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İSAM 

Images of the Mediterranean in an Ottoman Pirate Novel From the Late Seventeenth Century*

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Onyedinci Yüzyılın Sonlarında Yazılmış Bir Osmanlı Korsan Romanında Akdeniz İmgeleri

Özet ■ “Makâle-i Zındancı Mahmud Kapudan berâ-yı feth ü zafer-keşti-i Maltiz-i la'in-i düzah-mekîn” onyedinci yüzyıl sonu Osmanlı *Tiefkultur* romanının nadir örneklerinden biridir. Sözde, bir müttekânın eski sahibine yazdığı bir mektuptan istinsah edilmiş olan bu eser, eski kölenin İskenderiye'den İstanbul'a doğru yola çıktık-tan sonra başından geçenleri anlatır. Basit ve canlı bir dille yazılmış olan bu değerli eser, Akdeniz'de değişik dinlerden gelen insanlar arası ilişkiler ve korsanların hayatları hakkında geniş malumatı havi olduğu gibi, aynı zamanda Akdeniz'deki denizcilerin bu denizin coğrafyasını nasıl algıladıkları, yollarını nasıl planlayıp anladıkları, Doğu Akdeniz'de rastlanan farklı milletleri nasıl gördükleri gibi konularda da zengin bir içeriğe sahiptir. Metnin kompozisyonu ve Osmanlı edebiyatındaki benzer metinlerle ilişkilerinin üzerinde durduktan sonra, bu makale, Osmanlı denizcilerinin, bilinen bir denizi ve onun yollarını temsil etmek için ne tür bir algı haritası (ya da zihni harita), ne gibi coğrafi işaretler kullandıkları ve bu denizi nasıl algıladıkları sorularına cevap arıyor. Yapılan tahlil, gerçek haritalar, portolanlar ve ada ve kıyı haritaları ile bu türden benzer kaynakları da dikkate almaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Akdeniz, korsanlık, Osmanlı edebiyatı, zihin haritaları.

In 1942 Andreas Tietze published a German translation of an Ottoman pirate novel of the late seventeenth century, entitled “The discourse on Warden Captain Mahmud, on [his] victories over the damned dwellers of Hell, the Maltese”

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(*Makâle-i Zındancı Mahmud Kapudan berâ-yı feth ü zafer-keştî-i Maltiz-i la'in-i düzah-mekîn*), one of the few (till now) known specimens of Ottoman 'popular literature' recorded in this early era.¹ The Ottoman text was published some two decades later by Fahir İz based on the only known manuscript (Köprülü Hafız Ahmed Paşa 214, ff. 70a-107b).² Strangely enough, this important text has not been studied thoroughly so far, with the notable exception of some observations by Suraiya Faroqhi and Cemal Kafadar.³ However, it presents immense interest for both the historian and the philologist, not only as a highly telling description of sea-faring, swashbuckling, and piracy in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also as a splendid specimen of Ottoman prose story.⁴

The original manuscript seems to be related to the circle of the Köprülü household. According to İz' description, it also contains a history of the conquest of Candia (Herakleion, Kandiye), entitled *Makale-i tevârih-i ma'reke-i Kandiye, sene 1077* (ff. 1a-70a), a text known in several other versions (*Tarih-i Fazıl Ahmed Paşa ve feth-i Kandiye, Hikâyet-i azimet-i sefer-i Kandiye, Tarih-i muteber*).⁵ The manu-

- 1 Andreas Tietze, "Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän, ein türkischer Seeräuberromane aus dem 17. Jahrhundert," *Acta Orientalia* 19 (1942): 152-210. Cf. Alessio Bombaci, *Storia della letteratura turca* (Milano: Nuova Accademia Editrice 1962), 368.
- 2 Fahir İz, "Makale-i Zındancı Mahmud Kapudan", *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 14 (1964): III-150.
- 3 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, tr. M. Bott, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 91 and 215-16; eadem, "Ottoman Views on Corsairs and Piracy in the Adriatic," in *The Kapudan Pasha: His Office and His Domain. Halcyon Days in Crete IV: A Symposium Held in Rethymnon, 7-9 January 2000*, ed. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press 2002), 357-370, esp. 357; eadem, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 122; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 83. Kafadar has also presented a paper on this work and its interpretation "as a frontier narrative", so far unpublished (quoted in op. cit., 173 n. 66).
- 4 On this *genre* see the illuminating article by Edith Gülçin Ambros and Jan Schmidt, "A Cossack Adopted by the Forty Saints: An Original Ottoman Story in the Leiden University Library," in *The Ottoman Empire: Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes': Contributions in Honour of Colin Imber*, eds. Eugenia Kermeli – Oktay Özel (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2006), 297-324.
- 5 İz, "Makale-i Zındancı," III; Tietze, "Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän," 152-3; Elias Kolovos – Marinos Sariyannis, «Θωμανικές πηγές για τον Κρητικό Πόλεμο: μια επισκόπηση» [Ottoman Sources on the Cretan War: a Review], in *Ο Κρητικός Πόλεμος: από την ιστορία στη λογοτεχνία* [The Cretan War: From History to Literature], ed. S. Kakkamanis (Herakleion: Etaireia Kretikon Historikon Meleton, 2008), 183-214, esp. 188-9 and fn. 17, citing Ersin Gülsoy, *Girit'in fethi ve Osmanlı İdaresinin Kurulması (1645-1670)* (Istanbul: Tarih ve Tabiat Vakfı, 2004), xviii-xix; Ağâh Sırrı Levend, *Gazavât-nâmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Gazavât-nâmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1956), 123-24; and collective work, *Istanbul Kütüphaneleri Tarih-Coğrafya Yazmaları Katalogları*, vol. 1: *Türkçe Tarih Yazmaları* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1943-), 295-296 (no. 184). In these sources, the title of the same ms. is given as *Târih-i muteber*. A similar text entitled *Makâle-i tevârih-i müherrike(!)-i Kandiye* is to be found in Manchester, Univ. Lib., Coll.

