

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

The *Seyahatname* as a First-Person Narrative

Bir Birinci Ağzdan Anlatı Olarak *Seyahatname*

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Öz

Evliya'nın Osmanlı kültür tarihinde yeri eşsizdir; çünkü 17. yüzyıl gibi seyahat anlatılarının az olduğu ve birinci ağızdan anlatıların dar bir ulema çevresi dışında nadiren üretildiği bir dönemde, Evliya, ki iyi bir eğitim almış olmasına rağmen ulemadan değildir, kendi hayat hikayesini on ciltlik devasa bir seyahatnameye içine dahil etmiştir.

Bu çalışma, Evliya'nın anlatısını üç ana kavram açısından analiz ediyor. İlk sırada yazarın hayatını yaşama biçimi olarak seyahat etmeye olan bağlılığı, ardından Osmanlı hanedanına olan sadakati geliyor. Üçüncü faktöre gelince, Evliya'nın hayatının en azından bir kısmında belirleyici olmuştur, İstanbul'da belirli bir statüye erişmiş bir taşra ileri gelen ailesinin üyesi olmasını görürüz. Bu konumu elde etmek ve korumakta, Evliya'nın ve babasının IV. Murad ve saray çevresi ile olan bağları belirleyici rol oynamıştır. Oysa Evliya, Nil'in kaynaklarını bulmak için çıktığı macera dolu bir yolculuktan döndükten sonra hayat hikâyesini kısaca özetlediğinde, seyyahın kendisini hiç terk etmediğine inandığı Tanrı'nın koruması yanında, bu dünyanın bu tür kaygıları önemsiz kalıyordu.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Yaşam boyu süren bir uğraş olarak seyahat, Osmanlı hanedanına sadakat, Yerel ileri gelenler, Batı Anadolu, Tanrıya ve manevi önderlere bağlılık.

Abstract

Evliya's position in Ottoman cultural history is unique. For in the 17th century, when travel accounts were rare and first-person narratives seldom encountered outside of a limited number of religious scholars, Evliya who despite a good education was not a scholar, integrated his life story into a massive ten-volume travelogue.

The present study analyzes Evliya's narrative in terms of three major concepts. First in line is his devotion to travel as a way of living one's life, followed by loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty. As for the third factor, a determinant during at least certain years of Evliya's life, we identify him as a member of a provincial notable family, who achieved a certain status in Istanbul. To establish and protect this position, the connections of the author and his father to the person and court of Murad IV were decisive. Even so, when Evliya briefly summarized his life story after an adventurous trip aiming to find the sources of the Nile, these worldly concerns faded into the background, when compared to the protection of the Deity that the traveler believed had never abandoned him.

Keywords

Travel as a lifetime occupation, Loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty, Local notabilities, Western Anatolia, Devotion to the Deity and holy men.

Introduction

Ensclosed within the *Seyhatname*, we find a marvelous first-person narrative, which deserves more attention than 20th- and 21st-century historians have been willing to give it. In the present study, we attempt to fill this gap, at least in part. We begin by discussing certain categories indispensable when a person sets out to describe his/her life story, namely relationships to the people in his/her immediate environment. First in line are family members, such as fathers or brothers that are close to the narrator because they are from the same bloodline. Certain key people in the environment of the narrator may not be physically related, and they enter the life story of the narrator due to socio-political considerations. Patrons are a prime example.

The next step is the discussion of two categories that in his influential biography, Robert Dankoff has used to make sense of Evliya's presentation of self. The first category is the devotion of the latter to travel as a way of living one's life, while his loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty is the second factor – even so, this attitude did not preclude a critical stance toward certain sultans.¹ When Evliya pointed out the faults and limitations of certain Otto-

1 Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). On Evliya's attitude toward the Ottoman dynasty, compare Yahya Kemal Taştan, "Evliya Çelebi's Views on the Ottoman Dynasty," in *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of his*

man rulers, he adhered to a custom that we can observe throughout the ages: courtiers and advisors supposedly were responsible for the misfortunes to which the chronicler, in this case Evliya Çelebi needed to refer. Women in the environment of the sultans were favorite scapegoats, and when discussing the reign of Sultan Ibrahim (r. 1640-48), the author conformed to this custom without hesitation.²

To date, scholars have not paid much attention to a third category that plays an important role in Evliya's narration of his life, and the present paper argues that we need to fill this gap. In Evliya's writing, his identity as a member of a minor notable family in Western Anatolia is a key feature: his father had relatives and houses in Bursa, Kütahya, Manisa and in the rural district of Sandıklı, part of the sub-province of Karahisar-ı Sahib (today Afyon).³ While this aspect of his identity was not very significant when Evliya narrated Istanbul and many of the Empire's major cities, it did become important on certain particular occasions. Thus, when Evliya performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in the beginning 1670s, he passed through Kütahya, the original home of his family and later visited the grave of his sister in Bergama, abducted by her former fiancé İlyas Paşa after her father had broken off her engagement.⁴ Moreover, the author's narration of this distressing provincial episode links it to the intervention of Murad IV (r. 1623-1640) in favor of Evliya's father Mehmed Zilli, when the latter complained of the misdeeds of the rebel İlyas Paşa. Evliya's account shows how provincial figures of some repute might gain access to the Istanbul elite, a feat that Evliya's father accomplished, though not without difficulty.

Certainly, there are quite a few other concerns involving Evliya that justify historical studies, which the present chapter will not include because of the limitations of time, space and most obviously, the competence of the present author. To cite just a few examples, Evliya was passionate about archery, a

Birth, eds. Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan, Robert Dankoff, English-language version edited by Robert Dankoff, (Istanbul: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2012), 242-62. For a summary compare Seyyar, "Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesinde."

- 2 All references to Evliya's narrative are from the following series: Evliya Çelebi b Derviş Mehmed Zilli. *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, edited by Seyit Ali Kahraman et al., 10 vols. (Istanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Yayınları, 1999-2007). On the author's comments about the women in Sultan Ibrahim's harem, see Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 130.
- 3 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 12-79. Evliya has not recorded the exact location of his family's farm/çiftlik.
- 4 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 12-7 (Kütahya), 45-6 (After the complaints of Evliya Çelebi's father, Murad IV orders the execution of İlyas Paşa).

sport much esteemed by Ottoman elite figures, and through his best shots, the author may have entered the lists of famous archers.⁵ Moreover, his numerous entries about local foods show that he had an interest in tasting foods both familiar and und unfamiliar.⁶ Furthermore, for Evliya as an (admittedly modest) member of the Ottoman elite, promoting Sunni Islam and Sufi values was a central concern. Typically, the author avoided discussing the variant religious practices of different dervish communities and the disputes that these practices sometimes occasioned, visiting sites connected to different holy men without paying much attention to their doctrinal differences. Thus, the author punctuated the narration of his life story by numerous visits to pious foundations and the graves of holy men.⁷ In Evliya's perspective, these pious purposes seem to have legitimized his avoidance of a regular career in the sultan's service, for which his education and family ties had prepared him.

