

Evliya Çelebi in Vezirköprü, 1648

Evliya Çelebi Vezirköprü’de, 1648 yılı

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Abstract: In February 1648, the famous Ottoman travel writer Evliya Çelebi, travelling with the army of Defterdarzade Mehmet Paşa made a stopover of several weeks in Merzifon. From here, he undertook two journeys across the mountains to the city of Köprü (now Vezirköprü, Samsun province). The account of Evliya’s visits to Köprü in the second book of his *Seyahatname* provide an important source for the topography of Vezirköprü and its region in the early modern period. Through a close reading of Evliya’s account and a comparison with Joseph von Hammer’s abridged translation (1850), this study demonstrates that while his description of the city itself is partly based on Evliya’s first-hand observations, the following description of the area to the west of Vezirköprü is not, and that Hammer’s reconstruction of Evliya’s itinerary is in error. On his first visit, Evliya spent a whole day in Vezirköprü, then returned to Merzifon by the direct route across the Tavşan mountains, not – as Hammer assumes – by way of Göl, Kargı and Tosya.

Keywords: Vezirköprü • Evliya Çelebi • Seyahatname • Joseph von Hammer • Merzifon

Öz: Şubat 1648’de Defterdarzade Mehmet Paşa’nın ordusuyla seyahat eden ünlü Osmanlı seyyahı Evliya Çelebi, seyahatinin birkaç haftasını Merzifon’da geçirmiştir. Buradayken dağları aşarak Köprü nahiyesine (günümüzde Samsun ili Vezirköprü) iki gezi gerçekleştirmiştir. Evliya’nın Köprü’ye yaptığı ziyaretler hakkında bilgiler içeren *Seyahatname*’sinin ikinci kitabı, erken modern dönemde Vezirköprü ve çevresinin topografyası için önemli bir kaynak niteliğindedir. Evliya’nın aktardıklarının yakın okunması ve eserin Joseph von Hammer’in kısaltılmış çevirisiyle (1850) karşılaştırma yoluyla gerçekleştirilen bu çalışma gösteriyor ki; Hammer’in nahiyenin kendisi ile ilgili tasviri kısmen Evliya’nın birinci elden gözlemlerine dayansa da, Vezirköprü’nün batı sahası ile ilgili aktardığı aşağıdaki açıklaması bu kaynağa dayanmamaktadır ve Evliya’nın takip ettiği güzergâh ile ilgili yaptığı varsayım hatalıdır. Evliya, ilk ziyaretinde tam bir gününü Vezirköprü’de geçirdikten sonra Hammer’in aktardığı üzere Göl, Kargı ve Tosya üzerinden değil, Tavşan dağlarını aşarak gerçekleştirilen direkt yoldan Merzifon’a dönmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vezirköprü • Evliya Çelebi • Seyahatname • Joseph von Hammer • Merzifon

The *Seyahatname* or “Book of Travels” by Evliya Çelebi¹ (AD 1611 – ca. 1685) is one of our most detailed sources for life in northern Anatolia during the seventeenth century and our only textual source for the topography of Vezirköprü in the same period. In the course of a long and active life², Evliya crossed Anatolia on his travels to or from the eastern provinces of the Ottoman empire³. In 1672, he settled in Cairo, where he spent his retirement writing the *Seyahatname* on the basis of the

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¹ Orthography after Dankoff 2004. The modern Turkish forms are *Seyahatnâme* and *Evliyâ*.

² Good introductions to the *Seyahatname* are Dankoff & Kim 2010, which includes a summary of Evliya Çelebi’s journeys (Appendix, pp. 453-471); also Kim 2020; to Evliya’s biography, Dankoff 2004.

³ After a shipwreck on the Black Sea from which he narrowly escaped with his life, Evliya was determined to make his future journeys over land wherever possible: Dankoff & Kim 2010, 47-52.

journal which he had kept since he was a young man.

