

Unraveling History: Latifi's Alleged *Hamse* and the Celalis' Persecution of His Son

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Context*

Housed in the Ottoman Archives (BOA, C..ML., 204-8439), the *telhîş*¹ presented here sheds new light on renowned *tezkiye* (collection of poets' biographies) author Latifi Çelebi's (d. 990/1582) own family and offers new insights into the relationship between the Ottoman administration and renowned literati after their death. The *telhîş*, dated 1 Muharram 1019/26 March 1610, states that Hacı Mehemed, Latifi's son, submitted a petition to the state requesting that ten *baṭmāns*² of paddy seeds be allotted to him from the land owned by the Sultan (*mīrī 'arāzī*) in Boyabat. Mehemed appealed to the state because he had been robbed four times and held captive by the Celalis. This, coupled with his advanced age, poverty, and responsibility for a sizable household, compelled him to appeal to the authorities for a monthly allowance. The *telhîş* includes the officer's address to Sultan Ahmed I, in which he expressed his opinion about Mehemed's request, as well as the Sultan's response. The officer deemed ten *baṭmāns* to be excessive and proposed that five *baṭmāns* be allocated to Mehemed instead, stating that this amount would suffice his needs. Thereupon the Sultan approved this officer's recommendation in his concluding remarks.

The *telhîş* directs our attention to two intriguing, previously unknown facets of Latifi.³ Firstly, although Latifi himself confirms his lineage to the prominent Ḥaṭīb-

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¹ While a *telhîş* refers to a summarized report written by any subordinate to a superior officer, it is most commonly used in reference to the correspondence of the grand vizier to sultan. See Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı Belgelerinin Dili (Diplomatik)*, (İstanbul: Kubbealtı, 1994), 206.

² The *baṭmān*, a unit of weight used particularly by Turks across different regions and historical periods, lacked a fixed equivalent and varied depending on both time and geographic region. While standardized at 10 kg in the Ottoman Empire in 1881, its weight had previously fluctuated between two and eight kg. See Cengiz Kallek, "Batman", in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV, 1992). Given this, we can infer that the aforementioned amount of ten *baṭmāns* corresponds to a range of 20 to 80 kg.

³ Biographical sources indicate that two additional poets using the nome de plume Latifi lived during the sixteenth century. The first, also known as Tûtî-i Latîf, was a qadi from Bursa who died in 972/1564-65 (Yunus Kaplan, "Latîfi, Tûtî-i Latîf," in *Türk Edebiyatı İsimler Sözlüğü*, Ankara: Ahmet Yesevi Üniversitesi, 2014). The second, Latîfi-i Hânende, was a poet and composer from Iran who eventually settled in Aleppo (İsmail Hakkı Aksoyak, "Latîfi, Latîfi-i Hânende, Halepli" in *Türk Edebiyatı İsimler Sözlüğü*, Ankara: Ahmet Yesevi Üniversitesi, 2014). Since the document

zâdeler family of Kastamonu,⁴ the specifics of his own immediate family had remained elusive until the discovery of this *telhîş*. Indeed, it reveals that Latifi had a son named Mehmed who, albeit in the autumn of his life, was still alive in 1610. As evidenced by his title of Hacı, Mehmed had completed the Hajj pilgrimage prior to filing his request, thereby suggesting that he had possessed sufficient wealth to cover the travel expenses to Mecca at some point earlier in his life. Yet his fortune took a downturn as he approached the twilight of his life. Despite his prominent lineage and wealth, he and his family were unable to shield themselves from the economic and social turbulence wrought by the Celalis during their era.

