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TRACES OF THE SELF: SCATTERED FIRST–PERSON NARRATIVES IN THE WRITINGS OF MÜNĪRĪ–İ BELĠRĀDĪ (D. CA 1620–1628)

Abstract

This paper explores traces of first–person narrative in the writings of the Balkan Ottoman author Münīrī–i Belġrādī[1] (d. ca 1620–1628). Based on the available data, it is known that he held the positions of mufti, *müderris*, and Sufi scholar. It is therefore probable that he also served as a sheikh of a Sufi order, most likely the Halveti order. Münīrī–i Belġrādī was active during the second half of the sixteenth century and the early decades of the seventeenth century, primarily in Belgrade. Through close textual analysis of his writings, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about the rhetorical construction of

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1 Since the primary sources consulted in this study are predominantly in Ottoman Turkish, we have opted to follow the transcription conventions of the *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. Arabic, Persian, and Turkish words listed in the Oxford English Dictionary appear in this article without italics, for example; Qur'an, sheikh, madrasa, etc. Words and expressions not listed in the Oxford English Dictionary are italicized and written according to Turkish language conventions. Names commonly used in modern Turkish are written in their standard form, while names transliterated from texts and not widely known are rendered phonetically, for example: Muṣlihuddīn, Vildān Efendī, etc. Further information on the transcription approach see: İsmail Durmuş, "Transkripsyon", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (hereafter: *TDVİA*), vol. 41, 306-308; Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, New York, 2017, x.

selfhood in Ottoman manuscript culture. Rather than treating the first–person singular pronoun "I" as the sole marker of ego–narrative, the paper identifies and interprets indirect and periphrastic strategies for articulating the self. Such texts offer not only rhetorical complexity but also valuable historical insights, particularly in terms of factual content. The study argues that representation and factuality in these writings are not mutually exclusive, but rather interwoven dimensions of Ottoman literary expression. Researchers approaching ego–narrative in this context should attend to both rhetorical strategies and the historical realities embedded within them.

Keywords: first–person narrative, ego discourse, Münīrī–i Belġrādī, Ottoman selfhood, manuscript culture, Sufism, rhetorical strategies

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines ego–narratives and rhetorical gestures of selfhood in the writings of the Ottoman–Balkan author İbrahim ibn İskender, better known by his penname Münīrī–i Belġrādī (d. ca 1620–1628). It focuses on first–person expressions embedded within his prose, exploring how such narrative traces contribute to our understanding of self–representation in early modern Ottoman manuscript culture. Drawing on methodologies developed for analysing first–person narratives and autobiographic notes in early modern Europe, particularly in German–speaking lands, France, Italy, Spain, and England, the study aims to situate Münīrī's writings within a broader transregional discourse on selfhood. While the concept of ego–documents gained prominence in European scholarship from the late 1970s onward, Ottoman first–person narratives began receiving sustained scholarly attention in the late 1980s and have since evolved into a diverse and expanding field. This paper offers one further contribution to this growing body of research, with a focus on the rhetorical and historical dimensions of self–articulation in Münīrī's texts.

MÜNĪRĪ–I BELĠRĀDĪ: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

To date, the most significant contributions to the study of Belġrādī's biography have been made by Hazim Šabanović, Nathalie Clayer, and the present author.[2] İbrahim, son of İskender, adopted the penname

[2] Hazim Šabanović, "Munīri Belgrādi", *Književnost Muslimana BiH na orijentalnim jezicima*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1973., 193-201; Natalie Kleje, "Muniri Belgradi,

Münīrī–yi Belġrādī, a literary construction by which both the name and its bearer were widely recognized throughout the Ottoman Empire. The renown of Münīrī endured well beyond his lifetime and continues to resonate to the present day. According to an autobiographic note written in 1615, Münīrī was born around 1552.[3] The available data about his life is limited. Nevertheless, it is known that he served as the Mufti of Belgrade, a *müderris* – professor at a higher religious school, and a preacher (*vā'iẓ*, *müẕekkir*). In addition, it is certain that he simultaneously held the positions of sheikh and mufti and was most likely affiliated with the Halvetiyye order.[4] Münīrī produced writings on numerous subjects. His works were composed in all three languages of the intellectual communication in the Ottoman Empire (Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Persian). Therefore, it is safe to propose that he studied in some of the intellectual centres of the Empire, most probably in Istanbul.[5] Münīrī's own notes indicate that he spent the earliest part of his life in Sremska Mitrovica (Ott. Dimitrofça), in the Province / Sanjak of Srem.[6] There he got his primary education and this town was the burial place of both of his parents.[7] The famous Ottoman biographer Nev'īzāde Aṭā'ī (d. 1635)[8] mentioned that Münīrī studied higher introductory

život i delo jednog od najuticajnijih beogradskih intelektualaca s početka 17. veka", *Godišnjak grada Beograda*, 54, 2007., 109-124; Nihad Dostović, "Beogradski muftija Munīrī Belġrādī i hamzevije", *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, knj. XLI, Sarajevo, 2020., 157-175.

3 Zagreb, Orijentalna zbirka Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti [Oriental Collection of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts] (hereafter OZ HAZU), *Muḥāḍara al-awā'il wa musāmara al-awāḫir*, Ms. no. 1550, f. 79a, 137b.

4 H. Šabanović, "Munīri Belgrādi", 195; 'Abdülkādir Efendi, *Topçular Kâtibi Abdülkādir (Kadrî) Efendi tarihi: (Metin ve Tahlîl)* (hereafter; *Topçular Kâtibi*), vol. I, haz. Doç. Dr. Ziya Yılmazer, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 2003, 210, 302, 416. On the Ottoman Halvetis see: John Curry, *The transformation of Muslim mystical thought in the Ottoman Empire: the rise of the Halveti order, 1350-1650*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012.

5 N. Dostović, "Beogradski muftija Munīrī Belġrādī i hamzevije", 162-163.

6 On the province of Srem see: Bruce McGowan, *Sirem Sancağı mufassal tahrir defteri*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, 1983; Nebojša Šuletić, *Sremski sandžak u XVI veku*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Belgrade, 2013.

7 Münīrī-yi Belġrādī, *Silsiletü'l-muḳarrebīn ve Menāḳibü'l-mutteḳīn*, İstanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehîd Alî Paşa, Ms. no. 2819/3 (hereafter in the footnotes: Belġrādī, *Silsile*), f. 78a-82a, 117a-117b; Taxhidin Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî ve Silsiletü'l-mukarrebîn Adlı Eseri*, unpublished MA thesis, University of Marmara, İstanbul, 2001 (hereafter: Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*), 18, 154-159.

8 On Aṭā'ī see: Haluk İpekten, "Atâî, Nev'îzâde", *TDVİA*, vol. 4, 40-42.

courses (*muḳaddemāt–ı ʻulūm*) with Vildānzāde's father Vildān Efendī.[9] As Münīrī himself stated, he studied at further levels with Vildān Efendī, attending Vildān Efendī's courses in both rational and traditional sciences (*ʻulūm–ı naḳliyye ve ʻaḳliyye*).[10] On the other hand, a telling indirect source on his education can be deduced from the facts that he was the Mufti of Belgrade and *müderris* in the madrasa of Yahyapaşazade Mehmed Pasha. The madrasa endowed by Mehmed Pasha belonged to the highest level of the best paid madrasas in Rumelia. To hold such a position, one had to be in possession of a good education.[11] A careful reading of his work *Silsiletü'l–muḳarrebīn ve menāḳibu'l–mutteḳīn* (hereafter in the main text: *Silsiletü'l–muḳarrebīn*)[12] supports the proposition that Münīrī passed away in the period 1620–1628.[13] Nevʻīzāde Aṭaʻī was the first authority to claim that Münīrī was of Bosnian origins (*Bosnevīyü'l–aṣıldür*).[14]

THE CORPUS OF SOURCES AND METHOD APPLIED

In this paper my analysis shall be based on Münīrī's following writings:

a. *Niṣābu'l–intisāb ve ādābu'l–iktisāb* (hereafter *Niṣāb*),[15] a work in the Ottoman language.

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9 Nevʻîzâde Atâî (ʻAṭā'ī, Nevʻizāde ʻAṭaullāh), *Ḥadā'iḳü'l-ḥakā'iḳ fī tekmileti'ş-şaḳā'iḳ*: *Ẕeyl-i şaḳā'iḳu'l-ʻAṭā'ī* (hereafter: ʻAṭā'ī, *Ẕeyl-i şaḳā'iḳ*), İstanbul, Maṭbaʻa-i ʻāmire, 1268 [1852], 607; H. Šabanović, "Munīri Belgrādi", 195.

10 ʻAṭā'ī, *Ẕeyl-i şaḳā'iḳ*, 607; Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 115a, 118a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 19, 199, 203.

11 Basic literature on scholarly career in Ottoman Empire includes: Richard Cooper Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul : a study in the development of the Ottoman learned hierarchy*, Ithaca Press, London, 1986; A. Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, passim; On madrasa of Yahyapaşazade Mehmed Pasha see: Hazim Šabanović; "Urbani razvitak Beograda od 1521. do 1688. godine", *Godišnjak grada Beograda* 17, 1973, 5-40, especially at p. 29-30.

12 Perhaps the most suitable translation of this title would be: *The Lineage of Those Drawn Near to [God] and the Accounts of the God-Fearing*.

13 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 103b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 25-36, 185.

14 N. ʻAṭā'ī, *Ẕeyl-i şaḳā'iḳ*, 607.

15 Münīrī-yi Belġrādī, *Niṣābu'l-intisāb ve ādābu'l-iktisāb*, Istanbul, İstanbul Üniversitesi Nadir Eserler Ktp., Ms. no. T6803 (hereafter: Belġrādī, *Niṣāb*, NE). Perhaps the best translation of this title would be: *The Grounds of Association and Manners of Gaining*.

b. *Silsiletü'l–muḳarrebīn ve menāḳibu'l–mutteḳīn*,[16] a work in the Ottoman language.
c. *Sübülü'l–hudā*,[17] a work in the Ottoman language.
d. *Şerh–i ḳasīde–i Süleyman*,[18] a work in Ottoman language. [19]

Both cultural anthropology and historiography have traced the emergence of concepts such as personhood and selfhood across distinct historical periods.[20] Together with these developments in anthropology and historiography, studies of personhood and selfhood moved away from narrowly defined autobiographical texts, formerly understood through the post–Diltheyan concept of the rise of Western individualism,[21] toward the first person narrative / ego–document / autobiographic model developed in early modern German scholarship, which proposes a broadening of the textual corpus under consideration and avoids the teleology of an authorial understanding of personhood. In other words,

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16 Münīrī-yi Belġrādī, *Silsiletü'l-muḳarrebīn ve menāḳibü'l-mutteḳīn*, İstanbul, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Şehîd Alî Paşa, Ms. No. 2819/3, f. 21b-145b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, especially at pp. 69-236.

