulkan. In this issue, he examines the captivity letters of Yusuf Muhlis Pasha, the notable of Siroz, who had shown great valor in the suppression of the Morea Revolt of 1821 but was taken prisoner by the Russians during his tenure as the guardian of Varna in the Ottoman–Russian War of 1828. In this series of letters preserved in the imperial edict collection of the Ottoman archives, Yusuf

Muhlis Pasha expresses, in deeply emotional language, his longing for his family members and his hope for liberation. It is noteworthy that the Pasha, who had developed a form of cryptology of his own and was meticulous about the security of state correspondence, wrote all of these letters on the same day, making use of the brief time and limited stationery provided to him by the Russians, and that he was especially careful not to neglect any of his family members. In these letters written from Hocabey, where Yusuf Muhlis Pasha was held captive, what emerges is not so much the bearing of a statesman as the human condition of a responsible husband, a compassionate father, and a son who seeks his mother's prayers for his deliverance.

I owe the cover photograph of this issue to Kemal Gurulkan. He drew my attention to the gravestone inscription of Fatma Safiye Hanım, dated 18 December 1918 and written in her own hand, located at the Yahya Efendi Dervish Lodge in Beşiktaş. Since this issue also includes an article on gravestones, featuring the gravestone on the cover proved especially meaningful. When our dear layout designer, Kadir Abbas, applied the photograph to the cover, I was very pleased with the result—and so were my colleagues. For permission to use the photograph, I wrote to Lorans Tanatar Baruh at SALT, who told me that the photograph had originally been taken as part of Edhem Eldem's "Death in Istanbul" project, and that the photograph was by Serdar Tanyeli.⁴

News from us:

1. From the publication of our last issue in June up to the present, we have carried out a range of academic activities as the Istanbul Ego-Documents Research Group. We continued to share our findings with the scholarly community by organizing a panel at the Fourth International Congress of Ottoman Studies (OSARK), held at Ca' Foscari University in Venice on 17–19 October 2025. At the panel titled "Characteristics and Structural Features of Ottoman Self-Narratives: A Discussion on Form

4 The photograph appeared on page 245 of Edhem Eldem's *İstanbul'da Ölüm* [Death in Istanbul], published in 2005 (Istanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi). Information about the gravestone is found on pages 242–244. I would like to thank Lorans Tanatar Baruh for sharing the reference.

and Content,” I presented the captivity narrative of the Janissary Süleyman, which I discovered in Paris in 2019; Semra Çörekçi presented Mustafa Latifi, Canan Torlak Eremya Çelebi, and Gülşen Yakar focused on the intersection of the history of emotions and ego-documents.⁵

2. Michaël Green invited me to speak as part of the “Egodocumental Seminar.” Before me, figures in the field such as Tsila Rådecker, Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, and Michael Mascuch had spoken in the series. Within this framework, I took part on 11 December 2025 with a talk entitled “Ego-Documents: An Ottomanist’s Perspective.” In this lecture, I discussed what I understand by self-narratives as an Ottoman historian, as well as the work we have carried out both individually and as a team.⁶
3. The Turkish Historical Society launched a series entitled *Living History* on its YouTube channel. I contributed to this series by conducting interviews with İsenbike Togan (22 July 2022), Heath W. Lowry (25 November 2022), Suraiya Faroqhi (3 March 2023), Barbara Kellner-Heinkele (2 September 2023), and Cemal Kafadar (19 October 2024). These were followed by interviews with Feridun M. Emecen and Ali Akyıldız. The interviews with Emecen and Akyıldız were published very recently, on 1 November 2025⁷ and 6 December 2025⁸ respectively. Recorded conversations are among the most valuable forms of self-narratives. Just as I attach importance to studying self-narratives as historical texts, I also find it extremely meaningful and important to record testimonies belonging to the age we live in. The Turkish Historical Society also has a project to publish these interviews in book form. If we succeed, we will have transferred these recordings from YouTube onto paper as well.
4. Özlem Özdemir Kumbar, who has been pursuing her graduate studies under my supervision for a long time, has completed her doctoral dissertation entitled “The Construction of a Holistic Self in Ottoman Self-Narratives: Studies in the Context of Macro and Micro-Relationali-

5 For the program, see: <https://www.osmanliarastirmalari.org/images/file/2025/osark-2025-kongre-programi.pdf>. Accessed on 1 December 2025. The abstracts of our papers are included on pages 22-29 of the congress book of abstracts: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vvre3w7EQAcgS-4RoPhzjIKPEpStjKdZ/view>. Accessed on 1 December 2025.

6 The talk can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa8l20tVXrk>. Accessed on 20 December 2025.

7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjCSifPrjSI&t=70s>. Accessed on 10 December 2025.

8 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JDSAyJVSDA&t=15s>. Accessed on 10 December 2025.

ty (1700–1900).”⁹ In January, she will defend her dissertation before a jury composed of myself, Cemal Kafadar, Fehmi Yılmaz, Ekrem Tak, and Semra Çörekçi. If the entire process is successfully completed, Kumbar’s dissertation will be the second doctoral thesis in the field of self-narratives completed under my supervision, following that of Semra Çörekçi.

5. In January, during the semester break, we plan to gather as a project team in Izmir to conduct a status evaluation for our project, which is now nearing completion. We have not yet decided whether we will hold a closing meeting after the project is completed in March.
6. In recent months, an important development has taken place in my life, and on 5 September I began a new position as rector of İzmir Demokrasi University. Will *Ceride* continue with me in Izmir, or will it carry on its publishing life in Istanbul? Will *Ceride*, together with our TÜBİTAK 1001 project that will conclude in March, suspend regular publication and continue its existence as occasional papers, like some other examples in our field? All of these matters are currently uncertain. To date, including this issue, we have presented all our issues to you simultaneously in printed form as well, something I have cared deeply about. With the Ministry of Culture and Tourism subscribing to our journal, it has also been distributed to one hundred libraries across the country. If we move to an occasional-publication format, we may also abandon our insistence on print publication.

With the hope of meeting again in the near or distant future, whenever that may be, please take good care of yourselves.

Göztepe-İzmir, December 2025

9 For the time being, this is the title as determined, but it may change before the submission of the dissertation.