

A New Source on Ottoman Self-Narratives: Kulakzade Mahmud Pasha's Dream Diary

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Abstract : In this study, a new source on Ottoman Self-narratives, Kulakzâde Mahmud Paşa's Düşname (Dreambook), will be introduced to illustrate how dreams can provide a ground for historical analysis. The manuscript looks like a private notebook of an Ottoman official, Mahmud Pasha, who lived and operated in Rumelia in the early eighteenth century. It provides insight into the ordinary and daily concerns of a bureaucrat who had the knowledge and tools to record them in writing. On the one side of the notebook, Mahmud Pasha recorded his travels and appointments in 1730-1731. He wrote places that he reached and stayed every day. On the reverse side, the same author kept a record of his dreams and named that part of his notebook, Düşname. He recorded his dreams on a daily basis in writing and therefore they were well-preserved in a dream diary. This study aims at drawing the social, cultural and psychic life of an early modern Ottoman bureaucrat. It will uncover the ways and means whereby he interpreted his environment, as well as how he made meaning of his dreams considering the social milieu and historical context within which he lived. The first part will focus on 'official dreams' uncovering how his official life and ambitions coincide with his spiritual life. Related to this, connection between anxiety and dream narratives will be evaluated as dreams in which the mundane concerns of securing a post occupied the most central place in the construction of his narrative. A further point will be made by questioning Mahmud Pasha's possible Sufi connections and his familiarity with the tradition of dream interpretation. Also, considering Mahmud Pasha's inclusion of other's dreams in his Düşnâme, the issue of dream-telling will be questioned in order to reveal how dreams were interconnected and how they created a space for social gathering.

Keywords : Ottoman self-narratives, dreams, diary, Ottoman cultural history

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