17 Sarajevo, Gazi Husrev Bey Library (hereafter: GHB), Ms. no. 826/I.

18 Belġrādī, *Şerḥ-i ḳaṣīde-yi Şeyh Süleymān Delālet-nişān*, Çorum, İl Halk Kütüphanesi, Ms. No. 668/I (a), f. 1b-34a; Idem, *Şerh-i Gazel-i Rusûhî*, Ankara, Millî Kütüphanesi 06 Mil Yz A 2927/10, f. 164b-167b; Oğuzhan Şahin, *On Altıncı Asrın Son Çeyreğinde Bir Gazel Üzerinden Hesaplaşmalar: İki Sûfînin Mücadelesi*, Litera Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2018. Şahin's volume includes a critical edition of *Şerh-i ḳasīde-i Süleymān* (pp. 317-380). Although the transliteration is not in proper academic sense, the entire book by Şahin is an important contribution to Münīrī's intellectual biography, as well as to a more comprehensive picture of the streams in the Ottoman Sufism during 16th and 17th centuries.

19 Due to limited space in the article and availability of secondary literature I opted for these four works of Münīrī-i Belġrādī.

20 The crucial theoretical framework was provided by Marcel Mauss in French, back in 1938. For an English translation see Marcel Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self", *The Category of the Person. Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Michael Carrithers et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, 1-25. For a comprehensive bibliography with deep analyses of interpretative paradigms up to 2015 see: Gabriele Jancke, "Persons, the 'Autobiographical Person' and Cultural concepts of the Person: Early Modern-Self Narratives from German Speaking Areas in a Trans-Cultural Perspective", *The Medieval History Journal*, 18, 2, 2015, 346-377.

21 For this paradigm and its most expressive testimony, see: Georg Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, 1. Bd. Das Altertum. 2. v. 3. stark verm. Aufl.-2. Bd. Das Mittelalter. 1. T. Die Frühzeit. 2 v.--3. Bd. Das Mittelalter. 2. T. Das Hochmittelalter im Anfang. 2. v.-4. Bd., A. Francke, Bern, 1949.

such studies assert that personhood and selfhood were expressed in diverse ways. Likewise, the scholarship on first–person narratives advocates distancing from cultural exclusivism, particularly the proposition that European, Western experience, is defined by individuality, whereas non–European experiences are relegated to collectivity. This binary opposition carries an implicit, culturally determined value judgement. As is well known, value judgements are inappropriate in historiographical analysis.[22] In Ottoman studies, a turning point in the study of first–person narrative / ego–documents with a special regard to the question of (non)existence of expression of individuality was Cemal Kafadar's paper published in 1989.[23] In the meantime the Berlin group of early modernists–Europeanists developed a set of new paradigms approaching the questions of individuality, selfhood, personhood, first–person narratives, ego–documents, autobiographic expressions, and similar notions. Two important points were raised by the Berlin group. First, the Berlin group strongly argued against earlier predominant Euro–centric concepts which sharply divided Europe from the rest of the world claiming that only Europe and the West were able to give rise to individuality. The Berlin group questioned the teleological and chronological argument of Georg Misch in his famous writings on the rise of autobiography. Therefore, Gabriele Jancke was inclined to see the European early–modern ego–document as not merely expressions of individuality, but also as texts which were concerned with collectivities and communities, and which were expressions of non–individual entities like collectivities and communities. In recent years, one witnesses an important breakthrough in Ottoman studies with regard to the question of first–person / self–narratives. Selim Karahasanoğlu has made significant scholarly contributions, including the formation of a research group dedicated to cataloguing preserved Ottoman self–narratives. The goal was to compile a corpus of known texts that could serve as a foundation for further analysis. In his own writings, he advocates for a balanced position between pre–Janckean and Janckean approaches. Put differently, Karahasanoğlu views the rise of individuality as closely connected to

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22 On this problem classical statements are provided in the work of Max Weber. See, *Max Weber-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, herausgegeben von Hans-Peter Müller und Steffen Sigmund, Verlag J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart, Weimar, 2014.

23 Cemal Kafadar, "Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth Century Istanbul and First-person Narratives in Ottoman Literature", *Studia Islamica*, vol. 69, 1989, 121-150.

the historical processes that Jancke emphasized in her argument. Under his editorship, important works by Turkish scholars have also appeared. These scholars, influenced by his restatement of the Berlin group's paradigm of ego–document and first–person narrative, have contributed meaningfully to the field alongside his own publications.[24]

In this paper, I have chosen to use the term first–person narrative, despite Karahasanoğlu's deliberate avoidance of it in his own work. Nonetheless, I have endeavoured to follow the methodological principles articulated in his writings and those of scholars in his research group, particularly drawing on his more general, problem–oriented contributions to support my argument.[25] Equally, this paper benefits from the analytical framework for study of the Ottoman texts authored by important Sufi masters in the Ottoman language during 16th and 17th century and their connection with the question of expression of selfhood in various publications by Derin Terzioğlu.[26] Finally, in this study I should like to analyse ego–documents and first–person narratives scattered in writings by Münīrī–i Belġrādī which were not crafted expressly as independent first–person narratives. Rather than being crafted as independent narratives, these were excursuses and interpolations within texts of a different character. Belġrādī's first–person passages offer

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24 Detailed bibliographic references on recent publications by Turkish scholars are found in the thematic issue dedicated to the Ottoman ego-documents, edited by Selim Karahasanoğlu: *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* (hereafter: *OA*), 64, 2024. Also, Karahasanoğlu edits a special journal dedicated to this subject. See: *Ceride: Journal of ego-document studies*, I/1, 2023; I/2 2023; II/1, 2024; II/2 2024.

25 Selim Karahasanoğlu, "Ben-anlatıları", *Tarih Bilimi ve Metodolojisi*, ed. Mehmet Yaşar Ertaş, İdeal Kültür Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2019, 280-284; Idem, "Ben-anlatıları: Tarihsel Kaynak Olarak İmkânları, Sınırları. Ego-documents Potentials and Limitations as a Source for Historical Research", *TUHED, Turkish History Education Journal*, 2019, 8 (1), 211-230; Idem, "Giriş: Hakir ile Fakir, Ben ile Biz – Osmanlı-Türk Toplumunda Kendini Anlatmanın Dayanılmaz Hafifliği. Introduction: The Lowly and the Poor, I and We – The Unbearable Lightness of Expressing Oneself in Ottoman-Turkish Society", *OA*, 64, 2024, 27-44.

26 Derin Terzioğlu, "Tarihi İnsanlı Yazmak: Bir Tarih Anlatı Türü Olarak Biografi ve Osmanlı Tarih Yazıcılığı", *Cogito*, 29, 2001, 284-296; Eadem, "Men in the Image of God in the Image of the Times: Sufi Self-narratives and the Diary of Niyazi-i Misri (1618-94)", *Studia Islamica*, 94, 2002, 139-165; Eadem, "*Mecmu'â-i Şeyh Mısrî*: On Yedinci Yüzyıl Ortalarında Anadolu'da Bir Derviş Sülûkünü Tamamlarken Neler Okuyup Yazdı?", in: *Eski Türk Edebiyatı Çalışmaları VII. Mecmûa: Osmanlı Edebiyatının Kırkambarı*, ed. Hatice Aynur et al., Turkuaz Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2012, 291-321.

a broader spectrum for understanding not only the intellectual world of an Ottoman thinker but also aspects of everyday life of an ordinary Ottoman citizen. As this paper will demonstrate, such writings were not composed merely to fill blank pages; they served specific purposes. At times, the author seeks to reinforce the message of a particular biography. In other instances, he introduces new information. In one first–person narrative, he attempts to counter the spread of undesirable ideas, such as heresy. Additionally, these texts contain critiques of the political system, corruption, and greed. Belġrādī's first–person narratives are therefore far from expressions of narcissism or boastfulness. As previously noted, these occasional interpolations and ego–documents are scattered throughout his writings. They appear sporadically and often seem to be inserted without deliberate framing but with a clear message.

Let us remind that non–continuous self–narratives embedded within larger works of differing character are not an entirely neglected subject in Ottoman studies. In a recent thematic volume edited by Karahasanoğlu, Göker İnan studied that type of ego–documents exemplified in a cosmographic work by Hasan Esīrī (d. after 1731–2).[27] As already explained, my intention is to study a similar corpus of scattered ego–documents and traces of first–person narratives which is roughly 100 years earlier than the one provided in the study by İnan. Before analysing the various ego–documentary / first–person narratives scattered throughout Münīrī's works, one must first define Münīrī's vocabulary of selfhood. In other words, before any analysis, one has to enumerate rhetorical strategies used by Münīrī for expressing the selfhood.