Secondly, the *telhîş* introduces Latifi as a *hamse*⁵ *şâhibi*—an author of five *meşnevîs*. In his biography of poets, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şu'arâ*, Latifi states that he authored twelve works, including *Enisü'l-Füşeḥâ*, *Fuṣûl-i Erba'a*, *Evşâf-ı İstanbul*, and a voluminous *Divân*.⁶ Apart from what he mentioned, scholars have likewise determined the following works to belong to him: *Evşâf-ı İbrâhîm Paşa*, *Sübḥatü'l-Uşşâk*, *Nazmü'l-Cevâhir*, and *Esmâ'u Suveri'l-Ḳur'ân*. Of all the aforementioned works, only the latter three and his *Divân* are poetic works but not in *meşnevî* form.⁷ Assuming that he wrote his last three unknown works in *meşnevî* form, they would not suffice to classify him as a *hamse şâhibi*. Moreover, neither Latifi himself nor any other sources mention him with this title.⁸ Given that not everyone who had authored five *meşnevîs* called himself or was known as a *hamse şâhibi*, Arslan argues that being a *hamse şâhibi* requires that one meet additional criteria in addition to writing five *meşnevîs*. However, he does not specify what these criteria are.⁹

specifies that Latifi was from Kastamonu, the poet referenced in the document is the celebrated *tezkire* writer and not either of the two mentioned herein.

⁴ Latîfi, *Tezkiretü'ş-Şu'arâ ve Tabsiratü'n-Nuzamâ*, ed. Rıdvan Canım (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2018), 468.

⁵ A *hamse* used to indicate a collection of five *meşnevîs* authored by a poet. See Mehmet Arslan, "Türk Edebiyatı'nda Hamse," *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 5, no. 9 (2007): 305.

⁶ Latîfi, *Tezkire*, 470-471.

⁷ Ahmet Sevgi, "Latîfi," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV, 2003).

⁸ Cf. Sevgi, "Latîfi" and Latîfi, *Tezkire*, 9-11, 468-474.

⁹ Arslan, "Türk Edebiyatı'nda Hamse," 310.

The title used in the *telhîş* gains importance in this context. Here are three possibilities explaining why Latifi was called a *hamse şāhibi*. Latifi may have written five heretofore undiscovered *meşnevîs* during the twilight of his life, or the official made an error. Yet, these two explanations are unlikely. The final and most probable explanation is that his works, which number well more than five, were deemed a *hamse*.

Arslan asserts that, at least in certain exceptional cases, any five works of an author could render him a *hamse şāhibi*.¹⁰ Although he fails to specify such cases explicitly, we can infer that he is referring to Nergisi (d. 1044/1635), as Nergisi is always presented as an exceptional case of being a *hamse şāhibi* of his five prosaic works in current studies. The manuscripts from the late seventeenth century also name Nergisi's works *hamse*, nevertheless, there is no evidence that he collected them under this title.¹¹ This means that Latifi might have been called *hamse şāhibi* due to his works which he himself pointed out in his *Tezkire*.¹² If so, it is still remarkable that the term was used for prosaic works at such an early date.¹³ Whatever the case, the official's use of *hamse şāhibi* in reference to Latifi suggests an effort on his part to convince the sultan to honor Hacı Mehemed out of esteem for his late father's standing. This document also illustrates how archival sources, even the most seemingly mundane *telhîş*, can stimulate new inquiries into Ottoman literary history and enrich prosopography studies.

¹⁰ Ibid., 306.

¹¹ Süleyman Çaldak, *Nergisi ve Nihâlistân'ı*, (Istanbul: Kesit, 2010), 84-85.

¹² Tradition allowed an author to be still called a *hamse şāhibi* even if he had written more. See Hüseyin Ayan, "Divan Edebiyatında Hamseler," 91-92.

¹³ Hüseyin Ayan points out that although Aşık Çelebi recognizes Celili of Bursa as a *hamse şāhibi* of prosaic works for the first time, he has five *meşnevîs* and no prosaic works mentioned in the edition of Aşık Çelebi's *tezkire*. Cf. Ayan, "Divan Edebiyatında Hamseler," *Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi Ahmet Caferoğlu Özel Sayısı* 1, no. 10 (1979): 90, 99, and Aşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü's-Şu'arâ*, ed. Filiz Kılıç, (Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2018) 209-212. According to İ. H. Ertaylan, one copy of Aşık Çelebi's *tezkire* kept in Millet Library's Ali Emiri Collection includes a note stating that Celili authored a prosaic *hamse*. See Ağâh Sırrı Levend, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, (Ankara: TTK, 1973), 112.