script was copied in H. 1158 (1745/46) by Giritli Süleyman bin Halil on order of Köprülü Hâfız Ahmed Paşa, then governor of Candia (between 1744 and 1746). According to İz, Giritli Süleyman is to be identified with the anonymous author speaking in the beginning of the text.⁶ However, the latter states that he found the original manuscript while in Cairo in 1694. Thus it seems that Giritli Süleyman was the copyist rather than the author, who remains anonymous.

The novel, in a manner very common in contemporary Western European literature, presents itself as a real story. In the introduction, the author states: “it is related that” (*rivayet olunur ki*) in 1084 AH (1673-4) el-Hac Abdurrahman, a merchant of Cairo, freed a slave of his, Yusuf, gave him some capital, and sent him as his *protegé* (*çırak*) to Istanbul. The voyage was bound to have adventurous complications, which Yusuf wrote down and sent to his former master. The anonymous author was in Cairo in 1106 AH (1694-5) and met in the famous Khan al-Halil bazaar a merchant (*Han-ı Halil sakinlerinden... bir bazirgân*), el-Hac Ibrahim. During the conversation, it turned out that el-Hac Ibrahim, being the son of the above-mentioned Abdurrahman, owed his literary knowledge to the chronicle of Yusuf. The anonymous author copied this chronicle, which forms the main body of the story.⁷

The Warden’s story: a summary

Since both editions are unfortunately rather hard to access, I will give here a synopsis of the story, which is written in a simple first-person narrative, with several mistakes in spelling Arabic and Persian words, and with a lot of nautical vocabulary which might suggest that it was created in a port or naval environment.⁸

Lindsay, No. 141; Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1927), 218, no. 189.

- 6 İz, “Makale-i Zindancı,” 111, based on the original (op.cit., 148). According to Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, ed. Nuri Akbayar (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996), s.v. “Ahmed Paşa (Köprülüâde) (Hafız),” 215, Köprülü Hafız Ahmed Paşa became governor of Candia in Receb 1157 (August 1744) until Zilkade 1159 (November 1746), when he was transferred to Yanya. However, evidence from the judicial registers of Candia show that his governorship lasted from after September 1744 (at the earliest) until July 1747; see Nikolaos Stavriniadis, *Μεταφράσεις τουρκικών ιστορικών εγγράφων* [Translations of Turkish historical documents], vol. IV (Herakleion: Vikelaiia Demotike Vivliotheke Herakleiou, 1984), 282, 284-85, 314, 317.
- 7 İz, “Makale-i Zindancı,” 114. Levend (loc.cit.) thinks that the text is an account of Yusuf’s actual adventures, rather than a work of fiction.
- 8 Cf. İz, “Makale-i Zindancı,” 112-13; Tietze, “Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän,” 153-54. In one instance, the author has inserted a Persian phrase (*gâfil mebâs*, “do not ignore that...”: İz, “Makale-i Zindancı,” 117; Tietze, “Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän,” 162, fn. 3),

Yusuf starts with his leaving Alexandria for Istanbul on a French ship, together with another fifty or fifty-five Muslims. The ship is hit by a terrible storm, described in much detail, and is severely damaged. In the end a sailor sees an empty island, in whose shore the ship crushes. Another sailor recognizes the island and leads the crew and passengers to a cave, where they find refuge; a dervish lights a fire using a piece of wood. Here the author adds to the verisimilitude of his story, asserting that from among fifty-five Muslims, twelve were drowned in the storm and seven were wounded, while nine out of eighteen Christians were dead and three wounded.

After five days, a galleon appears like a *deus ex machina*; its crew asserts that the ship is French as well, heading for Alexandretta (Iskenderun), and the captain promises the passengers to leave them in Cyprus. However, as it turns out, the ship belongs in fact to pirates who put the Muslim passengers to fetters and start off for plunder. Five or six days later, while approaching Cyprus, the pirate galleon captures a small boat and learns that a rich Muslim is soon to celebrate the circumcision of one of his sons in a nearby village. The pirates approach the shore and most of them, under the direction of the captain himself, disembark in order to attack the village.

However, the Warden (*zindancı*) of the galleon, who had earlier quarreled with the captain, now finds the opportunity to rebel. He frees the prisoners and uses those among them capable of war (including the narrator, Yusuf), along with some of the pirates who are faithful to him, in order to take over the ship. After a short battle, the mutiny is crowned by success. All the more so, the Warden beats the remaining pirates, who return empty-handed from their expedition (as the village had been aware of it), makes the survivors prisoners, and gives some of them over to the Muslim army waiting at the shore. From among the remaining prisoners, the Warden gains over the officers, who esteemed him of old, and distribute the loot among his crew, including now the Muslim released prisoners. As the ship is then near Famagusta (Ammochostos, Mağusa), the governor of Cyprus invites the Warden and his crew; however, the latter declines politely.⁹

which might be known to him through some poem (cf. its use by Evliya Çelebi: Robert Dankoff, *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis: The Relevant Section of the Seyahatname edited with Translation, Commentary and Introduction* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990], 234). On the vocabulary used, the classic work is of course Henry Kahane, Renée Kahane and Andreas Tietze, *The Lingua Franca in the Levant*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958).