MÜNĪRĪ'S VOCABULARY OF SELFHOOD

For the subject of this paper, the preface–like introductory section (*dībāce*; *muḳaddime*; *sebeb–i te'līf*, etc.) can be quite revelatory. For a long time, as a consequence of 19th–century positivism and its Eurocentric and value–laden paradigms, any pre–modern preface in general and the Byzantine as well as the Islamic ones in particular were considered formulaic texts, devoid of any message and content. Formulaic they certainly were, but in the meantime the formulaic

[27] Göker İnan, "Bu Hakîr Esîr İken: Hasan Esîrî'nin *Mi'yârü'd-Düvel*'inde Ben Anlatısı İzleri", *OA*, 64, 2024, 479-500.

character of any pre–modern text was shown to have been everything but contentless. Concepts, ideas, messages, and even hard data were demonstrated to have been as easily expressible through supposedly repeating and meaningless rhetorical devices.[28] The rhetorical strategies of the Ottoman prefaces and preambles in the Ottoman literary texts in the widest sense of the word as well as in the official, semi–official, and private documents were already studied to a degree. These studies revealed that such texts conveyed both explicit and implicit messages. The hidden meanings were not only challenging for modern scholars to interpret, but were also deliberately veiled for contemporary readers at the time of writing, requiring careful reading and contextual understanding even then.[29]

The personhood in the introductory portion of the Ottoman texts, more exactly the authorial personhood, used to be expressed in somehow periphrastic rhetorical units.[30] The most common rhetorical strategy was the strategy of self–deprecation. Self–deprecation was an unavoidable part of the Ottoman dialogic discourse in the Bakhtinian sense of the word. Self–deprecation was grounded in the Qur'anic ideal of Islam; literally subjecting, giving oneself to the Supreme Being. The main trait of man was that he was understood as slave and servant of God. This

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28 Ernst Robert Curtius, *European literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, translated from the German by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen series 36, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1973; Albert B. Lord*, The Singer of Tales*, Third edition, ed. by David F. Elmer, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, Cambridge, 2019; Garret P. S. Olberding, *Dubious facts : the evidence of early Chinese historiography*, Suny Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2012; *Bakhtin and the human sciences: no last words*, edited by Michael Mayerfeld Bell and Michael Gardiner, Thousand Oaks, Calif., Sage, London, 1998. For probably the most important application of the Bakhtinian paradigm in the Ottoman studies see: Derin Terzioğlu, "The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation", *Muqarnas*, 12, 1995, 84-100.

29 For two illuminating papers on the subject see: Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, "Aspects of the Legitimation of Ottoman Rule as Reflected in the Preamble to two early Liva Kanunnameler", *Turcica*, 21-23, 1991, 371-383; Baki Tezcan, "The Multiple Faces of the One: The Invocation Section of Ottoman Literary Introductions as a Locus for the Central Argument of the Text", *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 12/1, April 2009, 27-41; *Sebeb-i Telif: Osmanlı Literatüründe Açık ve Örtük Yazma Nedenleri*, eds. Mustakim Arıcı and Sami Arslan, Ketebe, İstanbul, 2024.

30 For one of the recent studies that gives new perspectives in this regard, see: Tatjana Paić-Vukić, "Tercüme ve Telif Nedenleri: Muslihuddin Musafi Tarafından 1609'da Banja Luka'da Derlenmiş Eser", in: *Sebeb-i Telif*, 179-194.

cosmological perspective, rooted in Islamic theodicy, permeated the core societal concepts across the broader Muslim world, both in the pre–Ottoman era and among the Ottomans and their contemporaries. In the Ottoman world it was equally important who was in and who was out, meaning who was Ottoman, as opposed to the non–Ottoman, and who was up and down regarding class and social strata. Across many premodern cultures, rulers were seen as divinely appointed figures who embodied sacred authority. The Ottoman sultan, for instance, was revered as 'God's shadow on Earth' (*ẓillullah fī'l–erḍ*), a concept paralleled by the divine right of kings in medieval Europe. This sacred hierarchy mirrored broader theological beliefs, in which, just as humanity was seen as subject to divine will, rulers were positioned as earthly reflections of that cosmic order. Ottoman subjects were under the authority as well as the custody of the sultan, either directly or via his vicegerents and other official agents. The societal class structure was crafted through various pyramidal relations marked by dependence and hierarchy. Therefore, the stress upon self–deprecation as a value in a hierarchical social matrix was highly significant. The basic terms carrying the representation of hierarchical subjection were ones situated in the semantic field of slavery and servitude. Such terms were *'abd*, *bende*, *faḳīr*, *ḥaḳīr*, etc.[31] Frequently, those terms were accompanied by adjectives which were semantically congruent to the notion of personal self–deprecation.

Let us see how Münīrī represented his selfhood in such self–deprecatory terms. The term *ḥaḳīr* – the lowly one, I – is present in various of Münīrī's works in the preface sections relating to his selfhood represented in a self–deprecatory image (*bu ḥaḳīre*).[32] The term *ḥaḳīr* was a commonly employed expression, extensively represented in Ottoman petitions and various forms of supplication, cutting across diverse social ranks.[33] More sophisticated authors were inclined to use the term *ḥaḳīr* determined by either an adjective or by a set of adjectives. Münīrī displayed his command of the rhetorics of three languages of the Ottoman culture (Ottoman, Arabic, Persian) using a not so common syntagm *bu*

[31] The quoted terms and similar words were commented upon in all articles in the thematic volume *OA*, 64, 2024, edited by Selim Karahasanoğlu.

[32] GHB, Ms. no. 826/1, f. 2b.

[33] Claudia Römer, *Osmanische Festungsbesatzungen in Ungarn zur Zeit Murāds III: dargestellt anhand von Petitionen zur Stellenvergabe*, Schriften der Balkan-Kommission, Philologische Abteilung, 35, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, 1995.

aḥḳar-ı kemter – this most lowly worthless person. The form *aḥḳar* is the Arabic elative, i.e. superlative of the term *ḥakīr*. While the Persian word *kemter* is a comparative form derived from *kem* and the suffix *–ter*, it conveys the meaning of "more inferior" or "less worthy". The coining of expressions in Ottoman Turkish that blend Arabic and Persian elements, such as this one, enhances the rhetorical richness and stylistic complexity of the text. One might infer that Münīrī intended to highlight his grammatical expertise by using this uncommon form.[34] The phrase *bu aḥḳar-ı kemter* was further specified by the personal name Münīrī, while the clause finished with the verb in the third person singular in the passive / reflexive mode (*nāmīde ḳılındı*). One can describe this usage as a circumventing ego–expression and self–effacing. Using his personal name, an adequate of the third person pronoun, after the syntagm *bu aḥḳar-ı kemter* the author referred to himself. The circumventing dimension was strengthened via the use of the passive reflexive mode.

The second most common term for the circumventing expression of selfhood and the notion of ego was *faḳīr* – the poor one. Poverty as a social ideal in the Islamic context used to be more of an ideal in the metaphysical sense of devout subjection to God than a praise of actual poverty. Rather than a person who was really in need, the term defined a person submitted to God's rule and societal norms.[35] In another work of Münīrī's there is a representative specimen of the use of the term *faḳīr* within the framework of described notion. The passage reads as following:*…ve bu cerīdeye bā'iṯ budur ki ustāẕlaruñ ba'żısı bu faḳīre bu fütüvvet–nāmelerin gösterüb didügüm vücūh üzre niçe ekāẕib–i bāṭile ile memlū vü mersūm gördügümde…*[36] The translation can be proposed in following wording: "and the reason for writing of this miscellany is this: when some masters showed this type of *fütüvvet–nāme* to **this poor one,** and when I saw that they are full and written down with so many corrupting lies in a way I already described…". Here, in this passage *faḳīr* is clearly a substitute for the personal pronoun in the first–person singular, I, and relative clauses were expressed in this passage

[34] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 22b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 72. The entire phrase is worth quoting: *Pes bu aḥḳar-ı kemter Münīrī bu bir ḳaç evrāḳı ketb idüb adın Silsiletü'l-muḳarrebīn ve menāḳibü'l-mutteḳīn deyüb ol nāmle nāmīde ḳılındı*.

[35] For various concepts of poverty in medieval and early modern Islam, see: Adam A. Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

[36] Belġrādī, *Niṣāb*, NE, f. 2a.

with the pro–participial form in the first–person singular in the appropriate case (*didügüm*; *gördügümde*). In general terms, the syntagm *bu faḳīr / ḥaḳīr…idüm* or *idügümde*[37] was the most frequent rhetorical construction for conveying the ego–documentary message referring to the authorial personhood / selfhood. There is no doubt that, for some readers, Belġrādī's use of first–person singular pronouns (*ben*) would have given an impression of authorial haughtiness. As is well known, humility, kindness, and wholeheartedness are central ideals of pious Islamic life. Moreover, a devout Sufi such as Belġrādī would be expected to annihilate the ego (*beḳā* ve *fenā'*), even in writing.[38] Accordingly, he employed various periphrastic strategies to avoid the direct use of "I" (*ben*), thereby preventing the personification of the text through the self. In this regard, an illustrative example is provided in the preamble section of Münīrī's work *Sübülü'l–hudā*. While referring to himself and reasons for his authorship Münīrī used the phrase "and this poor one, that is to say I, saw that" (*…faḳīr daḥı gördüm ki…*).[39] Further, this peculiar way of expressing authorial intention and causes of motivation as an ego–documentary statement is witnessed in another passage: "when some among **my** Sufi brothers as well as **my** friends were insistently approaching this lowly one"[40] (*Ba'żı iḫvānum ve aḥbābum vaḳtā–kim bu ḥaḳīre iḳdām idüb…*).[41] Here our understanding of the construction *bu ḥaḳīre* as a periphrastic circumventing way of expression of personhood is corroborated by the usage of possessive suffixes for the first person singular on certain nouns (*iḫvānum*; *aḥbābum*). Passages like this support the view of discursive textual analysis as a fruitful tool for understanding Münīrī's message and the way he authored and published it. In other words, this type of text can benefit from an historically informed, detailed approach, applying models from linguistical disciplines such as text grammar and discourse analysis.[42] In another clause, Münīrī quotes

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37 Here auxiliary verb in different tenses and forms is merely an illustration for verbal tenses and modes in general.

38 On the Sufi concept of ego annihilation (*beḳā ve fenā'*) see: Mustafa Kara, "Fenâ", *TDVİA*, vol. 12, 333-335, along with the references cited therein.