Until recently, scholarly enquiries were hampered by the lack of an authoritative edition of the *Seyahatname* and a reliable translation into a modern language. The original manuscript is in Ottoman Turkish, using the Arabic script. An Austrian diplomat, Joseph von Hammer (1774-1856), published an English translation of book 1 in 1834, followed by book 2 in 1850. Hammer was a prolific writer on oriental topics but not always a careful one, and his work was often criticized by fellow orientalists⁴. Especially problematic is his heavy-handed abridgement of book 2⁵, where his omissions are not always marked in the translated text. Nor are Hammer's conjectures, e.g., his attempts to supply names or figures missing from the manuscript text, indicated. Despite its shortcomings and for lack of a better alternative, Hammer's text has provided the point of departure for many studies of the *Seyahatname* and was reprinted as late as 2012 by Cambridge University Press.

The appearance of a transcription of the entire *Seyahatname* into Latin characters by Kurşun, Kahraman and Dağlı from 1999 onwards and a complete translation into modern Turkish by Dağlı and Kahraman from 2003 onwards were important contributions to the scientific study of Evliya's work⁶. A complete English translation remains a desideratum, but many parts of the *Seyahatname* have been translated into English and German⁷.

The following case study focuses on Evliya's description of the region around modern Vezirköprü (in Evliya's time known simply as *Köprü*, "bridge"), and its aim is twofold: first, to assess the value of the *Seyahatname* as a source for the topography of Vezirköprü and its region in the seventeenth century; second, to offer insights into the *modus operandi* of Evliya himself and of his nineteenth-century translator.

Evliya first visited northern Anatolia in the autumn of AD 1640 (AH 1050) on a voyage along the Black Sea coast with calls at – among other ports – Amasra, Sinop, Samsun and Trabzon⁸. In 1646, Evliya once again set out from Constantinople on a voyage to the east. The Sultan had appointed one of his relatives, Defterderzade Mehmet Paşa, as governor of Erzurum, and Evliya was given a position as customs clerk in Erzurum – evidently something of a sinecure, since he was also expected to function as Defterderzade's "muezzin and companion". After spending a month in Üsküdar preparing for their journey, the travelling party set out for Erzurum.

Anatolia's courier network or *ulak* consisted of three routes or "arms" stretching east from Constantinople⁹: the "right arm" led to Konya, Aleppo and Damascus¹⁰, while the two other "arms" ran together via Gebze and Bolu as far as Merzifon. Here they diverged, the "middle arm" (*orta kol*) continuing through Amasya and Tokat towards Diyarbakır¹¹, while the "left arm" (*sol kol*) led via Ladık and Niksar

⁴ Finkel 2015, 48-51.

⁵ The first two books of the *Seyahatname* are roughly the same length in the original, but Hammer's translation of book 2 is only about half as long as that of book 1.

⁶ A modern Turkish translation of the sections directly pertaining to Vezirköprü can also be found in İğçi and Kıvrak 2008.

⁷ For a list of translations published until 2010, see Dankoff & Kim 2010, 473-474.

⁸ Fol 245a-253b; Hammer 1850, 35-50; Kurşun *et al.* 1999, 42-55 = Dağlı & Kahraman 2005, 84-114.

⁹ Halaçoğlu 1981, 123.

¹⁰ Çetin 2013, 95.

¹¹ Çetin 2013, 134.

to Erzurum and Kars¹². Evliya, Defterderzade Mehmet Paşa and their party travelled along the *orta kol* as far as Tokat, then crossed over to Niksar to follow the *sol kol* the remainder of the way of Erzurum.

In 1647, the governor of Sivas, Varvar Ali Paşa, raised a revolt against the unpopular sultan İbrahim (1615-1648, reigned 1640-1648)¹³. In November of the same year, Defterderzade Mehmet Paşa decided to join the insurrection and marched west from Erzurum, recruiting troops as he went and taking Evliya with him¹⁴. Their route passed through Erzincan to Şebinkarahisar; from here, they followed the *sol kol* westward along the valley of the Kelkit river. By January 1648, they had crossed the Kılıçarslan pass and found themselves in the plain of Ladık. The army now moved through the Havza gap and set up camp at Merzifon. While at Merzifon, Defterderzade Mehmet Paşa dispatched Evliya north to Köprü on a mission to recruit horsemen for the rebel army and make contact with another Ottoman notable, Köprülü Mehmet Paşa (1578-1661), who held the governorship of Karaman but at this moment was on a visit to his home city¹⁵. Evliya's narrative of his journey to Köprü¹⁶ is framed by two dates given in the *Seyahatname*: 10 and 27 Muharrem 1059 (= February 5 and 22, AD 1648).