For today's historians, viewing Evliya's life narrative entails special challenges because this text is at the same time a travelogue. In consequence, we need to take account of the difficulty of assigning Evliya's work to a genre recognized by Ottoman intellectuals. After all, when readers of all times have trouble 'placing' a work in the literary categories with which they are familiar, they may respond to this uncertainty by ignoring the work in question. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the authors of biographical dictionaries thus refrained from including Evliya, and intellectuals and bureaucrats of the Republic of Turkey also have struggled with the difficulty of categorization and thus, with the evaluation of Evliya's work.⁸

In fact, because from the late 19th century onward, readers of Ottoman and later of 20th- and 21st-century Turkish texts have become so familiar with travelogues and first-person narratives, we often forget that Evliya's account, completed probably in the 1680s, must have been a rather disconcerting novelty to those few Ottoman readers who encountered it before

5 Semih Tezcan, "Evliya Çelebi the Archer," in *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of His Birth*, 33-40.

6 Marianna Yerasimos, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nde Yemek Kültürü: Yorumlar ve Sistematik Dizin*. 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Yayınları, 2019).

7 Mehmet Yaşar Ertuş, "Seyyah ve Derviş: Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nde Kurgusal bir Katman Olarak Manevi Yolculuk," in *Dr. Kemal Daşcıoğlu'na Vefa Kitabı*, eds. Mithat Aydın, Süleyman İnan (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2020): 501-22.

8 Uğur Demir, "Evliyâ Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesi'nin Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi'ne İntikali Meselesi," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 39 (2012): 205-16; idem, "Yasaklanan ve Sansürlenilen bir Kitabın Macerası: Evliya Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesinin ilk Baskıları," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 46 (2015): 193-212.

the late 19th century.⁹ The reservations and later the outright hostility of many post-Tanzimat Ottoman literati seem to have had 18th century antecedents, today impossible to elucidate.

Evliya certainly knew the roads – or what passed for roads – of Anatolia, the Balkans and the Arab provinces, most of which he had traveled in person. However, he did not discuss them in a work resembling that of Katip Çelebi and his co-workers, which presented systematic physical cum human geography, although Evliya used the itineraries of previous travelers.¹⁰

On the other hand, Evliya's own travels were the backbone of the story, the major reason for narrating his life. On occasion, the traveler claimed to have been in places that he had never visited, but Evliya's motivation for doing so is unknown.¹¹ He may have wanted to emulate medieval travelers such as Ibn Battuta, who had visited the Delhi sultanate and perhaps even China.¹² While Evliya had never been to the lands east of Iran, he may have wanted to produce as complete a description of the area visited as possible, never mind an occasional invention. Furthermore, Evliya may have convinced himself that his stories, some of them true but hard to believe while others were pure fantasy, could only be convincing if the author presented them as his own experience. This complicated bundle of motivations, which today's historians have disentangled only in part, was probably the reason why Evliya integrated a travelogue, a literary format unfamiliar but not unknown to Ottoman elite readers, with an extensive narration of his own life, which was another great novelty.

Apart from Evliya's neglect of genre conventions, the assumptions of quite a few Ottoman and Turkish literati active in the 19th and 20th centuries made it difficult for subsequent generations to appreciate Evliya's work. In the Ottoman world as in Europe, many authors and readers of the period felt that there was – or should be -- a clear dividing line between storytelling and

9 Nicolas Vatin, "Pourquoi un Turc ottoman racontait-il son voyage? Note sur les relations de voyage chez les Ottomans des Vâkı'ât-ı Sultân Cem au Seyahatnâme d'Evliyâ Çelebi," reprinted in Nicolas Vatin. *Les ottomans et l'occident (XVe-XVIIe siècles)* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2001), 179-93.

10 Katip Çelebi, *Kitab-ı Cihannüma li Katip Çelebi* (Ankara: TTK, 2009); Hatice Aynur, "Evliya Çelebi's Written Sources," in *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of his Birth*, edited by Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan, Robert Dankoff, English-language version edited by Robert Dankoff, 383-87. (Istanbul: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2012).

11 Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, 58.

12 Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2004).

historiography. Fiction was acceptable if the author defined his/her work as such, although the contemporary popularity of historical novels in Catholic and Protestant Europe showed that the exact location of the border might be open to negotiation. However, in the Ottoman literary world of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, novels still were a novelty of uncertain status that many readers and potential publishers regarded with suspicion. Even if a publisher did publish novels, he might consider these works as being of lower status than either poetry or historiography. Therefore, he might not be willing to invest the care and resources that contemporaries considered necessary to bring out a well-produced non-fiction book. Publications of Evliya's work that appeared before about 1990 bear witness to this neglect, although a few scholars such as Ulrich Haarmann already in the early 1980s defended Evliya as an innovator who introduced Ottoman readers to a new and hitherto unknown genre, namely the travel novel.¹³

Evliya and the people close to him: Blood-lines and patronage

As one may expect from a first-person narrative with an autobiographical slant, Evliya life story contains quite a few tales about his father. By contrast, the author only mentions his mother in passing, as a nameless slave woman. While people often considered it polite to avoid mentioning females in formal discourse, in this instance the omission remains remarkable. For Evliya had no qualms at all about mentioning fairly intimate details from the life of Kaya Sultan (1633-perhaps 1656), a daughter of Murad IV (r. 1623-40) and spouse of the Grand Vizier Melek Ahmed Paşa (d. 1662), Evliya's most prominent patron. In fact, references to Kaya Sultan, her wealth, her charities and her death are quite abundant throughout the *Seyahatname*.

Evliya entered even further into the intimate life of the princely couple when he discussed in some detail a bad dream of Melek Ahmed Paşa, which the latter interpreted as a prediction of the death of his beloved spouse Kaya Sultan in childbirth. Furthermore, Evliya went into excruciating detail when describing the miscarriage that led to the untimely end of the young princess and the burial of the still unformed fetus.¹⁴ Evliya even included a sum-

13 Ulrich Haarmann, "Evliya Çelebis Bericht über die Altertümer von Gize," *Turcica* VIII: 1 (1976): 157-230.

14 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 3, 292-3.

mary of the speech by which he supposedly attempted to console the grieving father, namely by explaining that at the current stage of its development, the fetus had been no more than a piece of meat. Even if it had lived, it would have taken many years before it could have taken on the role of a man.

Evliya's connection to this near-royal couple was very important for the author's career, at least in its middle stages. For at that time, he needed a patron both to finance his travels and to legitimize his presence in what were often out-of-the-way locations. It is worth retaining that Evliya's link to Melek Ahmed Paşa and Kaya Sultan was due not to his father but to his mother, as both the future grand vizier and Evliya's mother had arrived in Istanbul as slaves from the northern shores of the Black Sea.¹⁵ Reticence about female relatives apart, perhaps Evliya did not mention his mother because he was uncomfortable with the fact that he had acquired the patronage of Melek Ahmed Paşa through a woman.

As for the autobiographical information that Evliya has recorded, it is well known but a short recapitulation is in order nonetheless. He was born in 1611, as he (and no other person) tells us. This is unusual, because in the Ottoman world, people were more likely to record the date of a person's death than his/her birthday. In this case, however, the date of Evliya's demise remains unknown, although scholars have suggested a variety of dates, all in the 1680s. As for the present author, the observations and arguments of Karl Tepy and Nuran Tezcan have convinced her (and I hope will convince the readers) that Evliya probably was alive in 1687. After all, the *Seyahatname* recorded a change in the decoration of the bell tower of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, which as Austrian records show, took place in 1687.¹⁶ While by that time, Evliya was not in or even near Vienna, one of his acquaintances in the Istanbul elite could easily have mentioned the fact in a letter, perhaps as a follow-up to an account of Kara Mustafa Paşa's failed siege, which took place in 1683. While it is impossible to be sure, for the time being Tepy and Tezcan seem to have proposed a convincing argument.