39 GHB, Ms. no. 826/1, f. 2b.

40 The bold indications are added by the author of paper.

41 GHB, Ms. no. 826/1, f. 2b.

42 For such models see: Teun A. van Dijk, *Some Aspects of Text Grammars. A Study in Theoretical Linguistics and Poetics*, Janua linguarum, Series maior, vol. 63, Mouton, The Hague, 1972; *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, 1-4, edited by Teun A. van Dijk, Academic Press, London, Orlando, 1985.

the words of people who expressed the wish for his work to be written. Their wish is addressed to Münīrī in the imperative mood in the second person plural. The subject of the clause is in the first person plural, while the imperative in the second person plural indicates that the addressee was a person and not a collective (*...bize aḥkām–ı şer'iyyenüñ mühimmātını cā[mi'] bir kitab–ı müfīd ve muḫtaṣar cem' idüb virüñ didilerse*…).[43] A quite non–standard way of self–deprecatory portrayal of the authorial first person is preserved in another clause in Münīrī's preface to his treatise *Sübülü'l–hudā* (*Pes bu nefsi ẕelīl ve fikri kelīl ve aḳıl ḳalīl 'ācz daḫı Ḥaḳḳ celle ve 'alā ḥażretlerine tevekkül idüb şurū' itdüm*).[44] First of all, the circumventing I in this passage is expressed through the Arabic reflexive term *nefs* – literally soul, person, personhood, further determined with a self–deprecatory adjective *ẕelīl*. The sentence is then continued with syntagms stressing the incompleteness of the author's mind, and his supposed labouring with the construction of the text. The clause ends in the first–person past tense. This corroborates understanding of the term *nefs* as metonymy for the personal pronoun "I". Together with the topos of non–perfect personhood, sinful and devoid of intellectual perfection, Münīrī used the Sufi category of *tevekkül*, asking sanctuary with God. The idea of *tevekkül*, along with the topoi that illustrated it through metaphorical language, was an important part of the Sufi–inspired Islamic and Ottoman literary legacy.[45] Further variations in the semantic field of self–deprecating personhood were represented in some rare doublets of Arabic adjectival forms. Therefore, Münīrī wrote about himself as "this weak and utterly frail one, ever in need" (…*bu ża'īf ve naḥīfü'l–muḥtāc*…).[46] A pairing of two Arabic adjectives following the form of *fa'īl* (*ża'īf ve naḥīf*) expressed a stylistically stronger position at two levels. The first level was prosodic and orthoepic, as the two terms followed the same phonological pattern. This created the effect of rhymed prose (*sec'*). On the semantic level, the two adjectives were close in meaning, conveying notions of frailty, weakness, subjection, and surrender to a stronger observing entity, etc.

43 GHB, Ms. no. 826/1, f. 2b.

44 GHB, Ms. no. 826/1, f. 2b.

45 Benedikt Reinert, *Die Lehre vom tawakkul in der klassischen Sufik*, Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients; N.F., Bd. 3, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1968; Süleyman Uludağ, "Tevekkül 2/2", *TDVİA*, vol. 41, 3-4.

46 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 21b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 69-70.

In Ottoman aesthetics, when phonological and semantic messages went hand in hand, such texts were considered masterfully composed.[47]

A further device for ego–documentary expression fashioned by circumventing the personal pronoun "I" was found via an intense use of the first–person possessive suffix (*–m*), both as a determinant appended to the nouns proper or to the verbal nouns, gerunds, gerundives, converbs etc (*ammâ korkum budur ki*; *ve anladuġum budur ki*).[48]

The closest to the modern "I" clause are examples of the use of first–person singular of a specific type of present tense (*geniş zaman*). In the Ottoman language, this grammatical tense, in addition to its main semantic of the present tense, could also carry a semantics of intentionality, which was primarily situated in the sphere of future, along with notions of hope, expectation, and planning. This passage nicely illustrates the semantics of intentionality in the future: "…*ve adını Niṣābü'l–intisāb ve ādābü'l–iktisāb deyü mevsūm idüb umarım ki neticesi hayrü'l–me'āb ola…*".[49] This passage translates as following: "…and having named it with the title the wording of which is *The Grounds of Association and Manners of Gaining*, I hope that its achievement shall find itself in the best possible abode". In this sentence, the first–person expression appears in the verb form of *umarım ki*. Although it is in the first–person singular, it conveys both humility and sincerity. The author, presenting himself as a humble and pious servant of God, acknowledges that his work may be imperfect despite the effort he has invested. Nevertheless, he believes it can still be valuable to others.

Broadly speaking, authorial intentionality and personhood were most prominently articulated in prefaces, particularly within the incipit sections as defined by codicological analysis. In contrast, ego–documentary expressions were comparatively rare in the explicit sections, with the exception of colophons, which were predominantly produced by copyists rather than by the authors themselves.[50] Nonetheless, Münīrī left a very telling and rhetorically excellent example of a first–person

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47 On this peculiar trait of the Ottoman 16th and 17th century texts see a fundamental paper by Andreas Tietze, "Muṣṭafā 'Ālī of Gallipoli's Prose Style", *Archivum Ottomanicum*, vol. 5, 1973, 297-319.

48 O. Şahin, *İki Sûfînin Mücadelesi*, 358-359.

49 Belġrādī, *Niṣāb*, NE, f. 2b.

50 On the textual structure of the colophons of the manuscript copied in the Ottoman Balkans and on copyists see: Muhamed Ždralović, *Bosansko-hercegovački prepisivači djela u arabičkim rukopisima*, I, Biblioteka Kulturno nasljeđe Bosne i Hercegovine, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1988, 118-149.

narrative statement in the explicit section of his polemical commentary of a controversial ghazal by the Ottoman poet Rūsūḫī.[51] This statement by Münīrī's reads in English translation: "When I **observed** (bold N.D.) this poem in a literary miscellany owned by a friend of mine, the refutation of it streamed directly out of my heart and appeared in public" (…*ol nazm bir dost mecumû'âsında manzûrum oldukda gönülden inkâr kopup*…).[52] This short passage is a revelatory one from different perspectives. First of all, the authorial personhood, namely his first–person narrative stance, was announced in the syntagm "*manzûrum oldukda*". This type of construction is characterized by a clear presence of the notion of "I". Another memorable piece of information in this statement was Münīrī's precious information that he discovered the controversial *ghazal* in a literary miscellany owned by a friend of his. Such statements corroborate the importance of friendship ties as a cultural norm[53] together with the insight regarding reading practices and book ownership. Books were read together, exchanged, and referred to among friends.[54] Therefore, it was an important part of Ottoman social life. Without the information obtained in the environment of educated social circles Münīrī probably would not have gained information about the ghazal he commented on and criticized.

The final determinant of the presence of personhood in first–person narrative texts may be discerned in the authorial style. Like other Ottoman authors especially from the 16th and 17th centuries, Münīrī wrote his prose as a mixture of low, middle, and elevated styles. Indeed, he demonstrated considerable skill in composing Ottoman rhymed prose and in employing synonymous and semantically related vocabulary drawn from Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian – features commonly

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51 Rūsūḫī's ghazal was composed in 1575. For more on this poet and his controversial ghazal see: O. Şahin, *İki Sûfînin Mücadelesi*, 35-86.

52 Ibid., 379-380.

53 Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2005, passim; Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: nation, identity, and coexistence in the early modern Mediterranean*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore Md., 2006, passim; Serkan Delice, "Friendship, Sociability, and Masculinity in the Ottoman Empire: An Essay Confronting the Ghosts of Historicism", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 42, 2010, 103-125.

54 Cemal Kafadar, "Green Reading: Books and the Outdoors in the Early Modern Ottoman World", *Muqarnas*, vol. 40/1, 2023, 353-387.

associated with educated Ottoman authors.[55] Beyond these conventional traits acquired through education, reading, and textual reproduction, a close reading of his works reveals distinct personal and authorial stylistic elements.[56] Taken together, these observations suggest that prevailing aesthetic sensibilities, mentalities, and social norms regarded direct self–reference, especially through the first–person singular pronoun *ben*, as incompatible with the conventions of polite expression.

MÜNĪRĪ'S LIFE AND EXPERIENCES THROUGH HIS FIRST–PERSON NARRATIVES

A careful examination of the corpus outlined at the outset of this study indicates that Münīrī identified Dimitrofça (today Sremska Mitrovica) as his place of birth. Interestingly, up to the present, we have found no passage in Münīrī's writings devoted to his father, unlike the one narrative that centers primarily on his mother. Münīrī's mother achieved a hagiographic prominence as a comparative example while Münīrī was crafting a hagiographic note on a certain Muhammed Dede of Belgrade, a follower of the Ümmī Sinān tarikat.[57] Münīrī was in personal contact with both Muhammed Dede of Belgrade and his brother Hasan Çavuş (*…gendünüñ naḳli üzre…ḳarındaşı Ḥasan Çavuş naḳl itdi ki merḥūm Muḥammed Dede vefāt itdügi gibi zevcesi…āh idüb Yā Rabbi benüm daḥı cānum al diyüb rūḥı teslīm eyledi…*).[58] This anecdote provided Münīrī with a reason to remember his mother. He narrated how he resettled from Dimitrofça to Belgrade using a fluvial vessel.[59] His mother was not entirely happy with their resettlement. She explained her unease

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55 For the peculiarities of the Ottoman prose style during 16th and 17th centuries see: A. Tietze, "Muṣṭafā 'Ālī of Gallipoli's Prose Style", 297-319; Claudia Römer, "The language and Prose of Bostān's Süleymānnāme", in: *Humanism, culture, and language in the Near East: Studies in Honor of Georg Krotkoff*, edited by Asma Afsaruddin and A.H. Mathias Zahniser, Ind., Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 1997, 401-418.

56 On this topic see: A. Tietze, "Muṣṭafā 'Ālī of Gallipoli's Prose Style", 311-312.

57 On this branch of the Halvetiyye *tarikat* see: M. Baha Tanman, "Ümmî Sinan Tekkesi", *TDVİA*, vol. 42, 311-314. On the concept of Ümmīlik see: Derin Terzioğlu, *Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyāzī-i Miṣrī (1618-1694)*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1999, 61-76.

58 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 117a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 202.