Transcription

Hüve

Pāye-i serīr-i a'lāya 'arz olunduğda beş batmān ile berāt virilmek buyuruldı. Fī ğurre-i Muḥarrem sene 19.¹⁴

'Arz-ı bende-i bī-mikdār budur ki Kaştamonı sâkinlerinden ḥamse şâhibi olan merḥûm Laţîfi Çelebi'nüñ oğlı Hâcî Meḥemmed du'âcıları rikâb-ı hümayûna 'arz-ı ḥâl şunub vilâyet-i Anaṭolı'ya Celâlî müstevlî olaldan berü dört def'a mâ-meleki ğâret ve kendüsi esîr olmağla ve merḥûm du'âcıları pîr ü ihtiyâr ve faḳîrû'l-ḥâl ve keşîrû'l-'iyâl olmağın Boyabad çeltüğünüñ mîrîden ziyâde kalan toḥmdan sebab-i ma'âşî için ayda on batmān çeltük şadağa vü 'inâyet buyurıla. ~~Bâkî fermân sa'âdetlü pâdişâhumuñdur.~~¹⁵ [Ricâ ider.]¹⁶ Sa'âdetlü pâdişâhum, ayda on batmān çoğdur. Nihâyet sebab-i ma'âşî için ~~üçer~~ beş batmān kifâyet ider. Bu bâbda fermân sa'âdetlü pâdişâhumuñdur.

Maḥalline kayd olına.

¹⁴ This statement is the Sultan's verdict.

¹⁵ An additional word has remained undeciphered.

¹⁶ Such corrections could be found in the archival records. They occurred here because the authority would add an objection immediately.

*Tezkire*¹⁷ *dāde şod.*

Fī 16 Muḥarrem sene 1019.

*Tābi ‘-i kalem-i Burusa*¹⁸

Translation

He [Allah]

Following the submission [of the subjoined missive] to the honor of the [Sultan’s] most sublime throne, an imperial warrant conferring five *baṭmāns* [of paddy seeds] was ordained on the first day of Muharram, [10]19 [March 26, 1610].

This humble servant has presented the petition of Hacı Mehemmed, supplicant of the sultan and son of the late Latifi Çelebi, the author of a *ḥamse* hailing from Kastamonu. In his petition to the majestic presence of the Sultan, he states that he has been robbed four times and also held captive by the Celalis since their incursion into Anatolia. Given his advanced age, impoverished state, and burden of looking after a sizeable household, he implores that a monthly stipend of ten *baṭmāns* of leftover seeds be allocated to him from the land owned by the Sultan in Boyabat to sustain him in charitable support for his livelihood. ~~The ultimate command belongs to my felicitous Sultan.~~

¹⁷ A *tezkire*, as defined by Kütükoğlu, is essentially a communiqué exchanged between officials residing in the same town (*Osmanlı Belgelerinin Dili*, 245). Pál Fodor, however, argues that *telhîşes* evolved out of *tezkires*, citing instances where *telhîşes* are referred to as *tezkires*. Whereas the two documents do indeed share similar forms, Fodor classifies *telhîşes* as “*tezkires* submitted by the grand vizier to the sultan”. Given this, there is no doubt that this particular document is a *telhîş*, as it includes all the characteristics cited by Fodor. These include the Arabic word *hüve*, which means *he* and is commonly used in Islamic culture to refer to God, at the top; the phrase “*arż-ı bende-i bî-miḳdār*” used as an introduction to the body of the text; a summary of the event in question; the grand vizier’s opinion that begins with the phrase “*sa’ādetlü pâdişāhum*” and concludes with “*bākî fermān devletlü pâdişāhumuñdur*”; and the sultan’s ruling written at the top left of the document. See Fodor, “Telhis,” in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV, 2011).

¹⁸ The *Mukataa-i Bursa kalemi* was responsible for all of northwestern Anatolia in addition to Bursa in the seventeenth century. See Linda Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 76. Accordingly, the mention of Bursa here cannot be used to demonstrate that Hacı Mehemmed lived in Bursa proper.