9 On the geostrategic, military, and administrative situation of Cyprus in this period, cf. Antonis Hadjikyriacou, "Society and Economy on an Ottoman Island: Cyprus in the Eighteenth Century," Ph. D. diss. (SOAS, 2011). The presence of a governor seems to be an anachronism, since the story allegedly happened after 1673-4, while Cyprus passed under the jurisdiction of

Under its new leadership and crew, the pirate galleon has to decide under which flag it will enlist. Captain Warden summons a council and rejects various propositions: if they are to head for Istanbul, they would probably end up as prisoners of the Ottomans; if for Algiers, its Janissary corps (*ocak*), being greedy, would confiscate the ship; as for the Trablus (Tripoli) *ocak*, it is destitute and it would not treat them with courtesy. The only solution remaining is Tunis, to which everyone agrees. Meanwhile, the angry governor manages to arrest Captain Warden while he is on the shore collecting supplies, and urges him to send a man to the galleon, ordering it to come to the port. The Warden, however, instructs the crew through this man to answer that he himself is not their chief, but only their interpreter. Indeed, the galleon gives that answer and does not come to Famagusta. Now, it happens then that the governor's family, together with that of the local judge (*kadi*), was returning to Cyprus from Istanbul, and the galleon is lucky enough to capture them with their ship.

After this dramatic turn of fate, the governor summons a council in Famagusta and decides to attack the galleon. What he did not know, however, was that the pirates had already enrolled some twenty-five experienced men in Famagusta and had thus increased their power. The governor tries to persuade the French consul to give him a ship in order to launch the attack; the consul tries to discourage him, but he finally has to sell him the ship. In the battle that follows, not only the pirates prevail, but also the governor's son, their prisoner, decides to enter their ranks, saying that "neither the state of pasha, neither that of bey is for me; I am made to be a corsair." In the aftermath, Captain Warden is released and sent to the French consul's house, who attempts to persuade him to submit to the Sultan, but to no avail. The two sides exchange their prisoners, but the governor has to let his son join the pirates.¹⁰

Back in Damietta waters, the pirates encounter a Maltese pirate ship. In the fierce battle that ensues, Captain Warden, somewhat miraculously, becomes a Muslim, crying: "Hey community of the Muslims! Brothers! My name is Mahmud." It goes without saying that in the end his crew prevails and the pirates capture the Maltese ship.

the Kapudan Pasha in 1670; see Tietze, "Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän," 156-7; Hadjikyriacou, "Society and Economy on an Ottoman Island," 127. However, the existence of a governor in Famagusta (the usual seat of the Cyprus pasha being Nicosia) is indeed noted around the same period (Tietze, loc.cit.).

10 It is interesting that his father observes that corsair life is "just the right career for such a drunkard," *anıñ gibi sarhoşuñ korsânlık boyunca biçilmiş kaftandır* (cf. Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan*, 216).

Continuing their voyage, the pirates pass near the island of Patmos and arrive at Kuşadası,¹¹ where they enlist some more men. Then they pass from Chios, where they encounter some Tunisian ships, which celebrate the pirates' decision to run their flag with cannon shots.¹² In the road to Tunis, however, our pirates encounter a Maltese flotilla, which had been ordered to capture Captain Warden. The latter makes them believe his galleon is Dutch, and thus approach them closely enough to start the battle with an advantage. During the battle, which soon turns in favor of the pirates, the Maltese captain threatens to blow up his own ship and the pirates have to let him go. As a result of this gesture, and since he already knew Mahmud, the Warden, he turns Muslim as well and joins the pirate fleet.

Approaching Tunis, the fleet is welcomed by the *Tunus devletlisi*, the magnate of Tunis. He gives various honorary offices to Mahmud and his officers. However, he dies soon after, and his successor, afraid of Warden Mahmud, attempts to poison him. Suspicious, the latter decides to quit Tunis for the Algiers *ocak*, which had already invited him with special letters of friendship (*muhabbetnâme*). Indeed, Mahmud and his followers leave Tunis, return the Tunisian flag, and arrive to Algiers stating that they decided to “make the [Algerian] *ocak* their motherland” (*ocağı vatan edinmeye*).¹³ Here the alleged author and protagonist, Yusuf, ends his story rather abruptly with an eulogy of Warden Mahmud. One could observe that the later part of the story, after the arrival to Tunis, is written somehow in haste, with much less detail than the rest of the novel.

Some notes on the synthesis and authorship of the text

Like other similar texts of Ottoman prose, the “Discourse on Captain Warden” is thus a sequence of swashbuckling episodes rather than a well-structured story

11 On pirate presence in Patmos see Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Coexistence in the Aegean under the Ottomans,” *The Aegean and its Cultures. Proceedings of the first Oxford-Athens graduate student workshop*, eds. Georgios Deligiannakis – Yannis Galanakis (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009), 131-138.

12 The presence of Tunisian ships as far as Chios was not something unusual. A skirmish between a French flotilla and Tunisian ships harboured at Chios was noted in 1681; Defterdar Sarı Mehmed Paşa, *Zübde-i Vekayiât*, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1995), 122; Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches*, ed. Herbert W. Duda (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1963 [second ed.; first published: 1830]), vol. 6, 371. And in 1749 Tunisian pirates caught a Venetian ship; Eyal Ginio, “Piracy and Redemption in the Aegean Sea during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century,” *Turcica* 33 (2001): 135-147, at 138.