In this context, it is worth repeating that if present scholars are correct, none of Evliya's fairly numerous contemporaries who put pen to paper considered his life and death worth recording.¹⁷ While we can only speculate

15 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 3, 154.

16 Nuran Tezcan, "When did Evliya Çelebi Die?" in *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of His Birth*.

17 Thus, corroboration of the biographical information concerning Evliya is possible only in exceptional cases.

about the reasons, the following considerations seem appropriate: As noted, the author's many travels meant that he encountered many people in varying locations but after some time, he disappeared from the horizons of his former friends, mostly Istanbul-based intellectuals. In consequence, Evliya may easily have 'fallen through the cracks'.

Put differently, many of the people mentioned in Evliya's life story may have been his associates when he was young or at most middle-aged. However, as the author of the *Seyahatname* probably lived to be over seventy-five and revised his work toward the end of his life, most of the people, who had been his associates in the 1640s, the 1650s and perhaps even the 1660s must have predeceased him, often by many years. Perhaps at least in part, we can explain the silence of contemporaries not by objections to Evliya's writing style but by the simple fact that as an elderly man living in Cairo the author had lost contact with the Turkish-speaking literati of Istanbul. While these arguments contain a certain amount of speculation, they do help us to explain why this unique and original writer did not make it into any of the biographical encyclopedias put together in the years around 1700, not even as an associate of a fellow author that the compilers considered 'more important.'

Passionate about seeing the world

We now turn to the first of two qualities emphasized by Dankoff namely Evliya's self-definition as a world traveler (*seyyah-i alem*). At a later stage, we present him as a loyal servitor of the sultan and as a man with roots in the northern part of Western Anatolia. His self-definition as a world traveler shows that Evliya regarded his life and the imbrication of life and travel accounts as something special, which merited careful description. For while many members of the Ottoman elite crisscrossed the empire in the course of duty there were few people, who claimed to travel for pleasure. On the other hand, this perception was inherent in Evliya's asking the Deity for help in getting him launched on his life course as a world traveler – rather than as a pious pilgrim to Mecca, although Evliya certainly undertook the pilgrimage. After all, he embarked on this latter enterprise only after decades of travel, when he was about sixty years old. Perhaps there were other members of the Ottoman elite, who enjoyed their travels as well;

but to the frustration of present-day historians, they said so only in exceptional cases.¹⁸

For a long time, Evliya's biographers have dwelt on the sentences, in which the author highlighted his desire to travel, but perhaps some indirect evidence is just as convincing. The traveler's record of the varying foods that he encountered, are so numerous and detailed, that they have become the topic of a substantial monograph.¹⁹ It is unlikely that a person who valued regional foods did not in some way appreciate (or at least cheerfully tolerate) the travels which given the technical means of the time, were the only way of getting to taste them.

In the same vein, we can consider Evliya's numerous remarks about the value of buildings that he visited, especially those sponsored and used by non-Muslims. By describing churches and their décor, Evliya made it clear that these places were worth a visit even for a pious Muslim as himself. For in the author's perspective, such visits could teach a moral lesson: Unbelievers were more likely to fear Jesus, Mary and the saints and therefore less inclined to misuse the money collected for the upkeep of churches.²⁰ Viewed from a different perspective, by including such descriptions, Evliya also implied that he placed significant value on the travels that alone made it possible to view these buildings and their rich decorations.

Furthermore, as a matter of routine Evliya often referred to handsome young men and women (*mahbub ve mahbube*) as positive attributes of both Ottoman and foreign towns. Admittedly, at least if the girls and young women were Muslims Evliya could not have known what they looked like, as he usually emphasized that they were careful about veiling. However, as he did mention the *mahbubes* he must have regarded these young women, incidentally anonymous just like their male counterparts as ornaments to their respective hometowns; and only a visitor to the locality – and thus a traveler – could properly appreciate their handsome appearance.

In this context, it is necessary to say something about the animals and people that Evliya needed for his travels, but whom he only mentioned in passing if at all. Quite often, the author referred to having received slaves

18 Vatin, "Pourquoi...?" points out that most early travelogues highlight the miseries suffered by the author.

19 Yerasimos, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nde Yemek Kültürü*.

20 For his comments on the Nea Moni monastery on the island of Chios, see *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 66.

as gifts, but whether converts to Islam or not, he said nothing about them. Thus, we do not know where Evliya's slaves had come from, for how long they stayed in his service, or whether he manumitted at least some of them. In the same fashion, Evliya does not mention ever getting emotional about one of his horses. This fact is worth recording, as it was acceptable for elite Ottomans to express their attachment to their mounts, and thus, Evliya's omission is not due to the demands of *bienséance*.²¹ After all, the grave marker that Sultan Osman II (r. 1618-1622) commissioned for his favorite horse has survived: Today it is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul. Perhaps these omissions mean that for Evliya, slaves and horses only had instrumental value; but as so often, it is best to keep an open mind.

A servitor of the dynasty: Devoted but not uncritical

As readers of the *Seyahatname* know, Evliya constantly stressed that he was a faithful servitor of the sultan. He claimed particular devotion to his age-mate Murad IV (born 1612, r. 1623-1640), who had recruited him for palace service and membership in the Ottoman elite. As a page, Evliya had access to the sultan when both were still quite young. For some time, the monarch and his admiring future biographer were teenagers together and shared the games and horseplay typical of adolescents the world over.²² In Evliya's perspective, Murad IV was remarkable for his gigantic stature, physical force and endurance, while the re-conquest of Baghdad from the Safavids showed the young ruler to be not only successful in wrestling and warfare, but a champion of Sunni right belief as well. While this role required that similar to his ancestor Süleyman (r. 1520-66), Murad IV had to be a successful fighter against the infidels, the sultan died without having undertaken any campaign against the Habsburgs or Venetians. To compensate for this deficit, Evliya ascribed to his hero a gigantic series of naval preparations against Malta, an island that the admirals serving Sultan Süleyman in his last years had been unable to take.²³ We do not know whether in actuality, there had

21 Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 118-9.

22 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 103-27.

23 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 125-6; Hüseyin Serdar Tabakoğlu, "The 1565 Malta Campaign according to Spanish Archival Documents," in *Kanûnî Sultan Süleyman ve Dönemi: Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar / Süleyman the Lawgiver and His Reign: New Sources, New Approaches*, edited by

been any plans for a campaign against the Knights of St John and their island stronghold at the court of Murad IV, and if so, to what extent they had progressed. In any case, these hypothetical plans came to naught with the death of the sultan in 1640, before he was thirty years old.²⁴

Presumably, the marriage of Evliya's patron Melek Ahmed Paşa to a daughter of Murad IV greatly reinforced the author's loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty. For as noted, throughout the *Seyahatname*, we encounter references to this princess, and Evliya frequently mentioned embroidered napkins or scarves that he claimed were presents from Kaya Sultan or at least in a style that she favored; they probably featured a special type of decoration in gold thread.²⁵ When passing through the East African territory he called Fun-cistan, Evliya made a special point of presenting a dignitary whom he wished to honor, with a cloth embroidered in gold thread that the traveler had worn knotted around his waist. Once again, Evliya associated this type of textile with Kaya Sultan, evidently regarding it as something quite special.²⁶ We do not know whether any embroideries associated with this princess in the 1600s have survived to our time. If they still exist, today they must bear a different name, which makes it impossible to identify them.