59 This should be the river Sava.

to Münīrī, for she hoped to be buried next to his father, obviously in Dimitrofça. After living in Belgrade for eleven years (…*Belġrādda on bir yıl temekkün müyesser olub…*),[60] Münīrī decided to move elsewhere (…*āḫer yere göçmek*…).[61] His mother accompanied him and when they came to a townlet close to Dimitrofça she contracted typhoid fever (…*vālide daḫı ḥummāya mübtelā ider…*).[62] After that, he quotes his mother as speaking in the first–person singular. She said that she felt a strange and strong exhaustiveness (…*'aceb ża'fum vardur deyüb*…).[63] And finally, she said "I am parting" (…*hāy ben gitdüm*…). She expressed her last wish asking that she should be buried next to her spouse, i.e. in Dimitrofça (…*elbette beni yoldaşum yanında defn eyle deyü vaṣiyyet idüb*…).[64] The note was structured around the topos of spousal fidelity. A devoted wife wants to be buried next to her husband as a token of permanent closeness. From the narrative technique point of view, after narrating an example of spousal fidelity in the biography of Muhammed Dede, Münīrī involves the example of his parents. This reveals the oral character of the Sufi hagiographic texts which generally tended to emerge from the copies of dictated oral narratives.[65] The orality is characterised by a flow of free associations. One example suggests another example, similar to the moral of the story, but not chronologically or topologically identical. The orality in general is characterised by anachronisms and anatopisms.[66] As far as the topoi of representation of women in the Sufi texts are concerned, Münīrī's note on his mother reflects the standard type of representation of a virtuous woman, wife, and mother. Those narratives follow the Anatolian early hagiographic tradition and its ways of the representation of women with 'Āṣiḳpāṣā-zāde as a paragon to be followed.[67] Different passages from Münīrī's various works

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60 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 117b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 202.

61 Ibid., f. 117b; Ibid., 202.

62 Ibid., f. 117b; Ibid., 202.

63 Ibid., f. 117b; Ibid., 202.

64 Ibid., f. 117b; Ibid., 202.

65 This trait of the Ottoman hagiographic texts was demonstrated in: Halil İnalcık, "How to Read 'Ashık Pasha-zade's History", *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Ménage*, eds. Colin Heywood and Colin İmber, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 1994, 139-156.

66 On orality, anachronisms, anatopisms the fundamental analysis is provided in: A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, passim.

67 On the question how Aşikpaşazade represented women a fundamental study is: Barbara Flemming, "'Āṣıkpaşazādes Blick auf Frauen" in: Sabine Prätor and

reveal that ‘Āṣiḳpāṣā-zāde was both a spiritual and intellectual paragon for Münīrī. This especially applies to Münīrī’s clear intertextual allusions to the celebrated passage by ‘Āṣiḳpāṣā-zāde on how the early Ottoman ulema associated with the royal court (*dānişmend*) deprived the frontier warriors of their rights by imposing non–Islamic Persianate taxation upon the praiseworthy, brave and pious people of the marches.[68] It is necessary to deal with an important point at this place. No matter how the ways of representing female characters in Münīrī’s works were possessed of certain formulaic traits, this by no means undermines the evidentiary value of Münīrī’s works. Münīrī’s portrait of his mother is full of vivid and trustable details like the fluvial traffic, funerary architecture, etc. Yet again topoi and facts in the Ottoman texts are to be looked at as a mixed, not a distinguishable unit, and not as two parallel, but never overlapping worlds.[69]

In his seminal article dealing with the approach to Ottoman ego–documents, Selim Karahasanoğlu emphasized that there were different ways of expressing the self among the Ottomans. According to him, an ego–document clearly referring to a first–person experience might be even a text without use of either first person singular pronoun or first-person singular verb.[70] This point made by Karahasanoğlu is borne by certain passages by Münīrī dealing with the precariousness of the social position of children among the Ottomans.[71] Both natural and social circum-

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Cristoph K. Neumann (eds.), *Arts, Women and Scholars: Studies in Ottoman Society and Culture – Festschrift Hans Georg Majer*, vol. 1, Simurg Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, 69-97. Also see: Bruno de Nicola, “The Ladies of Rūm: A Hagiographic View of Women in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Anatolia”, *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 3 (2014), 132-156.

68 For Münīrī’s intertextual allusions to ‘Āṣiḳpāṣā-zāde see: Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 79a-80a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 156-157. On the social background and nature of ‘Āṣiḳpāṣā-zāde’s attack on the early Ottoman ulema–went-courtiers see: H. İnalcık, “How to Read ‘Ashık Pasha-zade’s History”, 139-156.

69 On these overlapping characteristics of the Ottoman sources using the metonymical image *onion* vs. *garlic*, Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, passim.

70 Selim Karahasanoğlu: “The Lowly and the Poor, I and We – The Unbearable Lightness of Expressing Oneself in Ottoman-Turkish Society”, *OA*, 64, 2024, 27-44.

71 On the topic of Ottoman childhood, see: Yahya Araz, *16. yüzyıldan 19. yüzyıl başlarına Osmanlı toplumunda çocuk olmak*, Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2013; Colin Heywood, “Ottoman Childhoods in Comparative Perspective”, in: *Children and Childhood in the Ottoman Empire*. *From the 15th to the 20th Century*, eds. Gülay

stances caused a high level of child mortality in the Ottoman Empire. One of the basic notions of Ottoman childhood was this high presence of mortality among the youngest population. It was not so infrequent that Ottoman parents not only outlived some of their children; sometimes Ottoman parents outlived all their children. One such case occurred in the household of a certain Ali Efendi whom Münīrī names as his master (…*şeyḫunā ve mevlānā*…).[72] A colourful person, Ali Efendi was presented by Münīrī with great approval and praise. According to Münīrī, he lost more than twenty children, but he submitted to God's design and will without complaints about his fate (…*yegirmiden mütecāviz evlād–i kirāmlarınuñ…acısını çeküb emr–i ilāhīye inḳiyād göstermişdür*…).[73] As the cause of death of some of Ali Efendi's children Münīrī singled out the plague (*maṭ'ūn*).[74] Münīrī praised Ali Efendi's finding peace in God in his Job–like situation. Ali Efendi was said to have washed the corpse of one of his deceased sons. He preserved his dignity although he was overwhelmed with grief (…*ṣabr mertebesin yerine götürüb ve merḥumı gendüsi ġusl idüb…bir damla yaş gelmek vāḳi' olmayub ammā ḳalbı ıżṭırābından*…).[75] This sort of very precise information could be only noted down by an eyewitness. It appears that Münīrī was himself an eyewitness, or that the account was relayed to him by someone who had witnessed the events concerning Ali Efendi, whom Münīrī seems to have known personally.

Yilmaz, Fruma Zachs, Colin Heywood, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2021, 31-54; Eyüp Ensar Dal, *The Social Construction of Childhood in the Ottoman Society: A Socio-legal Analysis of Childcare in Early Eighteenth-century Üsküdar*, unpublished MA Thesis, Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2021. On the social and legal position of a child in the Ottoman Bosnia see: Nenad Filipović, *Acta Ottomanica Saraevoensia (osmanski dokumenti Arhiva Orijentalnog instituta Univerziteta u Sarajevu – studijski katalog)*, Centar za istraživanje i razvoj UNSA, Sarajevo, 2024, 76-85, 134-144, 258-269.

72 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 77b-82a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 155-159. This biography represents one of the most developed and the most telling parts of this work by Münīrī.

73 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 80a-80b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 157.

74 Ibid., f. 80b; Ibid., 157; Nükhet Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015. On the plague epidemics in Ottoman Bosnia see: Nenad Filipović, "Oko kuge u Bosni 1763–1764. godine", *Prilozi Instituta za historiju*, 49, Sarajevo, 2020, 45-87.

75 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 80b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 157.

Child mortality was a significant problem in the pre–modern world, including the Ottoman one. Nonetheless, the most difficult situation for early modern Ottomans was the absence of male offspring. A story in another complex biography in Münīrī's work, i.e. the biography of Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn of Dimitrofça, provides a nice illustration. Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn's miraculous abilities and his faculty of seeing into both the future and the supra–sensual spheres are nicely illustrated in a story about one of Münīrī's followers whose name was Ġā'ibī. This follower of Münīrī narrated to his sheikh that he was born in a family in which children used to die soon after they were brought to this world. His grandfather on the maternal side asked for Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn's intercession with God in this regard and the Sheikh assured that they should not worry about their male child and grandchild. After quoting a story narrated in the first–person singular by his follower Ġā'ibī, Münīrī added his own remarks – also in the first person – emphasizing that the prophecy had been fulfilled, as Ġā'ibī was already fifty years old at the time Münīrī was recording the account. He concluded the passage with a prayer for Ġā'ibī's continued longevity (*…bu maḥalli yazduġumda elli yaşına varmış idi…*).[76] The history of pre–19th century Ottoman orphans is a highly neglected subject. The published studies are almost exclusively devoted to the period 1839–1924.[77] Although the Qur'an and the Islamic law developed a sophisticated discourse on orphans,[78] the care of orphans was not officially institutionalized in the pre–Tanzimat period. Almost exclusively, the care of orphans in the pre–1839 Ottoman society resulted either from private initiative, or it was a part of the Muslim religious endowments' activities. For that reason, we are almost devoid of the state-originated sources dealing with the subject. But the sources being still uncovered is one thing, and the absence of the sources is another. Legal and private documents preserved a plethora of evidence on the Ottoman orphans before 1839. Such evidence is scattered and non–serialised, but it is not non–existent. The lack of studies on the pre–1839 Ottoman orphans is a telling example of the setbacks of the statism mentality in the study of Ottoman history.

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76 Ibid, f. 86b; Ibid, 165.

77 For instance, see: Tahsin Özcan, "Osmanlı Toplumunda Yetimlerin Himayesi ve Eytâm Sandıkları", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakultesi Dergisi*, 14, İstanbul, 2006, 103-121.