13 In 1684, two brothers who had fled from Tunis to Algiers launched a military expedition against their homeland, an event that might be echoed in this adventure; Tietze, “Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän,” 156.

with beginning and end. In this it resembles the story-tellers' (*meddah*) scenarios or other adventurous, semi-folk tale stories.¹⁴ Unlike these examples, however, its ending has no emphasis at all, either on some more or less religious morale or on the eventual happiness of the hero. Of course, the real protagonist is Warden Mahmud, and not the narrator, about whom we never hear again after the first episodes of the story. It is true that the narrative ends with the Warden entering Algiers in pomp and triumph, but one would expect the author to make him retire of the swashbuckler's life and settle as a wealthy merchant or administrator, as usually happens in the *meddah* stories. It seems, as I noted before, that we have to do with a product of the sailors' milieu, emphasizing adventure in the sea and giving little importance in cities and ports. In a closer inspection, it seems in fact that in the Warden story two different narratives were collated: the initial storm and shipwreck episode is formulated in the third person, whereas the rest of the story is narrated by the alleged Yusuf. It is more than probable that at least one of the narratives has its origin in real facts, either from the naval experience of the author or from port hearsay.

The relationship of our text with certain *meddah* stories is worth to be investigated further. In a manuscript published by Özdemir Nutku, which contains a collection of such scenarios from the mid-eighteenth century, there are indeed references to Maltese piracy in the Mediterranean, bearing certain similarities with the story of Warden Captain. In a story entitled *Hazinedâr Ahmed Ağa Yusuf bâ Attarzâde*, the protagonist Yusuf, freed slave of Ahmed Ağa in Istanbul, is a rather despicable character that finally finds happiness, as in many *meddah* stories.¹⁵ At some point he goes to Egypt, where a Bektashi dervish gives him instructions to go to Istanbul; Yusuf embarks from Alexandria and falls prisoner to two Maltese galleons near Cyprus (*İskenderiyeye azm-ı râh; Kıbrıs adası kurbünde esir-i Maltız, iki kalyon*). After nine days, as prophesized by the dervish, the "famous Musallî ("devout") Kapudan," coming from Algiers, captures both galleons and Yusuf arrives safely in Istanbul. In the end of the scenario, a note states that Musallî Kapudan was a real person, famous in Algiers (*Musallî Kapudan fil-asl Cezayir'de meşhûrdur*), while Yusuf was also famous for his depravity

14 See Özdemir Nutku, *Meddahlık ve meddah hikâyeleri* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976); Ambros – Schmidt, "A Cossack Adopted"; Cengiz Kırılı, "The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780-1845," Ph. D. diss. (SUNY Binghamton University, 2000), 172ff. The *meddah* tradition, I think, formed a common basis of themes and styles that can be seen in many products of Ottoman literature, both "folk" and "high"; cf. the lively dialogues in Aziz Efendi's (d. 1798) work: Andreas Tietze, "Aziz Efendi's *Muhayyelat*," *Oriens* 1/2 (1948): 248-329.

15 Cf. Nutku, *Meddahlık*, 139; Kırılı, "The Struggle over Space," 175-178.

and oppression. All the more so, this scenario can be dated in some detail, since another note informs us that the story was in the repertoire of Şekerci Sâlih, Edirneli Külâhî, Meddah Hasan and Mıyancı-zâde.¹⁶ Now, according to another scenario in the same manuscript, Şekerci Sâlih and Meddah Hasan had told another story in 1727 and 1741 respectively.¹⁷ Maltese piracy is also mentioned in another story, dated 1758: the hero, Hüseyin Beşe, is still a child when made prisoner by the Maltese. After spending forty-four years as a slave in Malta, he escapes with ten of his companions in a small boat; they arrive at a coast in the desert, where all die except for Hüseyin Beşe.¹⁸

The similarities of the first *meddah* scenario with the text I study are striking enough to suggest a link. Here again the author asserts that the persons of the story are real; moreover, the name of the protagonist is the same, as well as his being a freed slave, although in different cities. Musalli Kapudan being from Algiers reminds us of Warden Mahmud finding refuge to the same *ocak* in the end of the story. Given the dating of the manuscript we study (1745/46), one cannot exclude the possibility that the *meddah* scenario was in fact influenced by the “Warden story,” which might have been circulated in literary and popular circles of Istanbul. Another possibility, though, is that both texts use stories circulating in Eastern Mediterranean harbors, perhaps about a real corsair, if we are to believe the—obscure, as all these short scenarios—note on Musalli Kapudan.

The few scholars that have been interested in this unique (as far as we know) text, have mainly paid attention to the information that it gives us concerning the fluidity of the interreligious and inter-‘national’ borders of the period. The author (and, we may assume, his expected audience) finds little difference between Muslims and Christians, although the conversion of the hero and of the Maltese captain seems somehow to readjust things. For instance, it is said that God’s grace was shown in the fact that when in the deserted island the crew and the passengers of the ship were saved due to both the infidel sailor (who guided them to the cave) and the dervish (who lit a fire).¹⁹ After all, it is well known how easily a prisoner could switch between religions and change his luck even from that of a slave to that of a pirate commander.²⁰ Pirate crews were widely mixed

16 Nutku, *Meddahlık*, 184-85; cf. Ginio, “Piracy and Redemption,” 136.

17 Nutku, *Meddahlık*, 181. On Şekerci Salih, see also *ibid.*, 34.

18 Nutku, *Meddahlık*, 221.

19 İz, “Makale-i Zindancı,” 118.