Evliya celebrated Kaya Sultan because of her charities, opulent as befitted a royal woman. When describing the Hijaz, the Ottoman traveler included a lengthy account of a foundation the princess had envisaged, which was to have brought water to Jeddah. Apparently, she had wished to honor Havva the female ancestor of humankind. However, the early death of Kaya Sultan in childbirth prevented the realization of the project.²⁷ Furthermore, the princess had the structure known as the 'House of Fatima' in Mecca decorated with colorful tiles and a valuable silk carpet. In this locale, she also had bookcases installed for the many Qur'an manuscripts

M. Fatih Çalıřır, Suraiya Faroqhi, and M. Şakir Yılmaz, 105-24. (Istanbul: İbn Haldun Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020)

24 For a biography of the sultan compare Ziya Yılmaz, "Murad IV". <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/murad-iv>

25 For a biography see Necdet Sakaođlu, *Bu Mülkün Kadın Sultanları* (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2015), 330-33; *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 393, 408. On Evliya's perception of women see Nurettin Gemici, "Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesinde Kadın Algısı," *İslami İlimler Dergisi* 18, 2 (2023): 5-40, accessed July 10, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.34082/islamiilimler.1411012>. The electronic version only provides a summary of this article.

26 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 10, 444; Nuran Tezcan, "Kaya Sultan: Handkerchiefs Used as Gifts," in *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of His Birth*.

27 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 10, 408.

found there. Glass panes in several colors both protected the books and made the room pleasant and lively.²⁸ In a different vein, perhaps Evliya's frequent references to Kaya Sultan's landed properties in Anatolia implied that if the princess had lived, she would have assigned some of them to her pious foundations.

Although Evliya was born in 1611 and thus belonged to the generation of Kaya Sultan's father Murad IV, the reader sometimes gains the impression that Evliya may have viewed the princess as a saintly provider and mother figure, whose opulent presents helped the author to live the life of an elite person. In any case, after her death, Evliya tried to associate his former patron with female saints. Nuran Tezcan, who has emphasized Evliya Çelebi's tendency to fictionalize the events surrounding Kaya Sultan's life and death, has even suggested that the author was alluding to his own feelings of love, albeit a love of the platonic kind, the only variety possible under the circumstances.²⁹

By contrast, the author showed only minimal interest in certain Ottoman monarchs that ruled for longer or shorter periods in the first half of the 17th century.³⁰ In particular, he produced only a brief account of Sultan Osman II (r. 1618-1622), whose short reign and frightful end at the age of eighteen continue to occupy the hearts and minds of today's historians.³¹ Evliya seemingly had a poor opinion of the young man, particularly because of the murder of Osman's younger brother Mehmed, which the insecure ruler had ordered when setting out to conquer Hotin.³² When commenting on the fact that Osman II lost his life only a short time afterward, the author drily remarked that the latter had gotten what he deserved.³³ Likely, when trying to reconstruct the background of Evliya's comment, we should keep in mind that the current *şeyhülislam* Hocazade Es'ad Efendi had refused to give the sultan a fatwa legitimizing the killing, and the sultan could only ob-

28 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 10, 393.

29 Nuran Tezcan, "Seyahatname'deki Aşk Öyküsü: bir Kaya Sultan Vardı!" *Kebikeç* 21 (2006): pages not numbered.

30 Taştan, "Evliya Çelebi's Views;" for a shorter version see Seyyar, "Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nde Osmanlı Hanedan Algısı."

31 For an example see Tülün Değirmenci, *İktidar Oyunları ve Resimli Kitaplar: II. Osman Devrinde Değişen Güç Sembelleri* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2012).

32 Feridun Emecen, "Osman II," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfının İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: İSAM, 2007) vol. 33, 454.

33 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 172.

tain the relevant document from the *kadı'asker* of Rumeli. Probably, the issue had been a subject of debate when Evliya was young, and he had listened to people sharing the position of the *şeyhülislam*.

As for the biographical sketches that Evliya wrote of all Ottoman sultans, in the case of Osman II he was self-critical enough to call the section on the young ruler a mere 'conspectus'. In fact, it conveyed only disconnected fragments of information. The story began with an ominous prophecy uttered by a khan of the Crimea, at that time a prisoner in the fortress of Yedikule on the outskirts of Istanbul. This dignitary had predicted that Sultan Osman would become a prisoner in the same locale, an event that as Evliya laconically noted, did in fact occur.³⁴ The author then listed the names of the religious scholars prominent during Osman's reign, following up this subject with a section that at first glance seems to be a detailed account of Osman's end.

However, the author's concern with the topic is more apparent than real. Certainly, the section headed 'Those killed on the day of Osman Han's martyrdom' begins with a list of the men who perished in the rebellion that brought down the young sultan, but the remainder of this section is mostly a disjointed account of what transpired shortly after Osman's death, in the second reign of Mustafa I (r. 1617-18, 1622-23).³⁵ As noted, these events took place when Evliya was a boy in school, old enough to notice what was going on around him but still distant from the events. Thus, his silence on the murder of Osman was probably deliberate, but he did not share his reasons with his (future) readers.

At the same time, Evliya does recount the reigns of sultans İbrahim (r. 1640-48) and especially Mehmed IV (r. 1648-87) in somewhat more detail. With respect to İbrahim, the author provides a brief overview over the sieges and battles of the 1640s, which resulted in Ottoman control of the port of Azak on the northern shore of the Black Sea.³⁶ In addition, Evliya focuses on the conquest of Crete, which began in 1645, the newly built mosque, still extant in the fortress of Rethymno/Retimne (later: Resmo) bearing the name of Sultan İbrahim. Covering the later stages of the war as well, Evliya reports on the conquest of Candia as an eyewitness, claiming to have intoned the

34 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 102-3.

35 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 103.

36 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 128.

first call to prayer in one of the former principal churches, now a mosque.³⁷ On the other hand, the renewed conflicts with Venetians, Russians and Habsburgs after the failed siege of Vienna in 1683 do not occur in Evliya's story: probably he was no longer alive after 1687. Earlier Veneto-Ottoman confrontations in Dalmatia however, do play a role in his account.

Given his mostly restrained comments on members of the Ottoman elite, Evliya's vituperation of Sultan Ibrahim's constant companion Cinci Hoca (d. 1640) was noteworthy: The author went out of his way to stress that he had known the soothsayer, a contemporary of his, from the time when they both studied in the *medrese*. Already during those years, or so Evliya claimed as supposedly a direct witness, Cinci Hoca was a ne'er-do-well.³⁸ At the same time, the author who after all had known several sultans in person, described Sultan Ibrahim as gentle but incapable, mostly interested in the harem and lavishing riches on his various concubines.³⁹

Remarkably, Evliya dwelled in some detail (and possibly with some relish) on the military rebellions that characterized Ibrahim's reign; invariably, these uprisings ended with the brutal killings of the dignitaries who found themselves on the losing side. Thus, the author reported without comment that the soldiers showed no respect for the dead bodies of people, who, whatever their deficiencies might have been, had after all been Sunni Muslims. According to Evliya's account, in the case of Hezarpare ('A-thousand-pieces) Ahmed Paşa and others, the rebelling military men hacked the bodies of their victims to pieces and left the remnants on the Atmeydani/ Hippodrome for all passers-by to see.⁴⁰ We may wonder where his sympathies lay; in any event, Evliya did not indicate any disapproval.