78 Abdüsselam Arı, "Yetim", *TDVİA*, vol. 43, 501-503.

That the Ottomans who lived in the classical and post–classical eras (ca 1453–1839) were deeply concerned with the questions arising from the status of orphans in the Ottoman society is well illustrated in certain notes by Münīrī which bear the characteristics of indirect ego–documents as they are defined by Karahasanoğlu. The examples of praiseworthy attitudes toward orphans are again to be found in lives and activities of certain charismatic Sufi leaders. Apparently, to be protector of the orphans for the Ottomans of that period was a commendable activity. The charismatic Sufi leader who was one of Münīrī's teachers, Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn of Dimitrofça was one such protector. Münīrī's story goes on like this: on a winter day Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn saw two young boys wandering through the downtown in Dimitrofça and was moved by their state, so he started feeling sorry for them (*…göñline teraḥḥum ġalebe ider…).* He was surprised by their condition and how they were wandering around in the cold day. He sat in front of a charcoal brazier and asked the children to sit with him and investigated their condition. They said that their father died recently and that a rich merchant (*ḫvāce)*[79] unlawfully got a hold of the farm they inherited from their father, corrupting a proxy judge for that reason. Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn confronted the rich merchant and reprimanded him with heavy words about his lack of conscious behaviour, reminding him of God's sanction for those who put their hands on the property of orphans. Then he appeared in the court room of the town, where he disposed the forgery and the false writ of the proxy judge. After this demonstration, he made the court to issue a new writ which corroborated the rights of orphans who by it reclaimed their property. A new court writ endorsing the rights of minor orphans was issued and given to the two orphans. Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn rented a horse for the orphans and provided them with food so that they could return safely to their village. These kinds of deeds performed by Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn were described as service for orphans and charity for widows (*ḫizmet–i eytām ve merḥamet–i bīve*).[80] For him, his peers, and his community this was something committed on God's path (*dīn yolında*).[81] By doing this, Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn became the leader of the people with

[79] On the term *ḫvāce* meaning a rich gross merchant see: Halil İnalcık, "Capital formation in the Ottoman Empire", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 29, no. 1, 1969, 97-140.

[80] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 83b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 161.

[81] Ibid., f. 83b; Ibid., 161.

a sincere faith (*ṣādıḳlara imām*).[82] The story's vivid and orderly details point to a source with immediate access – either the author himself as a witness or a reliable first–hand informant whose account was faithfully recorded. The story is characterized by Münīrī's high respect for Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn whom he portrays not only as a spiritual leader, but also as somebody who is following the Qur'anic injunction to command the right and forbid the wrong.[83] In this story there is nothing which is impossible or formulaic. An illustration of the role of a charismatic sheikh as somebody who commands right and forbids wrong is offered in the careers of Niyāzī–i Miṣrī in the 17th century and Sheikh Mehmed of Užice in the first half of the 18th century. They did not confront merely local evil doers and corruptors, they also criticised and acted against abuse committed by governors and the central administration invoking the Qur'anic injunction and the discourse about the injunction.[84]

That the stories about Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn stemmed from Münīrī's personal closeness to him is corroborated by a first–person narrative passage that Münīrī incorporated into his biography of the Sufi master. Münīrī narrated how Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn was constantly walking inside of a mosque (…*şeyḫ ḥażretleri ilerüde mescidde revāne olub gider… fi'l–ḥāl dönüb ḥaḳīre baḳdı ḥaḳīr daḫī ta'accüb idüb ḥayā u i'cāb ġalebe itdi…*).[85] In this anecdote, Münīrī related to himself using the self–deprecatory terms *ḥakīr* and *faḳīr*, the function of which we explained in the introductory part of the paper. The moral of the anecdote is based on two notions: the miraculous gift of reading other people's thoughts possessed by Sheikh Muṣliḥuddīn and Münīrī's subserviently giving himself over to the sheikh. The sheikh saw through Münīrī's thoughts, and Münīrī

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82 Ibid., f. 83a-83b; Ibid., 160-161. According to Münīrī Sheikh Muṣlihuddīn of Dimitrofça was a pupil of Ayni Dede of Sarajevo, on this topic also see: Nedim Zahirović, "O vjerodostojnosti narodnog predanja o sarajevskom šejhu Ajni-dedeu", *Anali Gazi Husrev-begove biblioteke*, knj. XLIII, Sarajevo, 2022., 211-220.

83 On the discourse about this duty, see Michael A. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

84 On Niyazi-i Misrī see: D. Terzioğlu, "Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyāzī-i Miṣrī (1618-1694)"; on Mehmed of Užice see: Nathalie Clayer, *Mystiques, Etat et société: les Halvetis dans l'aire balkanique de la fin du XVe siècle à nos jours*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, New York, 1994, 185-191, 196, 200, 201. Clayer summarizes rich ex-Yugoslav and Bosnian literature on this person although some of her claims seem to be far-fetched and based on misunderstanding of primary sources.

85 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 89b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 168.

found himself in the state of an awed sense of self–denigration and shame in front of the Sheikh. The terms *ḥayā* and *'uccāb* possess such meanings as technical terms in the Sufi vocabulary.[86] Written directly in the first–person singular, but without the first-person pronoun, this story is a direct record of Münīrī's mystical experience and devotion to the Sheikh who led him through the mystical stages (*şeyḫ–i terbiyye*).[87]

Another mystical experience involving one of Münīrī's Sufi teachers centers on a story whose main character is Ali Efendi – previously mentioned in this paper in connection with narratives about child mortality and intertextual use of 'Āşıḳpāşāzāde's critique of the ulema–turned–courtier class. In this account, no direct personal encounter or its consequences are described; rather, the focus is on the transformative power of dream vision. In this story, the personal meeting and its consequences do not take place. Rather, it is a story about the power of dream visions. Münīrī narrates how he saw in his dreams the deceased Ali Efendi who took him aside and put a white sweetmeat into his mouth (…*bir gice ḥakīri der kenār idüb aġzuma bir beyāż loḳum bıraḳdı*…).[88] Encounters between a sheikh and his disciples in dreams were a frequent theme in Ottoman Sufi texts.[89] Upon waking, Münīrī immediately narrated his vision, which he understood within the framework of the well–known controversy surrounding Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation of the Qur'anic Pharaoh's death as that of a believer.[90] The controversy was rampant in the Ottoman society in the 16th and 17th centuries[91] especially, though it

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86 Mustafa Çağrıcı, "Hayâ", *TDVİA*, vol. 16, 554-555; Seyyid Mustafa Râsım Efendi, *Tasavvuf Sözlüğü* (*Istılâhât-ı İnsan-ı Kâmil*), hz. İhsan Kara, İnsan Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, 778.

87 Fritz Meier, "Ḫurāsān und das Ende der klassischen Sūfik", *Bausteine I, Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Islamwissenschaft*, hgg. Erika Glassen und Gudrung Schubert, Franz Steiner Verlag, Istanbul – Stuttgart, 1992, 131-156, esp. at pp. 150-154.

88 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 81b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 159.

89 Cemal Kafadar, "Müteredditi Bir Mutasavvıf: Üsküp'lü Asiye Hatun'un Rüya Defteri 1641-43", *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yıllık*, vol. 5, Istanbul, 1992, 168-222; *Kitābü'l-Menāmāt: Sultan III. Murad'ın rüya mektupları*, hz. Özgen Felek, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014.

90 Eric Ormsby, "The Faith of Pharaoh: A Disputed Question in Islamic Theology", *Studia Islamica*, vol. 98/99, 2004, 5-28; Ömer Faruk Harman, Mustafa İsmet Uzun, "Firavun", *TDVİA*, vol. 13, 118-122.

91 *The Balance of Truth* by Katib Chelebi, Translated with an introd. and notes, by G. L. Lewis, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1957, II (Singing), 38-41, III (Dancing), 42-46, IX (The Faith of Pharaoh), 75-79, X (The Controversy), 80-83;

is one of those gross never ending intra–Muslim strives which are present even in our days. Münīrī concluded his narrative with the remark that in order to clarify the questions regarding the faith of Pharaoh and İbn ʻArebī he composed a treatise as a draft regarding the question (… *bir risāle tesvīd olunmaḳ müyesser oldı*…).[92]

On the widespread practice of visiting the graves of holy men (*ziyāret–i ḳubūr*) and seeking their intercession, Münīrī included a first–person narrative remark in which he reflected on the custom. This story was concerned with the famous siege of Kanije in 1600 led by Bosnian born Grand Vizier Damad Ibrahim Pasha.[93] This prolonged siege was one of the great issues in the Ottoman centres in Serbia, Bosnia and Hungary. The Ottoman people of the frontiers felt that without Kanije falling into Ottoman hands, the entire Ottoman frontier towards the Habsburgs would be endangered.[94] But, the siege was prolonged and difficult because the Habsburgs put all their sources at work to prevent the fall of the fortress. In that situation Münīrī, as he retold the story, went to visit the grave of Sheikh Muslihuddin in Dimitrofça. Together with Münīrī the rite of visitation was performed by a person named Ġā'ibī who was a preacher (*ḫaṭīb*).[95] They both asked in front of the Sheikh's grave for his intercession that the Ottoman military might take over the fortress. They both recited the *Feṭḥ* (Q 48) chapter of the Qur'an, which is famous as a text invoked by Muslims seeking God's help, especially in war. Then they had a vision of a rooster, which in Sufism particularly was considered as a creature connected with the Muslim paradise and miraculous deeds.[96] Münīrī and his friend Ġā'ibī received news of the conquest of Kanije quite soon thereafter. This story reflects the importance of

D. Terzioğlu, "Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyāzī-i Miṣrī (1618-1694)", passim.

92 Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 82a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 159, the term *tesvīd* referres to the draft (*müsvedde*). It is not clear whether some independent treatise of Münīrī existed, or this was a reference to his commentary on a ghazal in which the poet, according to Münīrī, inappropriately used some statements by Ibn Arebi, see: O. Şahin, *İki Sûfînin Mücadelesi*, 317-380

93 On him see: Nezihi Aykut, "Damad İbrâhim Paşa", *TDVİA*, vol. 8, 440-441.

94 *Topçular Kâtibi*, I-II, Index, s.v. Kanije (col. 1269a).

95 It is not possible to determine whether this was the same Ġā'ibī mentioned in the previous story, whose children were dying.