20 Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les chrétiens d’Allah. L’histoire extraordinaire des renégats, XVIe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Perrin, 1989); Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Changing Masters in the Aegean,” *The Greek Islands and the Sea: Proceedings of the First International Colloquium held at The Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London, 21-22 September 2001*, eds. J.

linguistically, as suggested by a variety of sources;²¹ our text suggests that they could even be varied religiously, as Cemal Kafadar notes:²²

[the text] shows how exigencies could render the transition from Christian-Muslim cooperation to the championing of Muslim faith abrupt yet relatively unproblematic... As a group, the Christian sailors, including the warden, are referred to as “dirty infidels”; the world is divided into “us” and “them” in a confrontational dualism based on religious identity. Yet this does not preclude the possibility of friendship and cooperation with individuals from “the other world”. It is always possible that those individuals will eventually join and fight for the same cause, just as the warden declares himself Muslim more than halfway through the novella. And the author has no qualms about using the word *gaza* for the joint undertakings of the Christian and (freed) Muslim shipmates, including himself, under the chieftainship of the warden-captain as *gaza* even before the latter’s conversion.

Images of the Mediterranean

However, in the rest of the paper I will try to focus on the image of the Eastern Mediterranean among Ottoman seamen, as illustrated in the text. In other words, what type of ‘cognitive / mental map’ would a sailor use in order to represent a sea he certainly knew, with its ports, established itineraries, and known or unknown waters?

A first observation we have to make is that the text does not mention any maps whatsoever. However, this does not mean that navigation was just an empirical matter of experience. For example, when describing a storm during which the compass of the ship was lost, the author states that everything seemed to be lost, since “compass is the eye of the ship” (*zira pusula sefinenin*

Chrysostomides, Ch. Dendrinios, and J. Harris (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 2004) [also published in eadem, *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans*, Variorum Collected Studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)], 199-212, esp. 209ff.

21 Bennisar and Bennisar, *Les chrétiens d’Allah*, 215-216 and passim; Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 308 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsyonu – Dizini*, vol. 8, eds. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, Robert Dankoff (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003), 282, states that the corsairs of Aya Mavra (Santa Maura, Leukada) could speak Turkish, Greek or “Frankish”: *lisânları Urûmca çalup fasîh ü belîğ Rûm lisâni ve Freng zebânî tekellüm ederler*; *Urûmca* stands for the Balkan Turkish dialects, see op.cit., 89-90, 94, 127-28; and Robert Dankoff, *From Mahmud Kaşgari to Evliya Çelebi: Studies in Middle Turkic and Ottoman Literatures* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), 276.

22 Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 83.

gözüdir: 116/72a).²³ It is highly probable that, compass apart, the use of a portolan or *isolario* was common among merchant and pirate ships alike. Svat Soucek analyzed such a portolan collection (apparently much more lavish than a common captain would use) dating from about the same period our text was compiled, i.e. between 1669 and 1715.²⁴ Nonetheless, save the use of compass, the author seems to ignore the principles of navigation, probably because he was no “skilled seaman” himself, so to say (on the other hand, the various kinds of ships and boats are carefully described). Thus, he only once uses a proper measuring of distance, when narrating that the ship had arrived 40-50 miles away from Tunis (*tamam Tunus’a kırk elli mîl kadar yaklaştıklarında*: 145/104b); in another instance, he says that the galleon was about three miles from the seashore (*deniz kenârına varınca tahminen üç mûlden ziyâde vardır*: 125/82b). In all other instances he uses time as a measure: a Cypriot village one hour away from the sea (*Kıbrıs cezâresinde denize bir sa’at mikdarı karîb bir köy vardır*: 120/77b), a port about two or three hours away from Famagusta (*Mahusi kal’asına tahminen iki üç sa’atlik yerde bir limana girüb*: 126/84a), three or four days from Cyprus to Damietta waters (*ez in canib üç dört gün kulanub Dimyat sularına inince*: 138/96a; *kulanub* for *kullanub*, “sailed for three or four days”).²⁵ Moreover, the author seems almost to ignore the points of the compass, such as North or South; neither does he mention any specific winds. He only uses expressions such as “a very calm sea” (*hava gayet limanlıktır*: 124/81b) or “[a sail coming

23 In this and all following references, the first number refers to İz’ edition and the second to the ms. folio. Well-known to seamen, compass was rather a curiosity for town-dwellers. A seventeenth-century satirical poem refers to “a Frankish curiosity that shows the direction of Mecca” (*bir Fireng işi turfe kible-nümâ / Kud’sê dönerdi Ka’be diyü hemân*); Hanife Koncu, “Mizah geleneğinden bir örnek: Kasîde-i cüzdân-nâme,” in *Perspectives on Ottoman Studies: Papers from the 18th Symposium of the International Committee of Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Studies (CIEPO) at the University of Zagreb, 2008*, eds. Ekrem Çaučević, Nenad Moaçanin, and Vjêran Kursar (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), 363-80.