In contrast to his short accounts of the reigns of Osman II and Ibrahim, the author had a good deal to say about Mehmed IV (r. 1648-1687). After all, the long reign of the latter sultan encompassed the second half of Evliya's life; perhaps Mehmed IV was still alive, though perhaps no longer on the throne at the time of the author's death. Concerning the lives of Osman II and Ibrahim, the author possibly procured some or even much of his in-

37 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 8, 186-7.

38 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 130.

39 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 130.

40 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 130. On the behavior of urban rebels compare Annemarieke Stremmelaar, "Justice and Revenge in the Ottoman Rebellion of 1703," Ph.D. Dissertation. Leiden: Print Partners Ipskamp, 2007.

formation from his own relatives and friends in the palace. However, when writing the lengthy account of the campaigns over which Sultan Mehmed presided, even if he did not command them in person, Evliya must have consulted written sources, which he did not name. Likely, he combined information from chronicles and occasionally from archival sources with his own impressions, garnered when accompanying the grand vizier Köprülüzade Fazıl Ahmed Paşa (1635-76) on his campaigns against Poland and Crete.

When discussing rebellious pashas operating in the borderlands or soldiers stationed in Istanbul who presented lists of the dignitaries whose executions they demanded, Evliya probably depended on information provided by third parties. For he surely was not privy to the relevant deliberations and bargaining, even when he was close to the events in a purely physical sense. Moreover, people knew him as an associate and dependent of Melek Ahmed Paşa: As a man who had made it to the top of the Ottoman political establishment, the latter surely had both enemies and friends. These people may have had their reasons for not telling Evliya what he wanted to know, or else they imparted a political 'slant' to the information provided, even if they did not tell any outright lies. We do not know to what extent Evliya could or would make allowances for these biases: after all, for an Ottoman elite figure loyalty to a patron was a major virtue.⁴¹

This brings us to the question when and in which contexts, Evliya criticized the actions of sultans and viziers.⁴² In certain cases, he had no real alternative, as he could scarcely avoid writing some harsh words about the rivals of his patron Melek Ahmed Paşa. Matters were more complicated when rulers and princes were at issue. Conflicting emotions were especially obvious when Evliya recounted the sad story of the sons of Murad III (r. 1574-95), killed to secure the rule of their half-brother Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603). Some of these unfortunates were still children, and Evliya included the story of a youngster who before his execution wanted to finish the chestnut that he was eating: the executioner would not let him do so.⁴³ Certainly, Evliya refrained from openly expressing disgust with the actions of Murad III or Mehmed III, both responsible for the massacre. By contrast,

41 On the loyalty of Mustafa II (r. 1695-1703) to his former teacher, see Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *The 1703 Rebellion and the Structure of Ottoman Politics* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1984), 50-51.

42 Taştan, "Evliya Çelebi's Views on the Ottoman Dynasty," 249-54.

43 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 170.

the historian and litterateur Mustafa Âlî (1541-1600) highlighted what he regarded as the irresponsibility of Sultan Murad in fathering so many children.⁴⁴ By contrast, Evliya's criticism was implicit when he appealed to the emotions of his (presumed) readers. Apart from the childish pragmatism of the boy who wanted to finish his food before submitting to the executioner, the author described the killing of a prince who was still a baby and who spit out the milk he had just drunk when the executioner strangled him.

A member of a western Anatolian family of minor notables

Evliya's devotion both to travel and – despite reservations against individuals -- to the Ottoman dynasty as a whole is obvious and unquestioned. However, it bears repeating that scholars have neglected the Anatolian roots of Evliya's family that were part of the author's mental makeup, perhaps especially in the middle to later years of his life.⁴⁵ After all, family members had instituted a pious foundation in Kütahya, their place of origin, which the traveler visited while on the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁴⁶ In this concern, Evliya was not unique: As the difficulties of the 1600s and 1700s resulted in high levels of migration especially to Istanbul, migrants from provincial places increasingly emphasized their ties to hometowns and villages of origin. Likely, these migrants wished to retain a source of material and emotional support if conditions in the city where they had settled became too difficult.

Intriguingly, when recounting a problematic situation in which his father considered it necessary to flee to Istanbul, Evliya told his readers that the older man entrusted his house in Kütahya to a relative, the noted poet Firaki Efendi (d. 1580-3).⁴⁷ This personage, whose attempts to make a career in Istanbul seem to have failed, has recently attracted attention be-

44 Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âlî (1541-1600)* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 154, 298.

45 In this section, I develop and support the argument made in Suraiya Faroqhi, "An Ottoman Gentleman Observing Izmir at a Time of Change: Evliya Çelebi on the Road, 1670-1" in *Çaka Bey'den Günümüze İzmir*, vol. 2, eds. Turan Gökçe and Hüseyin Çalış (Izmir: Katip Çelebi Üniversitesi, 2023), 505-22.

46 Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 45; on pious foundations as a means of integration into city life, compare Yahya Araz, "A General Overview of Janissary Socio-Economic Presence in Aleppo (1700-1760s)". *Cihannüma: Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8(1) (2022): 55-77; Zübeyde Güneş Yağcı, "Bir İsyân ve Etkileri: Balıkesir'de İlyas Paşa İsyanı," in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Eşkıyalık ve Terör*, ed. Osman Köse (Samsun: Samsun İlkadım Belediyesi Kültür Müdürlüğü, 2009), 63-81. This latter study is remarkable for the range of sources that the author has located and analyzed. In the section on İlyas Paşa I have closely followed Güneş Yağcı's research.

47 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 45.

cause of the information on India contained in one of his works, in which he tried to persuade the Ottoman court of the 1520s (or perhaps of a somewhat later period) to launch a campaign against the Portuguese in South Asia.⁴⁸ However, Evliya's chronology is wrong: if Firaki died in the 1580s -- and this seems to be the accepted date of his death -- he cannot have helped Evliya's father Mehmed Zilli in a dispute that occurred during the 17th-century reign of Murad IV. If there was indeed a connection, it must have involved the son or grandson of Firaki. While we know very little about Firaki's descendants, in his description of Urfa Evliya records that in the time of Ahmed I (r. 1603-1617) a relative of the poet named Firakizade of Kütahya had held a judgeship worth 500 *akçe* in Urfa.⁴⁹ Perhaps this personage after his return to his hometown was the trusted relative of Mehmed Zilli.

As previously noted, Evliya recounted a romanticized version of the connection of his family to İlyas Paşa, a member of the Ottoman administration originally from Balıkesir, a town some 300 km distant from Kütahya. Evliya's father had arranged -- or perhaps merely consented to -- the engagement of one of his daughters to İlyas Paşa, who must have had a notable background similar to that of his intended father-in-law: a man from a provincial family and thus not an elite slave (*kul*), who despite this impediment had made a successful career in Istanbul. While however, Mehmed Zilli seems to have loyally served a succession of sultans from Süleyman (r. 1520-66) to Murad IV, İlyas Paşa, sometimes known by the local form of his name 'Ellez' became a rebel, apparently due to a purely local quarrel. In a panic that Evliya recounted as pure melodrama, Mehmed Zilli hid from the rebel when the latter entered Manisa, where İlyas Paşa caused substantial damage to the townspeople.⁵⁰

We need to return to the terrified goldsmith when he dissolved the engagement of his daughter. The pasha refused to listen, kidnapping his former fiancée and then robbing the farm belonging to Mehmed Zilli in Sandıklı. His takings supposedly amounted to 7000 sheep and a sizeable number of horses. As a dubious excuse, İlyas Paşa claimed that he had mar-

48 Andrew Peacock, "India and the Indian World as Seen by Firâkî, an Ottoman Historian of Süleyman's Reign," in *Kanûnî Sultan Süleyman ve Dönemi: Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar / Süleyman the Lawgiver and His Reign: New Sources, New Approaches*, eds. M. Fatih Çalışır, Suraiya Faroqhi, and M. Şakir Yılmaz (Istanbul: İbn Haldun Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020), 301-22.