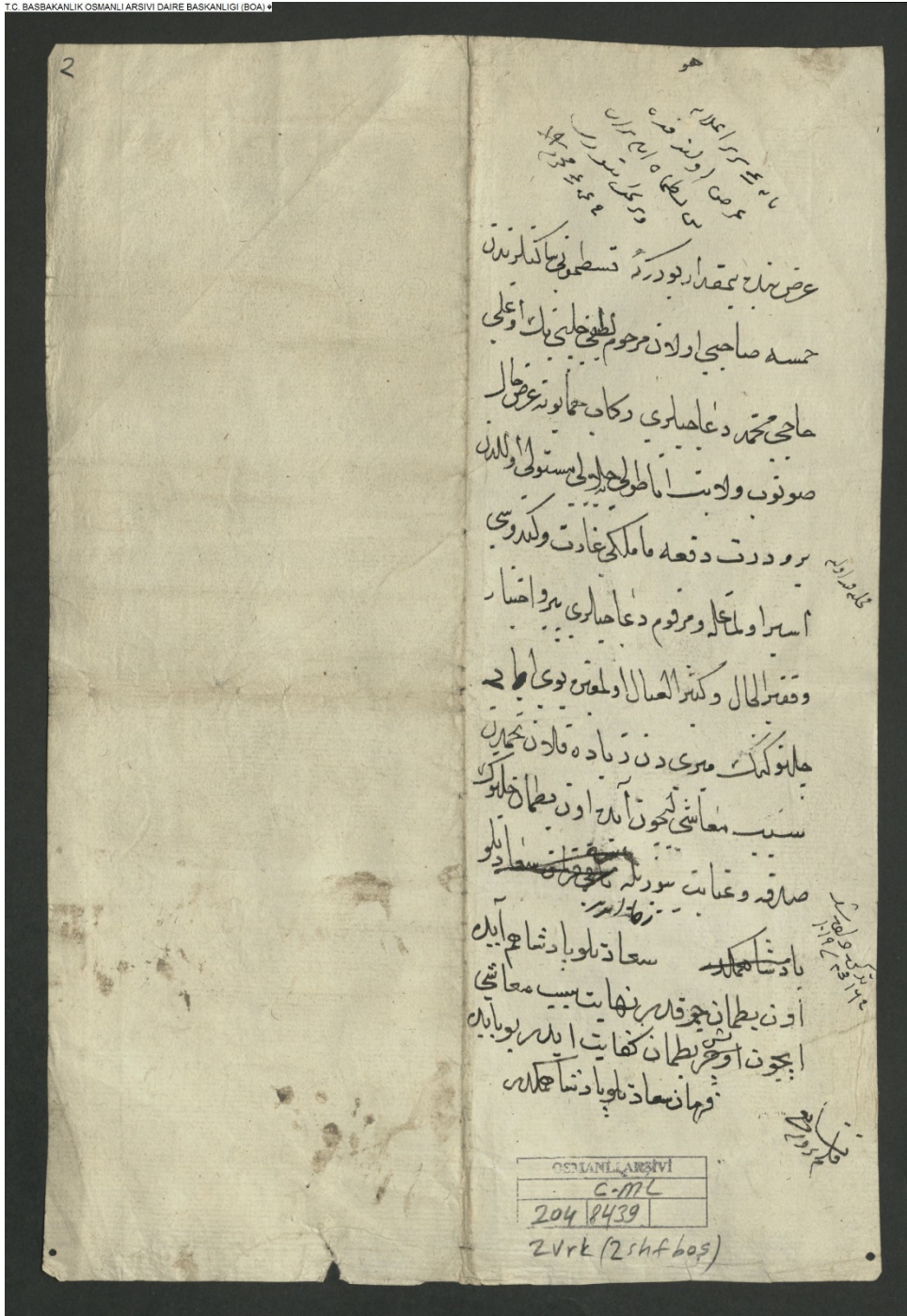
My felicitous Sultan! A monthly sum of ten *baṭmāns* is excessive. Rather ~~three~~ five *baṭmāns* shall suffice to cover his monthly upkeep. Verily the decision lies in my felicitous Sultan.

May it be duly recorded in the relevant place.

Tezkire was received on Muharram 16, 1019 [April 10, 1610].

Attached to the office of Bursa.

Facsimile



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