96 Fritz Meier, "Niẓāmi und die Mythologie des Hahns", *Bausteine II*, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Islamwissenschaft*, hgg. Erika Glassen und Gudrung Schubert, Franz Steiner Verlag, Istanbul – Stuttgart, 1992, 996-1056.

visitation of miraculous tombs in Münīrī's worldview. As is well–known, tomb visitation was also a highly contested question during the 16th and 17th centuries in Ottoman Islam.[97] The visitation of saintly tombs was apparently spread throughout the Ottoman society. Münīrī indeed was a learned sharia minded sheikh, but unlike the Kadızadelis, he apparently favoured the tomb visitation practices and personally took place in such activities. Sharia–minded he might have been, but he was much closer to the people whom Birgivī, Kadızade, and Kadızadelis launched attacks against, rather than being a Kadızadeli himself.

Münīrī belonged to a peculiar caste of the learned Sufi masters in the Ottoman Empire during 16th and 17th centuries[98] who were sharia–minded and well–versed in the exoteric Islamic scholarly disciplines as well as the secular aspects of traditional Islamic canon of learning, yet remained devoted Sufis. Therefore, it is evident that, in his view, the visitation of tombs did not constitute a para–Islamic excess, but reflected a normative dimension of Ottoman Islam.

The story about the Ottoman capture of Kanije and its impact on the public opinion of the Ottoman frontier society towards the Habsburgs brings another detail in which Münīrī, narrating in the first person, describes his contacts with the conqueror of Kanije, Damad İbrahim Pasha (d. 1601). On one occasion Münīrī was granted an audience in front of Damad İbrahim Pasha. He appeared in front of the Pasha for his concerns about the Belgrade endowment of Yahyalü Mehmed Pasha.[99] During his third vizierate Damad İbrahim Pasha was practically present all the time in the Hungarian war theatre.[100] Given that Belgrade served as the principal Ottoman logistical hub during the war of 1593–1606,[101] it is high-

97 *The Balance of Truth*, XIII (Pilgrimages to Tombs), 92-99; Derin Terzioğlu, "Ibn Taymiyya, al-Siyāsa al-sharʿiyya, and the Early Modern Ottomans", in: *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, ed. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2021, 101-154, especially at pp. 134-136, and n. 121.

98 Hanna Sohrweide, "Gelehrte Scheiche und sufische 'Ulemā im Osmanischen Reich", in: *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients. Festschrift für Bertold Spuler*, hg. Hans Robert Roemer, Albrecht Noth., Brill, Leiden, 1981, 375-386.

99 On this endowment see: Aleksandar Fotić, "Yahyapaşa-oğlu Mehmed Pasha's Evkaf in Belgrade", *Acta Orientalia Hungarica*, 54, 2001, 437-452.

100 N. Aykut, "Damad İbrâhim Paşa", 440-441.

101 Toma Popović, *Dubrovačka arhivska građa o Beogradu, 3, 1593-1606*, Istorijski arhiv Beograda, Beograd, 1986; *Topçular Kâtibi*, I-II, Index, Belgırad (coll. 1204b); Caroline Finkel, *The administration of warfare : the Ottoman military*

ly likely that Münīrī and the Pasha did, in fact, meet – even if Münīrī's account of the encounter has not survived. The main contemporary chronicler Topçular Kâtibi found it important to mention Münīrī Efendī as a famous sheikh and mufti of Belgrade who was a frequenter of the Divan of any *serdar* passing through Belgrade on his way to Hungary.[102] Münīrī described in the anecdote that when he appeared at the Divan of Damad İbrahim Pasha one of the ulema scholars attached to the Palace (…*sarāy müderrislerinden biri…*) questioned why he came with his request and why he is there, since he (Münīrī) is not officially recorded as belonging to this setting (…*senüñ bunda ne ḳayduñ vardur…).* Münīrī responded saying that "this poor fellow, I (*bu faḳīr*), came for the purpose of the re–establishment of the endowment and preservation of the memory of the late Mehmed Pasha because 'to serve this *ġāzī* causes God's grace'" (…*ıslāḥı vaḳf içün geldügüm…Meḥemmed Pāşā merḥūmuñ… ẕikr idecek…ol ġāzīye ḫiẕmet sebeb–i raḥmetdür…*).[103] From this anecdote emanates the social tension between the Palace circles in the capital and the frontier society in the Balkans and Hungary. Münīrī in this passage indirectly criticized the ulema occupying the courtly bureaucratic positions. He expressed his critique of the ulema of his time, who were competing for bureaucratic positions, through various means and in various contexts. In one passage in *Silsiletü'l–muḳarrebīn* after describing some virtues of the ulema of the Levant, Iraq and Egypt he says that: "As the pillars of the state continue to deteriorate in the present situation, the customs of the esteemed *sheikh*s [of earlier times] are now remembered with longing." (*Şimdiki ḥālde erkān–ı devlet bozulduḳça meşāyiḫuñ siñirleri özüldü olur*).[104] This was an old theme and topos in the discourse of the pious Islamic intellectuals.[105] Yet again we hear the echo of the olden Aşıkpaşazade's theme on the corrupted scholars

campaigns in Hungary, 1593-1606, VWGÖ, Wien, 1988; Nenad Filipović, "Grand Vizier Koca Sinan Pasha and the Ottoman Non-Muslims*", Entangled confessionalizations?: dialogic perspectives on the politics of piety and community building in the Ottoman Empire, 15th-18th Centuries*, eds. Tijana Krstic and Derin Terzioğlu, Gorgias Press, Piscataway, 2022, 625-672.

[102] *Topçular Kâtibi* I, 210, 302, 416.

[103] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 120a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 206.

[104] Ibid., f. 49b; Ibid., 116.

[105] Nikki R. Keddie, "Symbol and Sincerity in Islam", *Studia Islamica*, 19, 1963, 27-63; Gibril Fouad Haddad, "Quietism and End-time Reclusion in the Qurʾān and Hadith: al-Nābulusī and his Book Takmīl al-nuʿūt within the ʿUzla Genre", *Islamic Sciences*, vol. 15, No. 2, Winter 2017, 91-124.

attached to the court.[106] But this was not all. The anecdote regarding the renovation of Mehmed Pasha's endowment is indicative of the repeated cases of deterioration of endowments in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. Roughly 50–60 years after the famous members of the Yahyalü dynasty passed away (Bālī Beg, Mehmed Pasha, Arslan Pasha, and others), their endowments were in a mess. The Belgrade endowment of Mehmed Pasha was one of the greatest in the Ottoman Balkans. Nonetheless, around 1600, the state found it necessary to intervene and rectify the situation surrounding the endowment. Münīrī not only demonstrated concern for the legal and administrative integrity of the endowment but also expressed a personal attachment to the legacy of the frontier dynasty that had originally established it. As a prominent sheikh and jurisconsult in Belgrade, he may have held an official role in overseeing the endowment's affairs; yet his writings suggest a deeper emotional investment in the symbolic and cultural memory of the dynasty itself. This memory, rooted in narratives of piety, martial valour, and local patronage functioned as a foundational element of frontier identity in the Ottoman Balkans, shaping communal values and legitimizing local religious authority. All of this was neatly recorded in his note in which he repeatedly uses the first person of the verb together with the circumventing syntagm "this poor fellow". This exclusive use is a telling testimony of his selfhood dominating other discourse voices in his hagiographic work.

The interplay between the oral and written as reflected in both Münīrī's writings and in his Sufi experience is well represented in a story where Münīrī recounts how a certain Emīr Efendī related to him some stories about the important Halveti sheikhs of Damascus. Emīr Efendī said that he was the fourth transmitter and that Münīrī should be the fifth one in that chain (*…buña beñzer ḥikāyeti Emīr Efendī bu ḥaḳīre naḳl eyledi ve buyurdı ben dördünci rāvīyem sen beşinci ol…*).[107] Here one observes the adoption of the learned hadith scholarship terminology when relating the Sufi hagiographic data. This shows the incorporation

[106] As a curiosity, it can be mentioned that during the ceremonies marking the departure of the Ottoman armies from the capital for the Hungarian campaign, the flag of the ancestor of Aşıkpaşazade – one of the founding fathers of the Ottoman Sufism, as well as the religio-ethical lore of the Ottoman ghazis, Aşıkpaşa – was carried as a mighty relic to aid in the war. *Topçular Kâtibi*, II, 717, 1071. On Aşık Paşa see: Günay Kut, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Aşık Paşa", *TDVİA*, vol. 4, 1-3.

[107] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 129b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 217.

of the Islamic scholarly disciplines and their terminology into the popular Sufi hagiographic texts. In this regard one can observe the interwoven character of such hagiographic texts and traditions which used to contain the streams of both the higher and the lesser forms of tradition in the Burkeian sense of the word.[108]

In the context of the mentioned interplay between the oral and written regarding the Sufi hagiographic tradition in general and the Halveti one in particular, further explication by Münīrī on tradition regarding the Halveti sheikhs of Damascus is a quite pertinent piece of the first–person narrative. Münīrī observed that the traditions about *sheikh* Şemseddīn and the Üveysīyye branch in Damascus were carefully written down. A pupil of Şemseddīn–i Rūmī was said by Münīrī to have compiled a thick volume in Arabic wherein the miracles and mystic stages of Şemseddīn were recorded carefully. Then Münīrī comes to the authorial first–person singular narrative saying how he was unable to find a copy of that collection while he was writing his hagiographic work. Nonetheless Münīrī reiterated his frequent trope about the sharia mindedness of his discourse for he said that the main goal of his work was to be the purport of sharia and not merely a collection of the miracle stories (…*bir ʻāşıḳ bir nice cüz'–i ʻarebī terākīb ile cemʻ u derc etmiş sābıḳda gördüm idüm lākin taḥrīr ḥīninde dest–res bulmayub emmā ġarrāż ḥāmī–'i şerīʻat olmaḳdur cāmīʻ–i kerāmet degüldür*).[109]

Furthermore, Münīrī reflected on his authorial experience in a brief excursus, noting that he had composed a treatise addressing the permissibility and prohibition of dancing within the ritual life of the *ṭarīḳat*. As he put it, "In the treatise that this humble poor man, I, compiled on the defects of dancing [*naḳş–ı raḳş*], I have presented a clarification of the error" (…*bu ednā faḳīr cemʻeyledügüm naḳş–ı raḳş risālesinde ḥaṭīe–'i beyān getürmişümdür*…).[110] During a period marked by intense controversy over devotional practices, Münīrī emerged as a significant voice in the debates concerning the permissibility of *semā'* and *raḳş* within Sufi

[108] Peter Burke, "From Pioneers to Settlers: Recent Studies of the History of Popular culture. A Review Article", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 1983), 181-187; Idem, "Learned Culture and Popular Culture in Renaissance Italy", *Revista de Historia*, vol. 125-126, Aug-Dec/91 – Jan-July/92, 53-63, especially at pp. 57-58, and p. 63.