Despite Evliya's frequent use of the first person, every information in the ten books of the *Seyahatname* does not derive from personal observation or from the notes that he was able to take down while on the road. Much of it is clearly hearsay, some parts are fantasy or at the very least wildly exaggerated, and supernatural events abound. But there are also passages offering statistical information on population size, the numbers of households, the amount of taxes paid annually, et cetera. Evliya may have obtained these facts and figures from local officials while passing through, or from administrative records, tax lists, military rolls and other documents which he was able to consult in Constantinople or Cairo¹⁷. In numerous places throughout the second book of the *Seyahatname*, Evliya intended to give a date or a year, the number of houses, days etc., but the figures themselves are missing from the preserved manuscript. Evidently, when composing his narrative, Evliya intentionally left blank spaces, intending to go back at a later date and add the missing figures, drawing on a source which was not to hand at the time of writing, but in many cases, this was never done¹⁸.

Text¹⁹

[1] *Journey from Merzifûn to Koprî. We set out on the 10th Moharrem in a northerly direction along Mount Deshân, passed the village of Begorân and in six hours reached Koja Kala'a, a small castle on a rock accessible but by one road and one gate. It was besieged at different times by the rebels Karayâzîjî, Saîd Arab and Kalender, but never was taken by them. It was however conquered by Bayazîd I., from the Dânishmend family²⁰ and belongs now to the district of*

¹² Çetin 2013, 152-161.

¹³ Finkel 2014, 230-231.

¹⁴ Dankoff 2004, 3, 77.

¹⁵ The Köprülü were of Albanian extraction but took their name from their adopted native city, Köprü, which in their memory was later renamed Vezirköprü.

¹⁶ Fol. 348a-349a. For references to the printed editions, see the Concordance Table at the end of this article.

¹⁷ On Evliya's use of official records, see Dankoff 2004, 192-194.

¹⁸ E.g., *sene* --- *târihinde* (259b, 321b); --- *mil* (270b); --- *günü* (270a, 330a); --- *hândır* (327b); --- *sâ'at* (350b).

¹⁹ The translation and orthography are those of Hammer; the section numbers in brackets have been added.

²⁰ Hammer's abridged translation makes nonsense of the content: Bayezid I Yıldırım, 'thunderbolt' (reigned 1360-1403)

Koprí; the garrison consists of an hundred men, and it has a mosque, cistern, magazine for corn and seven or eight small guns, but no bath, khán or bezestán. The inhabitants make cans of fir-tree, which go by the name of bodúj, they also manufacture musical instruments called chekúr, tanbúr, rádha, karadozen, yúngvár, &c. In six²¹ hours more, after passing many villages on the border of Mount Deshán, we arrived at Koprí.

[2] Description of the old town and great bridge of Koprí. We dismounted at the house of Yússúf Aghá, where we stopped as guests, and delivered our letters to Koprílí Mohammed Páshá and the other principal men, we then collected the Búlúk-bashís and ordered cryers to proclaim that all those who wished to have goods and slaves, and possessed breeches and a horse, were to come to us. After this we went to view the town. Koprí is a fortress in good condition on the border of Mount Deshán, in a tract intersected by hills and valleys at a place watered by two rivers. One of these is called Bogha-koí and flows past the bottom of the town; the other is at an hour's distance and is called Astavolúz. The town of Koprí is situated between them. At the time of their overflowing they inundate the whole plain of Koprí;

[3] the town derives its name Koprí (bridge) from the great wooden bridge by which the Astavolúz river is crossed. It is a wonderful work constructed of fir-trees. At an early period this town was called Shebender, the name for bridge in the language of the Amalekites. The stone bridge, which was formerly here, broke down on the night of the birth of the Prophet, and was replaced by this wooden one. The two rivers which flow past the town of Koprí unite below it and fall into the great river Báfra.