24 Svat Soucek, *Piri Reis and Turkish Mapmaking After Columbus: The Khalili Portolan Atlas* (Oxford: The Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1996); on the dating, see p. 110. On previous map-making, see Kemal Özdemir, *Osmanlı Deniz Haritaları: Ali Macar Reis Atlası* (Istanbul: Marmara Bankası A. Ş., 1992); Gregory C. McIntosh, *The Piri Reis Map of 1513* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2000); Dimitris Loupis, “Piri Reis’s *Book on Navigation* (Kitab-ı Bahriyye) as a Geography Handbook,” *The Portolan: Journal of the Washington Map Society* 52 (2001-2002): 11-17; Mevhibe Pınar Emirialioğlu, “Cognizance of the Ottoman World: Visual and Textual Representations in the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Empire (1514-1596),” Ph. D. diss. (University of Chicago, 2006), 89-138; Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 188ff. Cf. also Ariel Salzmann, *Toqueville in the Ottoman Empire, Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 31ff.

25 Cf. Tietze, “Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän”, 209.

from] the windward side” (*rüzgâr üstünden gelür*: 119/75a). In order to explain that the Tunisian convoy passed south of Sicily, he says that they passed “in front of the Messina island” (*Tunus’a doğru... giderler iken Mesîna ceziresinin önlerinde*: 144/102b). Only during the description of the initial great storm, we read that it was “coming from the East” (*canib-i şarkiden*) before the wind changed to Western (115/71a); this exception shows exactly that the cardinal points are used *ad hoc* as wind indicators, and not as geographical markers.

On the other hand, geographical markers such as islands or straits are used often and with a certain confidence. The itinerary of the adventures shows in itself that the author knew what he was speaking of, and so did his audience. One would be tempted to suggest that the text was produced in a Cairene-Alexandrine milieu, as assumed by the introductory story. Indeed, it shows a rather detailed knowledge of Egyptian waters (namely, the mentioning of the “Damietta waters,” which are also very dangerous for sailors, so that “only pirate ships sail alone”; *Dimyat sularına inince... Bu sularda yalnız kalyon gezmez, meger ki korsan ola*: 138/96b) and of Cyprus, whereas the mentioning of the Aegean islands is somehow “selective.” The narrative is quite analytical concerning the itinerary from Famagusta to Patmos, Kuşadası, and Chios; it even shows special knowledge of local toponyms (*Sedde boğazında*: 139/96b; *Sakıza gelmeyüb ancak Boğaz hisarına geldikleri*: 143/101b), places for crew recruitment like Kuşadası (e.g., *merkum yoldaşlar... asılları Kuş Adalı olmağla*: 142/100b), or even the topography of particular islands (“the inhabitants of Chios proper [i.e., the town] and of the villages”: *Sakızın kendinde ve taşra karyelerinde olan halk*: 143/102b). However, it then skips the rest of the Aegean and goes straightforward to the “island of Messina” (Sicily) and Tunis.²⁶ The only reference to the Western Aegean is the mentioning of its islands as a place for recruitment of Christian pirates (so a Maltese ship is full of warriors, since it has recruited them from “among the islands”: *ada arasına uğrayub vafir levend kefereleri peyda ediüb*: 139/97a). How can we explain this omission? I would suggest that a seaman based in Egypt would know best the itinerary from Alexandria or Damietta to Istanbul, while the Western part of the Archipelago could more probably have been more of a *terra incognita*. The itinerary described in detail in our text forms part of the usual Ottoman convoy route linking Egypt with the imperial capital, and was also one of the principal areas of Maltese pirate activity.²⁷ As for the North African part of the adventure, the author seems to know little more than the above-mentioned portolan, which

26 On this name of Sicily cf. Soucek, *Piri Reis and Turkish Mapmaking*, 118; Tietze, “Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän,” 198 fn. 2.

27 See Molly Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants. A Maritime History of the Mediterranean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 117, 129.

notes that Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli are full of Muslim *gazis*.²⁸ However, the discussion on the greediness or mightiness of the *ocaks* of these three ports shows that he might at least have some hearsay knowledge from pirate crews arriving in Egypt.²⁹

Another interesting point concerns the various nations acting in the Levant. The author of our story identifies Dutch (*Felemenk kalyonu*: 139/96b; *Felemenk gemileri*: 144/102b), French (*Franstız şeytiye*:³⁰ 114/70b; *Franca gemileri*: 144/102b), English (*İngilis gemileri*: 144/102b), Algerine (*Cezayır gemileri*: 144/102b), Tunisian (*Tunus*: 143/102a) and, of course, Maltese ships (*Malta gemileri*: 144/102b).³¹ Furthermore, there are some networks that help sharing information about shipping in the Levant. The Maltese, for instance, knew that four Dutch galleons had left Smyrna (*zira İzmir'den Felemenk'in gelicek dört kit'a kalyonları olup ve mesfur kalyonların geliceğinden Malta keferesinin haberleri olmağla*: 144/103a). Of course, one of the most striking points of the text is its attitude against the Ottoman state. Not only the protagonist of the story, Warden Captain Mahmud, defies the governor of Cyprus and escapes from his hands, but when the pirate council has to choose between Muslim flags, they reject the Ottoman flag on the grounds that "if we go to Istanbul and fall into the clutches of the Ottomans (*Osmanlı pençesine düşersek*), it is evident that it will take our galleon and wealth from our hands and make us slaves (*esir*), and we will not find safety for our lives." This attitude could be interpreted with a number of ways: it might be a realistic rendering of the corsairs' world view, a condescension to the supposed audience of sailors and (perhaps) pirates-to-be, or a narrative technique in order to exalt the might of the Ottomans, feared even by the defiant corsairs. Another striking point, given the strong presence of the fleet of the *Serenissima* in the Aegean during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, is that

28 Soucek, *Piri Reis and Turkish Mapmaking*, 114.

29 Tietze ("Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän," 157) suggests that the author might be related to the North African *ocaks*; I think, however, that the analysis of the text shows clearly he only had hearsay knowledge of them.