[109] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 131b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 219.

[110] Ibid., f. 140; Bitiçi, Ibid., 228.

ritual life.[111] As a prominent critic of their permissibility in devotional practice, he articulated in an extraordinary way the views of earlier generations of scholars who opposed *semā'* and *raḳṣ*. Münīrī's writings pertaining to this controversy survive to our days, although one might think that what reached our days is not his entire input on the question.[112]

Besides his authorial activities, Münīrī left notes about his activities as a copyist. The craft of manuscript copying was quite developed in the Ottoman Balkans. There were totally professionalized copyists who were involved in the mass production of the manuscripts in the marketplaces,[113] then followed high ranking calligraphers who were attached to the imperial or local potentate households. Finally, there were non–professional copyists, mostly intellectuals and members of the religious institutions, who were engaged in the craft of copying out of their love for it and not due to its marketability.[114] Among his works, Münīrī authored a biographical account devoted to the esteemed Halveti sheikh Yaybaşızade

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[111] On this see: D. Terzioğlu, "Sufi and Dissident in the Ottoman Empire: Niyāzī-i Miṣrī (1618-1694)"; Eadem, "Sunna-minded sufi preachers in service of the Ottoman state: the naṣīḥatnāme of Hasan addressed to Murad IV", *Archivum Ottomanicum*, vol. 27, 2010, 241-312. Also see, for the bibliographic purposes, an unsatisfactory summary: Ali Efdal Özkul and Slobodan Ilić, "Ibn Arabi, Malami-Bayrami Dervish Order and the 17th Century Ottoman Balkans", *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2017, 328-335.

[112] Münīrī-i Belġrādī, *Risāle fī reddi'ş-semā'*, Konya, Konya Bölge Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Ms. no. 198, f. 148a-162b; f. 173b-188a; Idem, *Risāle ḳavlu'r-riżā fī't-tenbīh 'ale'l-fuṣūṣ ve'ş-semā*, Konya, Konya Bölge Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Ms. no. 198, f. 199b-214a; Idem, *Mektūb*, İstanbul Sülyemaniye Şehid Ali Paşa, Ms. no. 2819/3, f. 148a-160b. Comp. Anonymous, *The Treatise on the Rakṣ and Semā*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Mixt. 956, f. 108a-113a.

[113] For a particular example of how Ottoman manuscript practices influenced and mirrored the commercial trajectories of select treatises across different periods, see: Mustafa Altuğ Yayla, "Müellifler, Piyasa, ve Kendini Göstermek, *Hüsrev ü Şirin* Anlatısının Diyâr-ı Rûm'daki Serüveni", in: *Sebeb-i Telif*, 313-349.

[114] On the various types of Ottoman copyists in the Balkans see: M. Ždralović, *Bosansko-hercegovački prepisivači*, I, passim. An illustrative case of local-level book copying in the Balkans can be found in: Muamer Hodžić, "Skriptorij", *Foča: središte Hercegovačkog sandžaka*, Orijentalni institut, Sarajevo, 2019., 181-188. For exemplary figures of bibliophilic zeal and scribal dedication in the Ottoman Balkans, see: Tatjana Paić-Vukić, *Svijet Mustafe Muhibbija*, *sarajevskog kadije*, Srednja Europa, Zagreb, 2007; Stoyanka Kenderova, "Ahmed Keşfî Efendi", *TDVİA*, vol. EK-2, reviewed second edition, Ankara, 2020, 44-45.

Hızır Efendi.[115] He was one of those sheikhs who were politically deeply engaged and personally well connected. He played an important role in the Ottoman–Habsburg wars in Hungary.[116] This sheikh met a martyr's death in the Egri Campaign in 1596 and was buried in the Rumelian town of Tatarpazarcık, next to the grave of another famous sheikh Kurd Efendi to whom Münīrī also dedicated a biographic note. He immediately gained the status of the dead holy man because miracles related to his dead body made certain Christians convert to Islam, according to Münīrī.[117] Hızır Efendi was a learned sheikh involved in writing his own work as well as in commenting on the Islamic canon works. Münīrī mentioned his literary miscellanies (…*iki mecmū'ası gendüden soñra vaḳf olsun*…).[118] He was particularly interested in Qur'anic commentary – *tefsīr*, and in the works of substantive Islamic law. Münīrī copied some of his scholarly works (…*bu faḳīr istinsāḥ etmiş idüm*…).[119] Münīrī's engagement with prominent Halveti and other sheikhs, evident not only in his biographical writings but also in earlier documented interactions, suggests that he maintained close personal ties within influential Sufi circles. While composing biographies alone may not constitute definitive proof of intimacy, the cumulative evidence points to a network of relationships that shaped his intellectual and spiritual orientation. As he was a sheikh himself, most probably Halveti, Münīrī occupied a position that granted him privileged access to these figures, and his writings

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[115] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 95b-97b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 175-177. Further on this important sheikh see: Hafız Hüseyin Ayvansarayi, *Hadîkatü'l-Cevâmi' / İstanbul Câmileri ve Diğer Dînî-Sivil Mi'mârî Yapılar*, İşaret Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, 262. Also see: Gülrü Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2005, 500; Ayşe Bölükbaşı, "XVI. Yüzyılda İstanbul'daki Halveti Tekkelerinde Mekânsal İşleyiş: Tekkelerin Mensup Oldukları Külliye İçindeki Diğer Birimlerle İlişkileri", *Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, vol. 3, no. 1, June 2018, 214-239, esp. at p. 217, 220.

[116] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 95b-96a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 175. On this peculiar type of politically involved sheikh – courtier and frequenter of assemblies in the palaces of potentates see: Derin Terzioğlu, "Power, Patronage and Confessionalism: Ottoman Politics as Seen through the Eyes of a Crimean Sufi, 1580-1593", in: Marinos Sariyannis (ed.), Halcyon Days in Crete IX, *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete University Press, Rethymnon, 2019, 149-186.

[117] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 96a; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 176.

[118] Ibid, f. 96b; Ibid., 176. On this type of manuscript see: *Eski Türk Edebiyatı Çalışmaları VII*.

[119] Belġrādī, *Silsile*, f. 96a-96b; Bitiçi, *Münîri-i Belgrâdî*, 176.

reflect more than mere hagiographic convention. His notes, therefore, warrant close scholarly attention: they offer rare glimpses into the experiential and relational dimensions of Ottoman religious life that remain largely inaccessible through conventional archival sources. Parallel to the biographical narrative, this episode also underscores the willingness of socially prominent and intellectually distinguished individuals to engage in the labour–intensive practice of manuscript copying. Far from being a task reserved for professional scribes or lower–status figures, copying texts was, in certain contexts, a meaningful act that reflected scholarly devotion, piety, and participation in manuscript culture. In this sense, the case of Münīrī serves as a testimony not only to the social capital associated with authoring texts, but also to the cultural and symbolic value attached to the act of copying itself within Ottoman intellectual life.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored whether traces of a first–person narrative legacy can be discerned in texts not explicitly conceived as autobiographical. The case study focuses on the oeuvre of Münīrī–i Belġrādī, a Sufi and scholar active in Ottoman Belgrade, and shows that Münīrī frequently embedded first–person narratives and various forms of autobiographical excursuses throughout his works. These passages offer compelling evidence of the significance of selfhood and personality within the Ottoman worldview. The Ottomans possessed a richly layered vocabulary of selfhood that reflected a synthesis of mystical, rhetorical, and social registers shaped by broader currents of Sufi thought. Münīrī's autobiographical excursuses extended across both private and public domains, including domestic and institutional spheres. Although they were often used to illustrate spiritual concepts, particularly those rooted in Sufi tradition, the examples were drawn from real life and contained elements of factual information regardless of their representational function. The reliability and depth of this information are closely tied to the author's high intellectual achievements. To reach more definitive conclusions about the purpose and nature of Ottoman first–person narrative texts, it is essential to examine works by authors of varying educational backgrounds and social statuses. Future research should also pay greater attention to provincial settings, since much of the existing scholarship in Ottoman cultural history has relied predominantly on palace–centered texts.

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TRAGOVI VLASTITOG JA: RASPRŠENI NARATIVI U PRVOM LICU U SPISIMA MÜNĪRĪ–I BELĠRĀDĪJA

Abstrakt

Ovaj rad istražuje detalje i načine izražavanja u prvom licu (samoiskaz) u spisima balkansko–osmanskog autora Münīrīja Belġrādīja (u. 1620–1628). Iz nama dostupnih podataka znamo da je bio muftija, muderis i sufijski učenjak, odnosno vjerovatno je bio i šejh nekog tarikata, po svoj prilici halvetijskog. Münīrī–i Belġrādī djelovao je tokom druge polovine 16. i prvih decenija 17. vijeka, uglavnom u Beogradu. Kroz pažljivu tekstualnu analizu njegovih spisa, studija doprinosi savremenim raspravama o retoričkoj konstrukciji sebstva u osmanskoj rukopisnoj kulturi. Umjesto da se lična zamjenica „ja" tretira kao jedini pokazatelj ego–narativa, rad prepoznaje i tumači niz indirektnih i perifrastičnih strategija artikulacije sebstva. Također je pokazano da je ovaj tip narativa zaista bogat historijski izvor i sa činjenične strane gledanja. Studija zastupa tezu da predstave i činjeničnost u ovakvim rukopisima nisu međusobno isključive, već međusobno isprepletene dimenzije osmanskog književnog izraza. Prilikom analize ovih ego–narativa istraživači bi trebali obratiti pažnju ne samo na retoričke strategije već i na historijsku zbilju koja je u njima izričito prisutna.

Ključne riječi: naracija u prvom licu, ego–diskurs, Münīrī–i Belġrādī, osmansko sebstvo, rukopisna kultura, sufizam, retoričke strategije.