

“My Daughter Fatma Aliye Was Born”: The Birth Note Taken By Ahmed Cevdet Pasha

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Context

Ahmed Cevdet Pasha noted his daughters, Emine Semiye and Fatma Aliye's dates of birth in a miscellany that is currently kept in Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Atatürk Library (call no. CP_Yz_0058) and loosely cataloged as Remil Risalesi ("Treatise on Geomancy"). Such notes, taken by the owners of manuscripts in the marginalia or blank folios and pertaining to the birth of their children, are called *tevellüt kaydı* "birth note" in Turkish and can be frequently seen in MSS.

Although such personal notes inevitably pertain to a privileged class, they provide valuable insights into the social and daily life of the people. Apart from the annotations in the marginalia (*derkenar*, *haşiye*, *hamiş*), which serve a more fixed purpose, these personal notes encompass a wide spectrum of other items. Such records may include notes on significant events, such as births and deaths of loved ones, earthquakes, service appointments, dates of constructions, monetary transactions, medicines and draft poetry, as well as humorous notes directed at future readers.

Fatma Aliye Topuz (1862-1936) was a writer, essayist, and one of the inaugural female novelists in Turkish literature. Alongside her sister Emine Semiye Önasya (1864-1944), she played a pivotal role in the advancement of women's rights beginning in the late Ottoman Empire. Fatma Aliye wrote extensively on women's rights, women's education, gender inequality, and other social and gender-related issues during her lifetime.

The bottom half of folio 2^r of the miscellany bears the birth note of Fatma Aliye while in the top half of folio 1^v, there is Emine Semiye's birth note. According to this note by Ahmed Cevdet, Fatma Aliye was born on Tuesday, 27 Rabī' al-Ākhir 1279 AH and *Rumi* 9 Tishrīn al-Awwal.¹

¹ As per the Date Conversion Guide of the Turkish Historical Society, 27 Rabī' al-Ākhir 1279 AH should be a Wednesday rather than a Tuesday and correspond to *Rumi* 10 Tishrīn al-Awwal [1278] and 22 October 1862; however, since a deviation of one or two days from the guide is expected, 27 Rabī' al-Ākhir 1279 AH and *Rumi* 9 Tishrīn al-Awwal [1278] can be seen as corresponding.

Transcription

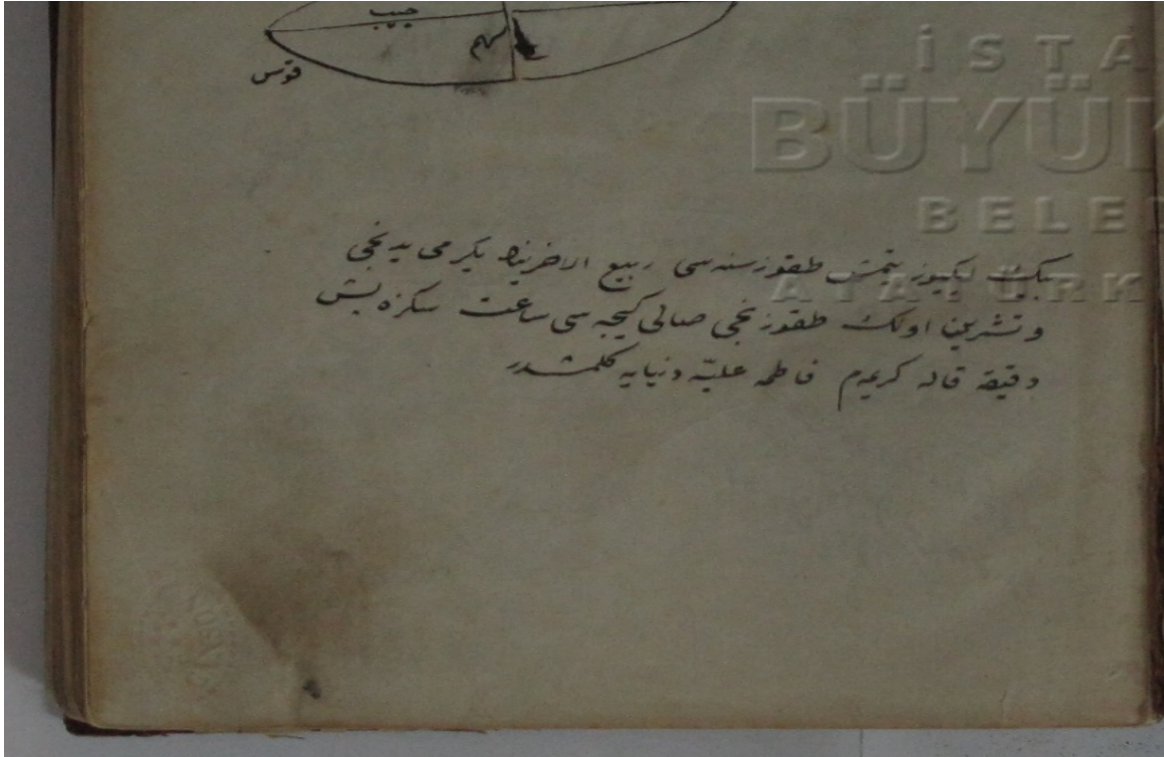
[2r, bottom half] *Biñ ikiyüz yetmiş tokuz senesi rebī'ü l-āhīriniñ yigirmi yedinci — ve tešrīn-i evveliñ tokuzuncı — şalı gècesi sā'at sekize beş daķıķa kıala kerīmem Fāṭıma [or Fāṭma] 'Aliyye dūnyāya gelmişdir.*

Translation

[2r, bottom half]

My daughter Fatma Aliye was born on the twenty seventh Tuesday night of Rabī' al-Ākhir — and the ninth of Tishrīn al-Awwal — in the year one thousand two hundred and seventy-nine [1279] at five minutes to eight o'clock.”

Facsimile



Bibliography

- “Remil Risalesi,” n.d. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Atatürk Library. (Call no. CP_Yz_0058)
- Aşa, H. Emel. “Fatma Aliye Hanım”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/fatma-aliye-hanim> (16.06.2024) (This article provides general and preliminary information on Fatma Aliye, as well as Aşa’s remarks.)
- Özdoğan, B. D. (2019). “In the Beginning Was “A Woman”: Motivation, Agency, and the Will of Fatma Aliye”. *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 6(2), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jottturstuass.6.2.06> (Özdoğan’s remarks on Fatma Aliye’s motivations for translating Georges Ohnet’s *Volonté* into Ottoman Turkish (as *Meram*) in 1889, which marks the beginning of her literary career, are worthy of consideration.)
- “Date Conversion Guide,” n.d. <https://www.ttk.gov.tr/tarih-cevirme-kilavuzu/>. (Visited on 25.3.2024)