30 On this particular kind of ship see Tietze, "Die Geschichte von Kerkermeister-Kapitän," 207; Colin Heywood, "The Kapudan Pasha, the English Ambassador and the *Blackham* Galley: an Episode in Anglo-Ottoman Maritime Relations (1697)," in *The Kapudan Pasha*, 409-438, at 416 fn. 25.

31 The text mentions explicitly flags (*sancak*, e.g. 129/86b, 143/101b; *bayrak*, 145/104a), although in most cases ships are to be recognized either by telescope (in cases of Maltese ships, which the Warden knows from before) or by the way they are travelling (e.g. it is stated that "in these waters, only pirate [Maltese] ships go without company"). On the use of flags in seventeenth-century Mediterranean cf. Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants*, 178.

Venetian ships are not mentioned at all in the text.³² The author speaks as if the sole opponent of the Ottoman-*cum*-Maghrebine navy was the Maltese corsairs.³³ The omission of the Venetian naval power can be explained again by the fact that the author seems to be familiar only with the itinerary Alexandria-Istanbul, in a period after the fall of Candia when the Venetians were active mainly in the western Aegean and the Adriatic, all the more so since their trading activity had severely declined;³⁴ however, by no means was Venetian martial activity absent in the area even in this period, which makes its omission in the text still puzzling.³⁵

What, then, is the mental image the author of the text has of the Mediterranean? He clearly does not have in mind a map the way we do, with its winds and points of the compass. One could even say there is no Mediterranean Sea in the narrative; there are only itineraries. Or, in other words and to extend the simile with mapping, there is no mental portolan or *mappamundi*, but only a mental *isolarium*, a list of island descriptions.³⁶ The very incoherence of the heroes' itinerary (from Cyprus back in the "Damietta waters," then to the Eastern Aegean, and then to Tunis) might indicate a certain degree of ignorance of the Mediterranean topography, as would be expected from sailors, who knew only ports and islands, not maps – unlike the captains.

32 On the Venetian-Ottoman conflict in the Aegean during the same period, see Daniel Panzac, "Affrontement maritime et mutations technologiques en mer Egée: l'Empire ottoman et la république de Venise (1645-1740)," in *The Kapudan Pasha*, 119-39; Svat Soucek, "The Strait of Chios and the Kapitanpaşa's Navy," in *op.cit.*, 141-163, 143-53; both with rich bibliography. On the presence of Venetians in Ottoman literature, cf. Giampiero Bellingeri, "Venezia e i Veneziani nella letteratura ottoman," in *Venezia e i Turchi. Scontri e confronti di due civiltà* (Milano: Electa, 1985), 144-153.

33 On the Maltese pirate activity in the Mediterranean, cf. Pál Fodor, "Maltese Pirates, Ottoman Captives and French Traders in the Early Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean," in *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Borders (Early Fifteenth-Early Eighteenth Centuries)*, eds. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007): 221-237; Ginio, "Piracy and Redemption"; Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants*.

34 Cf. Suraiya Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change, 1590-1699" in Halil İnalcık with Donald Quataert eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 520-21; Greene, *Catholic Pirates and Greek Merchants*, 99ff.

35 Panzac, "Affrontement maritime," 134ff.; and Soucek, *loc.cit.*

36 On Ottoman *portolani*, see e.g. Özdemir, *Osmanlı Deniz Haritaları*; on *isolaria*, cf. Nikos Belavilas, "Aegean Sea Islands and Ports through the Isolaria of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Eastern Mediterranean Cartographies*, eds. George Tolia and Dimitris Loupis (Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2004), 51-63. If it were not for the details on Cyprus and the South-Eastern Aegean, one could draw a parallel between this "mental map" and Medieval Arabic and Persian mappings of the Mediterranean, seen as a vase-like, east side up basin with three islands in a row (Cyprus, Crete, Sicily): see Karen C. Pinto, "'Surat Bahr al-Rum' (Picture of the Sea of Byzantium): Possible Meanings Underlying the Forms," in *ibid.*, 223-241.

At the very beginning of the text, the alleged narrator says that “we set out and departed from *that side*” (*ol tarafdān tevcih ve azimet edüb*: 114/70b), “that side” meaning Alexandria or rather Egypt at large, where the alleged receiver of the narrative resided. The use of “this” or “that side” (*bu tarafdān/tarafa, ol tarafdān/tarafa*) is common in official documents issued in Istanbul: the capital is “this side,” while the province concerned is “that side” (cf. the same use of the word in our text, concerning Famagusta: *kalyon... bu tarafa gelsün*, 130/87b). This ‘bipolar’ perception of the geographical space is typical for a state whose political ideology is partly based on the notion of ‘inner’ vs. ‘outer’, ‘center’ vs. ‘periphery.’³⁷ Furthermore, it is typical of a perception of the Mediterranean as a network of itineraries rather than a two-dimensional, homogeneous and grid-like space. For our author and his audience, the Mediterranean or the Aegean seems not to be perceived as a *mappable* space. Being no navigators or captains (who, we may assume, knew well the use of portolan maps and of the compass), they perceived the sea as a *set of routes*, composed by a sequence of islands and ports and their respective ‘open waters.’ For all we know, the same perception of the geographical space is to be seen in Evliya Çelebi’s (a contemporary of our novel) narrative of travels, which, to use Suraiya Faroqhi’s words, “views the Ottoman territories as an accumulation of cities, linked to one another by a network of roads.”³⁸ The same logic of “stations list” is evident in some Ottoman pilgrimage guides.³⁹

37 Cf. Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 12-13.

38 Suraiya Faroqhi, “In Search of Ottoman History,” in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, eds. eadem and Halil Berktaş (London, 1992), 224; cf. also eadem, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, 197 (on Matrakçı Nasuh), and Gottfried Hagen, “Afterword: Ottoman Understandings of the World in the Seventeenth Century,” in Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 215-56.