49 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 91.

50 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 45.

ried Evliya's sister and in consequence, merely collected the property that his new wife had brought into the household (*cehiz*). If he really made such a claim, İlyas Paşa ignored the legal situation: For while the bridal gift (*mehir*) of the husband to his wife was a precondition for a valid marriage, according to the sharia the family of the bride was not legally bound to give her anything. Even so, in many milieus, custom demanded that the bride should receive goods and/or money to help set up the new household.

At some point, perhaps when he felt that things were not going well for him, İlyas Paşa took refuge in the hill fortress of Bergama whose location made it almost inaccessible to an early modern army. Therefore, the administration in Istanbul induced another pasha to persuade İlyas to come out of his hiding place, travel to Istanbul and ask for the sultan's forgiveness. From Evliya's account, it seems likely that the presumed mediator knew that the sultan was not likely to amnesty the rebel. If so, İlyas Paşa must have considered his position desperate, for he too must have known that Murad IV did not easily pardon people who had crossed him. Whatever the facts of the case, Evliya made it appear that his father's complaints motivated the sultan to have İlyas executed, although at the same time, the author had Mehmed Zilli begging the ruler for the life of the person who albeit against the older man's wishes, had legally become his son-in-law.

Likely, other considerations were at issue too. To evaluate Evliya's account, we need a set of documents on this matter issued by the Ottoman central administration, which have not emerged to date. However, they may well do so in the future. As for the former pasha's young wife, seemingly no one cared much about her fate: Evliya merely recorded that when as an elderly man, he passed through Bergama, he restored her grave, which had fallen into disrepair.⁵¹ Thus, she probably died in Bergama, but the date remains unknown.

Even if we discount the İlyas Paşa episode, Evliya's account of his visit to the Aegean region indicates that the author was -- or claimed to be -- a man of local standing. To mention one example, after having left Izmir and its environs to travel southward along the Aegean coast, Evliya and his company encountered a young man from an apparently prominent İzmir family who had run away from home to follow a man whom he only called 'my

51 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 46.

ağa'.⁵² Perhaps this person was a commander of mercenaries, and the young man wanted to live the life of a soldier.⁵³ The family of the youngster sent out men to turn him back, and according to Evliya's story, an armed confrontation ensued in which some of the combatants lost their lives; the escapee's father and brother were among the victims. While Evliya did not say that he had family ties to the young man, he intervened as a senior person admonishing an errant youngster. Supposedly, Evliya told the adolescent in rather offensive words that he had already caused the deaths of his father and brother, to say nothing of other calamities. Now he needed to go home and take responsibility for his household. If we can believe the story, the young man did so without any protest. Perhaps, Evliya's contacts with several wealthy merchants of Izmir had persuaded the runaway that he should accept the advice of the older man, who after all traveled with the horses, servants and baggage only accessible to an elite person.⁵⁴ While this interpretation is speculative it is still probable that in the tightly knit society of Muslim elite figures active in Izmir, Evliya's visit had been a subject of animated conversation.⁵⁵ Even if the runaway did not know exactly, who the visitor was, Evliya and his suite must have appeared as wealthy and above all well provided with arms. Perhaps this impression persuaded the youngster to follow the instructions of the older man.

To these tales, we may add Evliya's accounts of the enjoyable hospitality provided by several prominent Muslim inhabitants of Izmir. He also spent a few pleasant days on the island of Chios, presumably as the guest of one of these persons.⁵⁶ Throughout his account, Evliya praised the wealth of the prominent Muslims of Izmir in extravagant terms; supposedly every one of them was worth 1000-2000 *kise*.⁵⁷ Most of these people were merchants

52 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 58. The name of the family is missing.

53 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 58.

54 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 58.

55 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 51-3. Sometimes, the author of the *Seyahatname* probably was over-enthusiastic. Thus, he went into detail especially about the colorful minaret of the Ahmed Ağa mosque, which he dated to the reign of Sultan Süleyman. However, before 1566 Izmir was still a small place unlikely to attract many rich donors. In Evliya's opinion, by the 1670s Izmir was an international port visited by many non-Muslims who could count on the protection of the local Islamic judge, but the dominance of the sultan's officials was not in doubt.

56 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 59-69.

57 Depending on time and place, the *kise* amounted to differing quantities of money. Ferit Devellioğlu, *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lugat: Eski ve Yeni Harflerle*, ed. Aydın Sami Güneşal. 24. Printing (Ankara: Aydın Kitabevi Yayınları 2007), 522 defines the *kise-i rumi* as 500 *guruş*.

but the growing prosperity of the city, which Evliya took care to emphasize allowed officials, in particular the judge to collect large amounts of money as fees. According to the *Seyahatname*, Evliya's host Uzun Ahmed Ağa, known for his piety, was the richest man in town. The author mentioned a string of further wealthy Muslims without including particulars; but at least one of them was a religious scholar.

When comparing Evliya's account of Izmir with his impressions of Bursa, Kayseri, Konya, and Urfa, all of which were important towns in the 17th century, it becomes apparent that the traveler had more to say about the appearance of mosques, schools and other charities in Izmir than about those of other Anatolian towns.⁵⁸ For instance, when describing Kayseri and Konya, he often merely listed the names of mosques and *medreses* without providing any further information, although these two towns had a far more impressive history as centers of Islamic civilization than was true of Izmir. We cannot be sure; but perhaps Evliya had fewer contacts with local elites in Konya and Kayseri than he did in Izmir, and therefore he was unable to collect as much documentation as he did in the Aegean port.

As for Bursa, a city on which he did put together a great deal of information, Evliya said very little about the people who had provided it. While announcing that he had associated with many local dignitaries, he did not mention many names, nor did he record the identities of most of the saints whose graves he supposedly had visited.⁵⁹ While Evliya certainly enjoyed the hospitality of the Bursa elite, we may wonder whether there were some incidents, which he did not want to put down on paper. As for his visit to Urfa, a town that had not quite recovered from the Celali occupation, he may have collected some of the detailed information relayed in his travelogue with the help of Firakizade of Kütahya, whom he described as a friend of the family. Thus, none of the stories he has related conclusively prove that Evliya owed his status at least partly to his local connections. Even so, enough details have emerged which in combination, make it appear that this was in fact the case.

58 On Izmir, see *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 49-58; on Bursa, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 2, 10-34; on Kayseri, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 3, 105-11; on Konya, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 3, 15-22; on Urfa, *Evliya Çelebi, Seyahatnamesi* vol. 3, 87-100.

59 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol 2, 36.

Defining Evliya's travelogue: the question of genre and the author's use of sources

We do not know how people who lived in the late 1600s and early 1700s regarded Evliya's travelogue. While their number was probably minute, some such people must have existed. For had the work remained completely unknown, Beşir Ağa, the bibliophile former Chief Eunuch of the Imperial Harem (d. 1746), who spent some time in Cairo between 1713 and 1716, would not have heard of Evliya's work.⁶⁰ However, it seems that Beşir Ağa – or his legal representative Hasan Ağa -- had the whole set of volumes copied and ultimately sent to Istanbul.⁶¹ Unfortunately (for historians), Beşir and/or Hasan Ağa did not record their impressions, of the ten volumes of Evliya's manuscript. The former Chief Black Eunuch might have viewed it as a work of geography or as an eyewitness account of the 17th- century conflicts between the leaders of mercenary bands and the palace establishment.