[4] This town was first built by the Amalekites and was taken by Melek Ghází, the Prince of the Dánishmend family, from the Greek Emperors of Trebisonde. Bayazíd I. took the fortress, the abovesaid castle of Kojá Kala'a, by capitulation. It now belongs to the government of Amasia, half of it being a zíámet and the other half subáshílik subordinate to Tokát; the judge is appointed with three hundred aspers. Its districts contain no less than an hundred and forty villages with gardens, kháns, mosques covered with lead, and from three to four thousand houses all covered with bricks; the great borough Bogház-koí has three thousand houses; the other remarkable places of similar extent are Baghjeh-koí, Doyán-koí, Akdepeh-koí and Akoren-koí. From these hundred and forty villages and boroughs the judge annually collects seven thousand piastres. There is a Muftí, Nakíb, Serdár, Kiayayerí, Mohtessib and Naíb, but as it is an inland castle it has neither commander nor garrison. The rebels Kara Yazijí and Saíd Arab were natives of this town, but having been defeated at Erla they fled and

was obviously not a member of the Danişmend dynasty. According to the original text, the castle was taken by Melik Danişmend in the year 476 = AD 1083/1084 and later by Bayezid. A similar story is told in sections (4) and (7).

²¹ "Six" is Hammer's conjecture; the figure is missing from the ms.

became rebels. To secure this town against them a second castle of earth was built close to the stone castle, and the two have four gates, but the shops and markets are outside in the suburb.

[5] The town of *Kopri* consists of six thousand houses covered with bricks of two stories, the lower story being built of stone and the upper of oak whitened with chalk; so that all the houses dazzle the eye by their brilliancy. The winter being severe they are all provided with chimneys, which lift their bonneted heads like white *Minárehs*. These chimneys looking like tall white columns give a good appearance to the town, which is all covered with red bricks. The principal building of stone in the castle is the *Seraï* of *Elháj Yússúf Aghá* built by *Koprilí Moham-med Páshá*; there are altogether seventy palaces, and twenty *mihrábs*, in eleven of which the *khutbeh* is performed. In the stone castle is the mosque of *Hájá Yússúf Aghá*, with a water basin, a *jet d'eau*, and a *mináreh* covered with lead. Of the convents the first is that of the great *Sheikh*, that of the *Káderites*, and of the *Khalvetí*, but there are none of the *Mevleví*. The people generally are friendly to *Dervishes*.

[6] There are eleven *kháns*, two *imárets*, and five colleges, because its lawyers, divines, medical men and students are numerous. The schools for boys are forty-eight, that of *Hájá Yússúf* is covered with lead and richly endowed. There are various baths, the best of which is the double one of *Ahmed Páshá*, a thousand shops, and a strong *bezestán* with four gates. *Yússúf Aghá* may be called the last builder of this town which he enriched by a great many endowments; the *bezestán* was also his building. The most elegant market-place is that of the tanners, who illuminate every night their shops with candles; there are also a great many dyers. Its gardens are in full cultivation and produce excellent fruits. The pears, grapes, cotton wares, wove and spun, and the blue linen are as famous as its rosy-cheeked beauties.

[7] The harbours of this town on the shores of the Black Sea are *Báfra* and *Sinope*, which are but a journey distant. At five hours distance is the strong castle of *Ardoghán*, which I am now about to describe. The castle of *Ardoghán* is situated on a high hill, which is ascended by five hundred steps and therefore only accessible to men; it is a single rock like the fortress of *Mardín*. The highest point is a crooked rock, which seems to threaten ruin every moment. *Melek Ghází*, the conqueror of *Nigissár*, also conquered this town; and it was afterwards taken by *Bayazíd I*. It is commonly called *Seddi Turkmán*, the dyke of the *Turcomans*. The castle now contains an hundred and fifty houses, a cistern, mosque, and magazine for corn. Precious articles are kept within this castle and in that of *Koja Kala'a* on the border of mount *Deshân*. A *Dizdar* and forty-eight men do the duty. The castle is rendered safe by a drawbridge against the attacks of rebels. There is no market *khán* or bath. The district belongs to the jurisdiction of *Kopri*.