39 Menderes Çoşkun, “Osmanlı türkçesiyle kaleme alınmış hac seyahatnameleri – I,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 24/I (2000): 91-108; Jan Schmidt, “Ottoman *Hajj* Manuals and the John Rylands Library MS Turkish 88”, now in Idem, *The Joys of Philology: Studies in Ottoman Literature, History and Orientalism (1500-1923)* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2002), vol. II, 269-277. One can draw a similarity with Ottoman catalogs of post-stations of the courier and communications network: Colin Heywood, “The Via Egnatia in the Ottoman Period: The *Menzilbanes* of the *Sol kol* in the Late 17th/Early 18th Century,” in *The Via Egnatia Under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699). Halcyon Days in Crete II, A Symposium Held in Rethymnon, 9-11 January 1994*, ed. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1996), 129-44. Unfortunately I did not have access to J. Michael Rogers, “Itineraries and Town Views in Ottoman Histories,” *The History of Cartography*, vol. 2, book 1: *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, eds. John Brian Harley, David Woodward et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 228-55.

If we want to generalize this conclusion, however, we have to locate, collect and study more sources coming from this milieu of seamen, Muslim or Christian. As far as I know, all known Ottoman texts on seafaring come from a different milieu, that of admirals and geographers. Seydi Ali Reis, for instance, the admiral of the Indian Ocean in mid-sixteenth century, describes his wanderings in the Indian Ocean in a somewhat similar yet ultimately different way: although he, too, seems not to mention in his text the points of the compass as geographical indicators (though he does mention the use of compass *per se*), it is clear that he has in mind a mental map with places such as Diu, Hormuz or Yemen dispersed in space, and which he uses in order to indicate the position and movements of his fleet.⁴⁰ That is to say, his perception of the Ocean is based on a grid composed by orientated places rather than routes, as our anonymous author's perception seems to be. Almost one century later, in his introduction to the naval history of the Ottomans, Kâtip Çelebi gives a description of the Eastern Mediterranean using the cardinal points,⁴¹ before narrating the movements of the Ottoman fleet. Moreover, Kâtip Çelebi systematically uses mileage instead of time units for distances, mainly between stable points and even when giving advice to future corsairs.⁴² Of course, this less than cursory inspection of sources is not adequate to reach conclusions on the perception of the Mediterranean. However, I think the difference between our anonymous author and educated geographers who know the use of a complete map is evident.

40 Arminius Vambery tr., *The Travels and Adventures of Sidi Ali Reis in India, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Persia during the Years 1553-1556* (London: Luzac & Co., 1899). Seydi Ali Reis once speaks of a storm coming from the West (ibid., 17). Unfortunately, the original Ottoman text (Mehmet Kiremit ed., *Seydi Ali Reis, Mir'âtü'l-Memâlik: İnceleme, metin, indeks* [Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1999]) was not accessible to me. On the author and his works cf. Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 85-86, 100-102, 120-23; Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, 182-85; Emiralioğlu, "Cognizance of the Ottoman World," 228 ff.

41 Kâtip Çelebi, *Deniz savaşları hakkında büyüklere armağan (Tuhfetül-kibâr fî esfâri'l-bihâr)*, ed. Orhan Şaik Gökyay (Istanbul: Kabcacı, 2007), 18-25, and cf. 67, 95, 100 (on western sides of islands), 84 (western wind, copying Seydi Ali Reis), 88 (in the west side, meaning Western Mediterranean).

42 Kâtip Çelebi, *Deniz savaşları*, 46, 56, 64, 88, 95, 107, 125, 127, 140, 153, 177-79, 181, 192.

Images of the Mediterranean in an Ottoman Pirate Novel From the Late Seventeenth Century

Abstract ■ “The discourse on Warden Captain Mahmud, on [his] victories over the damned dwellers of Hell, the Maltese” is a rare specimen of Ottoman Tiefskultur novel of the late seventeenth century. Allegedly copied from a manumitted slave’s letter to his former master, it describes the former’s adventures when he set off from Alexandria to Istanbul. Written in a simple and lively language, this valuable text gives a great deal of information on intra-religious relationships in the Mediterranean, on the life of corsairs, but also on the ways Mediterranean seamen conceived the geography of the Sea, planned and understood their itineraries, viewed the various nations acting in the Levant, and so forth. After a study of the composition of the text and of its relations with similar texts in Ottoman literature, this paper tries to answer questions such as what type of ‘cognitive/mental map’ would Ottoman seamen have in mind in order to represent a known sea and its itineraries, what geographical markers did they use, how did they perceive a given sea. Analysis takes into account real maps, portolani and isolaria, as well as other similar sources.

Keywords: Mediterranean, piracy, Ottoman literature, mental maps.