Perhaps Beşir Ağa had some hesitations about the value of his acquisition. Alternatively, some people in his environment became interested enough to take the volumes off his hands. In any case, when in 1746, officials compiled the post-mortem inventory of Beşir Ağa's possessions the Evliya volumes were no longer in the domicile of the deceased.⁶²

As to the approach of 18th- and early 19th-century Ottoman readers, they seem to have appreciated the entertainment value of Evliya's work. In any case, this seems to have been the opinion of the scribe Ibrahim b. Baltacıza-de Hacı Muhammed, one of the first copyists of Evliya's work, who was active in the mid-18th century.⁶³ As an attraction of the work he copied, Ibrahim stressed the novelty of the travelogue; for he pointed out that only he and a certain Rakım Efendi knew about this text. Even so, the copyist seems to have been unhappy about Evliya's arrangement of the information provided, which in the perspective of the scribe indicated a lack of organiza-

60 Jane Hathaway, *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 42-43. However, as we do not know the exact dates of Beşir Ağa's arrival in and departure from Cairo, it is possible that his legal representative had selected Evliya's works on behalf of his patron.

61 Hathaway, *Beshir Agha*, 91.

62 Demir, "Evliyâ Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesi'nin Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi'ne İntikali", 209-10; idem, "Yasaklanan", 194.

63 Demir, "Evliyâ Çelebi Seyâhatnâmesi'nin Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi'ne İntikali".

tion. Other readers were less accommodating: The official historian and diplomat Ahmed Vasıf (about 1735-1806) had a very poor opinion of Evliya's veracity; his short remark on the subject is interesting mainly because it shows that Vasıf was aware of the existence of the *Seyahatname*, one of the very few 18th-century literati possessing this information.⁶⁴ We do not know where and how Vasıf had encountered the *Seyahatname*.

When printing became more frequent in the Tanzimat period (1839-76) the publishers who introduced Evliya to the Istanbul public compiled a selection of strange and amusing stories mostly derived from the first volume of Evliya's work, which focused on the Ottoman capital.⁶⁵ We do not know much about the reasons why the later Tanzimat bureaucracy forbade this book. Perhaps the miseries of the times made humor and amusement seem inappropriate, but the question demands further study.

We can thus surmise that if they were a good mood, early readers of Evliya's book regarded his work primarily as a source of entertainment and in a secondary sense, of historical cum geographical knowledge. Scholars who studied the text (or rather the volumes to which they had obtained access) tended to focus on the geographical aspect of the *Seyahatname*, emphasizing the value and especially the limits of Evliya's work. In particular, the important study of Meşkûre Eren, regrettably available only in a limited number of copies, showed up Evliya's misunderstandings, the inscriptions he had assigned to the wrong buildings and his references to books that he visibly had not read.⁶⁶ Eren's observations confirmed the suspicion, already widespread among scholars of the early republican period that the author of the *Seyahatname* did not rate highly as a scholar.⁶⁷ Given the 'facts and figures' approach typical of Ottoman studies until the very end of the 20th century, Evliya's lack of interest in the exactitude expected from a historian and geographer worked against him; and children learned in school that that his work was full of exaggerations and therefore unworthy of serious study. In this context, it is worth noting that the two 'founding fathers of Ottoman so-

64 Ethan L. Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasıf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 224; Nevzat Sağlam, *Ahmed Vâsıf Efendi ve Mehâsinü'î-Âsâr ve Hakâ'iku'l-Ahbâr'ı 1166-1188/1752-1774 (İnceleme ve Metin)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2020), 5.

65 Demir, "Yasaklanan," 197.

66 For a more recent discussion see Aynur, "Evliya Çelebi's Written Sources," 383-87.

67 Meşkûre Eren, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi Birinci Cildinin Kaynakları Üzerinde Bir Araştırma* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1960).

cial and economic history', namely Ömer Lütfi Barkan (1902-3 to 1979) and Halil İnalçık (1916-2016) referred to Evliya's work only in passing.

From the 1980s onward however, some scholars took a different tack. As Ulrich Haarmann suggested in a discussion of Evliya's stories about the pyramids, perhaps appearances to the contrary, Evliya never intended to convey geographical information for its own sake but pioneered a genre completely new to Ottoman literature, namely the travel novel.⁶⁸ Haarmann thus viewed the *Seyahatname* as an example of literary prose. Certainly, this assumption did not end the perplexities of the 20th- or 21st-century historian; for even if Evliya was a highly original author, he could not have developed a new genre without some starting point in the established literary tradition. However, where was this starting point?⁶⁹ We know that on the one hand, the author was familiar with the work of 16th-century geographers such as Mehmed Aşık, on whose account Evliya relied especially when depicting Trabzon, the hometown of the geographer.⁷⁰ On the other hand, we do not know whether at any time in his life, Evliya established contacts to the circle of Katip Çelebi (1609-57) and Ebu Bekir Dımaşki (d. 1691). Such a contact, if it had existed would have allowed Evliya to see at least some of the preparatory work that went into the *Cihannuma*, which in the eyes of present-day scholars is the major work of early modern Ottoman geography.⁷¹ Only a close comparison of the two works can bring a solution to this problem.

Moreover, as studies of Ottoman first-person narratives have become a vigorous offshoot of Ottoman cultural history it may become possible to determine the genre conventions that governed the writing-up of individual lives in the early modern central provinces of the Empire. Once this information is in hand, we can figure out to what extent we should regard Evliya's work as a variety of Ottoman first-person life writing. Admittedly, the concept of genre and its attendant constraints are falling out of favor among certain historians of early modern Europe, who consider that excessive emphasis on genre conventions prevents historians from appreciating

68 Haarmann, "Evliya Çelebis Bericht."

69 Hakan Karateke and Hatice Aynur, eds., *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesin Yazılı Kaynakları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2018).

70 İsmet Miroğlu, "Aşık Mehmed, Menâzirü'l-'avâlim" *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, online edition, accessed September 13, 2024, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/asik-mehmed>.

71 Fikret Sarıcaoğlu, "Ebû Bekir b. Behrâm" in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, online edition, accessed September 13, 2024, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ebu-bekir-b-behram>

the individual qualities of the works that they study. Even so, perhaps as newcomers to the field of life writing, Ottoman historians may be somewhat more cautious and conservative than is customary among the representatives of more established subfields.⁷²

Genre conventions apart, historians have shown that on his travels, Evliya picked up stories that were part of local folklore and used them as input whenever he considered it appropriate. In the case of Vienna, which Evliya saw some twenty years before the second Ottoman siege of 1683, this folklore often concerned the first Ottoman siege (1529), commanded by Sultan Süleyman in person. This event became a subject of stories circulating in Vienna and was especially meaningful to Ottoman observers.⁷³ Evliya recorded sites that had been important to the army of Sultan Süleyman, and depicted the Viennese as desirable future Ottoman subjects. In the opinion of the traveler, the local artisans were inventive. Moreover, the city was home to good musicians who played the organ, an instrument that greatly impressed Evliya, who likely had musical talents. In addition, according to a stereotype that Evliya used repeatedly, the locals though infidels took good care of their religious buildings and thus showed both piety and an inclination for hard work.⁷⁴

In addition to geographers' studies, Ottoman and occasionally non-Ottoman folklore, Evliya seems to have derived inspiration from inventors of Istanbul background, such as the personage that he called Hezarfenn Ahmed Efendi.⁷⁵ Seemingly, Hezarfenn Ahmed Efendi built an apparatus that Evliya likened to the wings of an eagle. Given the strong winds that often prevail in Istanbul, this contraption apparently allowed the would-be aviator to sail through the air, which he did once on Okmeydanı, today a

72 Christian Jouhaud, Dinah Ribard, Nicolas Shapira, eds., *Histoire, Littérature, Témoignage: Écrire les malheurs du temps* (Paris: Gallimard, FOLIO HISTOIRE, 2009).