[8] Six hours westward is the station of *Gol*, a village in the district of *Zeitún*,

with a mosque, a khân, and a bath. Six hours further, the village of Súrúk in the jurisdiction of Zeitún; and after a march of six hours along the Yaila of Kondúz we arrived at Zeitún, a large place in the territory of Amasia of two thousand houses with kháns, mosques, baths, schools and numerous gardens. Six hours further is the large place (Kassaba) Karghú, belonging to the sanjak of Kanghrí, of six hundred houses with gardens, a mosque, khân, and bath. Six hours further, the town of Túsia which has already been described.

[9] We remained here one day and returned again to Merzifún. The third day I arrived at Koprí, where I found every thing in the greatest confusion and the whole town in an uproar, because Koprilí Mohammed Páshá had received orders from the Porte to march against the rebels. From hence I went in six hours towards the kiblah to the village of Begoran on the border of mount Deshán, which we had passed in coming but did not stop at. In another six hours we again reached Merzifún and met Defterdár-zádeh Mohammed Páshá, my gracious Lord, to whom I brought two hundred men, Sáríja. He was overjoyed at this and instantly formed them into two companies (Bolúk), giving them the names of the company of Evliya Guzerlí and Habib; and in addition to twenty-four other companies of irregular levies, they made together twenty-six hundred men. I remained ten days longer at Merzifún employing my time in collecting men, and on the 27th of Moharrem left it for the farm of Murteza Páshá, which I reached in six hours.

Comments

(1) Hammer's "Mount Deshan" is the Tavşan range and his Begorán [*Beğören*²²] can be identified with the modern village of Beyören, located in the eastern foothills of the Tavşan. The castle of Koca Kala'a, also known by the name of Kocakaya²³, is without any doubt the Kale Tepe (known in ancient times as *Sagylion*²⁴) just south of Büyükkale village²⁵. Though its summit is no higher than *ca.* 1350 m above sea level and lower than that of the neighbouring Ziyaret Tepe, the Kale Tepe stands out as a conspicuous landmark when viewed from the southeast (Fig. 1). Kale Tepe is 16 km distant from Beyören, and evidently Evliya and



Fig. 1. Kale Tepe Seen from the Plateau North of Düzyurt (Author's Photo).

²² Text given in square brackets is from the transcription of the *Seyahatname* by Kurşun *et al.* 1999.

²³ [*Yine Kocakaya nâmyla meşhûrdur*]; this information has been omitted by Hammer.

²⁴ Olshausen & Biller 1984, 162.

²⁵ Büyükkale, like Koca Kale, means 'big fortress'.

his party did not pass through either place on this journey; the verb *geçmek* must be understood as “pass by”. The information about the fortifications, history and garrison of Kale Tepe and the handicraft industries of the surrounding villages cannot, then, be based on autopsy; it must derive from a source that Evliya consulted later (see comments to section 8 below)²⁶.

(2) This paragraph contains the important information that the writer and his friends took time to “view the town” [*şehri seyr temâşâsına başladık*]; evidently, some of the description that follows will be based on autopsy. Evliya now describes the river called the Bogha-koî [*Boğaköy suyu*] flowing “past the bottom” [*dibinden*] of Köprü. Today, Boğa is the name of a village *ca.* 5 km to the SW of Vezirköprü, located along a road in the direction of Kale Tepe. On either side of the village, minor watercourses flow in the direction of Vezirköprü and unite to form the stream known as the Gödeş Dere, which merges with the Ulu Çay (also known as the Ak Çay) a short distance upstream from Vezirköprü. The confluence with the Istavloz river (Hammer’s Astavoluz, also known as Istavroz) is located to the north of Çalköy; as the crow flies, about 5 km from the centre of Vezirköprü, more or less consistent with Evliya’s estimate of the distance as “one hour” from Köprü.

We are also, however, also told that Köprü is “situated between these two rivers” [*bu iki nehrin ortasındadır*] and that when in spate, they overflow the “plain” [*sahrâ*]. At the confluence, the elevation of the Istavloz river is only about 250 m above sea level; it can never have posed a flooding hazard to the land around Vezirköprü, most of which lies above 300 m. Apparently Evliya has confused the Istavloz with the Esenli Çay, which passes about 2.5 km south of the city centre²⁷, slightly less than an hour at Evliya’s typical travel speed (see below). Its elevation directly south of Vezirköprü is *ca.* 380 m and when in spate, it can reach a width of more than 30 m. The Esenli Çay would be quite capable of flooding the land around Vezirköprü, which, as Evliya notes, is located “between” this river and the Ulu Çay, with which it merges a short distance below the city.

(3) This section has been abbreviated in Hammer’s version, probably because the translator found it difficult to make sense of Evliya’s description²⁸. As in the previous section, there appears to be some confusion surrounding the Ulu (Boğaköy), Esenli and Istavloz rivers. No remains are visible today where the road crosses the Esenli Çay just north of Doyran village, so the “very artfully designed” [*gâyet musanna*] wooden structure presumably spanned the Ulu Çay. Evliya tells us that it was erected as a replacement for a stone bridge, which collapsed on the night the Prophet was born²⁹; an obvious aetiology devised to explain the presence of building remains in the riverbed. (When the brothers Franz and Eugène Cumont visited Vezirköprü in the year 1900, they saw remains of Roman stonework upstream from the wooden bridge³⁰.) In the following sentence, we learn that the “two rivers which flow past the town” – the modern Ulu Çay and Esenli Çay – flow into the Bafra river “at a place

²⁶ According to Evliya, the castle contained two hundred houses, but this information has been omitted by Hammer.

²⁷ Measured from the Ottoman Taş medrese (now the municipal library) in central Vezirköprü.

²⁸ The original reads [*bu nehirler Daşan Dağ’ından geliüp nehr-i Istavloz’dan ağaç cisri azimden ubûr olunduğiyçün şehir-i Köprü derler*].

²⁹ Evliya relates similar stories about the obelisks in the hippodrome at Constantinople being toppled by an earthquake on the night of the Prophet’s birth (Dankoff 2004, 205) and about the collapse of the domes of Aya Sofya in Istanbul and the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Dankoff & Kim 2010, 334).

³⁰ Cumont & Cumont 1906, 133.

called Çeltiklik” (“rice field”)³¹.

(4) Now follows a summary of the town’s history since its foundation “by the Amalekites”, its administrative arrangements, numbers of villages in the district, numbers of houses in the city itself and in the largest of the surrounding villages, which are said to contain three thousand houses each. None of this information can be based on autopsy, and the tendency to count in large, round numbers leads the reader to suspect that Evliya has obtained his figures through interviews with local notables rather than from statistics such as tax lists. His figures for the number of houses in the villages appear to be inflated, unless they are meant to indicate the total number of households in a district of which the village formed the centre.

(5) The figure of six thousand houses is equally suspect³² and may derive from a local source, but the description of the townscape that follows – particularly the charming image of the chimneys “clad in bonnets” [*külahlı*] – shows some traces of autopsy, and Evliya’s remark about the severe winter weather may well reflect his own experience of Köprü in early February. So may that about the inhabitants being “friendly to dervishes”; though in actual fact he was quite affluent, Evliya liked to think of himself as a dervish³³. The figure for the number of palaces may derive from local informants, but the number of Friday mosques may be Evliya’s own calculation.

(6) Most of the information in the following section appears to be based on local hearsay. The figure of a thousand shops is suspiciously round³⁴, and Evliya cannot have seen the gardens of Köprü “in full cultivation and producing excellent fruits” during his midwinter visit. His description of the market, the tanners’ shops and the wares on display may, however, be his own observations.