73 Evliya Çelebi, *Im Reiche des Goldenen Apfels, des türkischen Weltenbummlers Evliya Çelebi denkwürdige Reise in das Giaurenland und in die Stadt und Festung Wien anno 1665*, tr. and annotated by Richard F. Kreutel, Erich Prokosch and Karl Töply (Vienna: Verlag Styria, 2nd edition, 1987).

74 See the program of a symposium focusing on the oral sources that Evliya likely used: "Evliya Çelebi'nin Sözlü Kaynakları", held in Ankara in 2011. https://www.unesco.org.tr/Content_Files/Content/Sektor/Kultur/evliya-soz.pdf

75 Heidrun Wurm, *Der osmanische Historiker Hüseyin b. Ga'fer, genannt Hezarfenn, und die Istanbulser Gesellschaft in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg i.B.: Klaus Schwarz, 1971). We should not confuse the person mentioned by Evliya with Hezarfenn Hüseyin Efendi, who in the later 1600s wrote on Ottoman and non-Ottoman history, occasionally using sources from Catholic or Protestant Europe in translation.

densely populated part of Istanbul but in the early modern period, an open field. In the second attempt, Hezarfenn Ahmed Efendi supposedly sailed from the Galata Tower as far as Üsküdar, a performance that Murad IV watched from a seaside kiosk near the sultans' palace. In both cases, Hezarfenn descended without mishap, and the sultan supposedly rewarded him with a purse full of money but banished him to Algeria for the remainder of his life. Evliya claimed that Sultan Murad worried about what this man might achieve in the future.⁷⁶ It is difficult to assess the veracity of this story, especially as Evliya placed it in a section of his Istanbul volume in which he focused on astonishing skills, some of them possible to a certain extent and others clearly imaginary. Perhaps in the future, further records will emerge concerning this experiment, and maybe Hezarfenn Ahmed will turn up in the archival records of 17th-century Algeria, which are however very difficult to decipher.

However, for our present purpose this story is important because it indicates another source of Evliya's life story and identity. When in his youth, the author experimented with the manufacture of fireworks he may have been in contact with inventors of the type of Hezarfenn Ahmed Efendi.⁷⁷ If so, conversations with these people may have inspired some of Evliya's stories. After all, in the culture of the 1600s the world over, the border between scientific observation and fantasy could be fuzzy, and Evliya may have regarded this situation as an opportunity to insert into his travelogue the clearly imaginary travels in Central and Western Europe that he claimed to have undertaken.

For at some point, historians concerned with Evliya's work have to address the question of the author's veracity: When did Evliya record matters he had witnessed and when he fantasize? In a study focusing on Evliya's narration of his own life, this is a crucial question. Reacting against the devaluation of Evliya's text as pure fantasy, in recent years some scholars have tended to assume that Evliya always 'told it like it was', which is clearly impossible. As we now possess a large number of monographs on Evliya's accounts of different cities and regions, it is time to pinpoint where exactly

76 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 1, 359.

77 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Fireworks in Seventeenth-century Istanbul," in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*, eds. Evelyn Birge Vitz and Arzu Öztürkmen (Turnhout/Belgium: Brepols, 2014), 181-94.

the author switches from a more or less realistic account to fantasy, or the other way around. This enterprise is especially timely in the case of Evliya's search for the sources of the Nile; the map that has emerged from this expedition demonstrates that at least in this section of the travelogue, Evliya saw himself as a *bona fide* explorer, even if some of his companions may have drawn the map.⁷⁸ In any case, it would take an Africanist to tell where Evliya's data conform to what we know from other sources, where his information was faulty and in which cases, unfortunately, it is impossible to tell. In some instances, such as the story of Hezarfenn Ahmed, our limited knowledge of 17th-century Ottoman scientific experiments is a serious impediment, but perhaps historians of science will be able to help us. All this is for the future, *inşallah*.

In conclusion

While examining the categories, which Evliya used when conceptualizing his work, we have focused on the considerations important to scholars of the recent past, especially the 1900s and early 2000s. The present author tends to the conclusion that Evliya's own categories of enthusiastic world traveler, faithful though critical servitor of the Ottoman dynasty and descendant of minor notables of Western Anatolia who achieved some prominence in Istanbul are all helpful when we try analyzing the *Seyahatname*.

As a desideratum, we need to study Evliya's work in connection with the *Cihannuma* and the authors involved in its production. At least when it comes to certain sections of the *Seyahatname*, it is worth analyzing Evliya's text sentence by sentence. For only such detailed investigation will allow us to pinpoint where the author focuses on the collection and presentation of geographical or historical information and where he tells stories, perhaps as the *raconteur* identified by Robert Dankoff.⁷⁹ In so doing, we probably should pay more attention to the stories of extraordinary feats, which if we are lucky, will allow us to define more clearly, which phenomena Evliya considered part of the ordinary world and where the limits between this world

78 Robert Dankoff and Nuran Tezcan, eds., *Evliyâ Çelebi'nin Nil Haritası "Dürr-i bî-misil in Ahbâr-ı Nil"* (Istanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Yayınları, 2011).

79 Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, 152-84. Once again, my profound gratitude for the many things that Dankoff's work has taught me!

and the realm of the imagination became fuzzy. We have the advantage that previous scholars have completed much of the preliminary work. We can build on their achievements when studying the *Seyahatname* as a text, in which a major author of the 17th century wrote up his life, the narration of which he probably regarded as inseparable from the account of his travels.

In this context, we should continue our search for the many different identities that Evliya took on when composing his lengthy travelogue cum life story. One such role, still very little explored is that of a proponent of what the author regarded as the achievements of ‘modern science’, especially the use of explosives that Evliya had occasion to observe in detail during the battle over Crete. It is intriguing to see how the author of the *Seyahatname* referred to problems that he hoped to solve by means of explosives, such as the removal of rocks making life difficult for pilgrims on the way to and from Mecca.⁸⁰ Seemingly, Evliya suggested using the means developed in the siege of enemy fortresses. While exploring this ‘technological’ aspect of Evliya’s self-presentation, we should find out more about his contacts with men who as noted, attempted to apply natural science to civilian as to military matters.

Once returned to the Ottoman border fortress of Ibrim after having suffered the extreme heat of the African desert, Evliya wrote up a short conspectus of his life and travels both real and imaginary.⁸¹ He considered that only the intervention of the Deity had made possible his numerous travels and especially those in the deserts to the south of the Ottoman border. We do not know why in the end Evliya seems to have turned his back on his friends and relatives in Istanbul and Kütahya, while he probably continued to edit the *Seyahatname*. Until further sources turn up, we have to live with our ignorance.

80 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, 421.

81 *Evliya Çelebi, Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 10, 498-99. However, he did not end his account with his return to Ibrim but devoted the following pages to events that transpired in Egypt.

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