(7) This section is rife with errors, and the confusion is further compounded by Hammer’s translation. Hammer gives the distance to Bafra and Sinop as “a journey”, i.e., a day’s travel, where the original has “one overnight stay” [*konak*] corresponding to two days of travel. As a former customs inspector, it was natural for Evliya to make enquiries about the city’s sources of imported goods. He was told that the most important seaports were Bafra and Sinop, in that order, and that Bafra was two days distant from Köprü, all of which is correct. Later, however, probably while recopying his notes into the *Seyahatname*, Evliya assumed that “two days” referred to both ports.

The distance “to the castle of Ardoghan” [*kal’a-i Erdoğan*] is said to be five hours and the castle is reached by ascending 800 steps (500 in Hammer’s translation). Twice previously, Evliya has told us that Koca kale was taken from the Greeks by Melik Danişmend and captured by Bayezid I; now the same story is told of Erdoğan kale and in more or less the same words. According to Evliya’s description this castle is, however, smaller; it consists of 150 houses and its garrison is only half as large (48 men) as that on Koca Kale. The castle may be confidently identified with present-day Eğri Kale. Five hours will not, however, suffice for a journey from Vezirköprü to Eğri Kale, which is more than 40 km distant. Probably this is another copying error: *on beş*, “fifteen” has been miscopied as *beş*, “five”.

³¹ The name has been omitted by Hammer. The “Bafra river” is either the İstavloz or, more probably, the Kızılırmak.

³² For comparison, Evliya gives the number of houses in Amasya as 5000 (fol. 281a), in Niksar as 2700 (fol. 283a) and in Merzifon as 4000 (fol. 346b). When the British explorer J. MacDonald Kinneir visited Vezirköprü in 1814, he was told that the town was home to 2000 families: Kinneir 1818, 298.

³³ Dankoff 2004, 117, 122-123.

³⁴ On round numbers in the *Seyahatname*, Dankoff 2004, 154-158.

(8) According to Evliya, Göl³⁵, which is still the name of a village in the Vezirköprü district, is six hours “to the west” [*garba*]: the distance (*ca.* 18 km) is correct, but the direction is not: present-day Göl lies in a south-southeasterly direction from Eğri Kale. It does lie to the west of Vezirköprü, but the distance is 34 km, equal to ten or twelve hours of travel. Evidently, Evliya has combined information from two sources, one of which gave the direction of the compass (from Köprü) and the other the distance (from Erdoğan Kale).

The similarities between the descriptions of Koca Kale and Erdoğan Kale suggest that these were taken from the same source³⁶. In all likelihood, both derive from records which Evliya consulted at a later date in Constantinople or Cairo. When the information about Erdoğan Kale was inserted into section 7, the direction “to the west” became separated from its context. Apparently Evliya himself was unsure about the location of Erdoğan Kale, since he left a blank space for the compass direction: “from the town of Köprü five hours in the --- direction” [*Köprü şehrinin --- tarafında beş sâ’at*]³⁷ which was never filled in.

From Göl, it is another six hours to the village [*karye*] of Suruk and from here “along the pastures of the Kunduz” [*Kunduz yaylasın aşup*] six hours to the town [*kasaba*] of Zeytün (*Zeitun*). Zeytin is the modern name of two villages on the right bank of the Kızılırmak directly west of Göl; one of them is now inundated. Hammer translates freely: “after a march of six hours along the Yaila of Kondúz we arrived...”, but as the sentence contains no finite verb, the use of the first person plural is conjectural. Evliya gives the number of houses (two thousand) and describes the amenities of the town before moving on to Karghú (modern Kargı), six hours from Zeytin, and from here onwards to Tosya, six hours distant from Kargı.

(9) Evliya remained “here” for one day, recruited eleven soldiers (this information is omitted by Hammer) and returned to Merzifon, and on the “third day” he was back in Köprü. In the meantime, Köprülü Mohammad Paşa had received orders from Constantinople to take up arms against Varvar Ali Paşa, the ally of Evliya’s patron Defterderzade Mehmet Paşa³⁸. Evliya wisely chose to leave Köprü as soon as possible, taking with him the men who had responded to his call for recruits two days earlier, and travelling, as he notes “in the direction of the qibla”. His route went via Beyören village, which he had also passed on the outward journey to Köprü, but without making a stop [*ubûr etmişdik*]. According to Evliya’s own calculation, the troopers he had recruited totalled two hundred. He stayed a further twelve days in Merzifon (ten days in Hammer’s version, but the original has *on iki gün*) and on the following day³⁹ [*on üç gün*], which was the 27th of Muharrem, he and his forces departed from Merzifon.

Evliya’s Itinerary

Evliya made two visits to Vezirköprü in February 1648. By which route(s) did he travel? Hammer assumed that after his first visit to the town, Evliya travelled west through Zeytin, Kargı and Tosya before turning back to Merzifon and continuing from there to Köprü. According to this reconstruction of his itinerary, Evliya travelled from Tosya via Osmaniçik and Merzifon to Köprü, a total distance of *ca.* 175 km, within a space of two days. (For comparison, when he passed through the same region

³⁵ ‘Gol’ in Hammer’s version, but the original has ‘Göl’.

³⁶ See also Dankoff 2004, 95-98 on Evliya’s method of describing fortresses.

³⁷ Fol. 348b.

³⁸ Here, a passage has been omitted from Hammer’s translation.

³⁹ Omitted by Hammer.

in 1646, Evliya took two days to cover the stretch from Tosya to Osmancık⁴⁰). Even if this unlikely feat were accepted as a fact, Evliya's hypothetical round trip Merzifon-Köprü-Tosya-Merzifon would have required at least six days of travel, with an additional two days for the round trip to Köprü and back, finally arriving in Merzifon on the evening of 17 Muharrem and departing on the morning of 27 Muharrem:

- 10 Muh. Merzifon to Köprü
- 11 Muh. Köprü to Göl (11 hours)
- 12 Muh. Göl to Zeytin (12 hours)
- 13 Muh. Zeytin to Tosya (12 hours)
- 14 Muh. "spent a day here"
- 15 Muh. Departure from Tosya for Merzifon
- 16 Muh. Arrival in Köprü on "the third day"
- 17 Muh. Köprü to Merzifon (12 hours)
- 27 Muh. Departure from Merzifon

This travel schedule is impossible to reconcile with Evliya's statement that he spent twelve days in Merzifon and departed "on the thirteenth day". Hammer has solved this in his own fashion by emending "twelve" to "ten" and omitting the following sentence altogether.

Further, although the route outlined above passes through a series of villages and towns which – except for Tosya – have not previously been described in the *Seyahatname*, Evliya has nothing to say about any of these places that smacks of personal observation: the information which he offers his readers could derive from official records consulted during Evliya's first visit to Köprü, or at a later date in Constantinople or Cairo. As we have seen, Evliya's knowledge of the garrison and fortification of Koca Kale could not have been based on first-hand observation, and there is no reason to suppose that the situation as regards Erdoğan Kale is any different; indeed, a closer study of his distances and travel times (see below) reveals that he had *not* travelled from Köprü to Erdoğan Kale. If he had, he would be aware that the journey required more than five hours.

Clearly, Hammer's reading of Evliya's visit to Köprü as one continuous travel narrative is in error. Sections (7) and (8) constitute an excursus, and the retelling of Evliya's visit to Köprü passes directly from the description of the city's attractions in section (6) to the opening of section (9): "We remained here one day and returned again to Merzifon". No doubt the intervening day was spent sightseeing and conversing with local notables and administrators, from whom Evliya could obtain much of the information which he has recorded in his journal. His travel schedule can be confidently reconstructed as follows (Fig. 2):

- 10 Muh. Merzifon to Köprü (via Düzyurt)
- 11 Muh. "spent a day there"
- 12 Muh. Köprü to Merzifon
- 13 Muh. Merzifon to Köprü (via Beyören)
- 14 Muh. Köprü to Merzifon (via Beyören)

⁴⁰ Fol. 279a-279b.

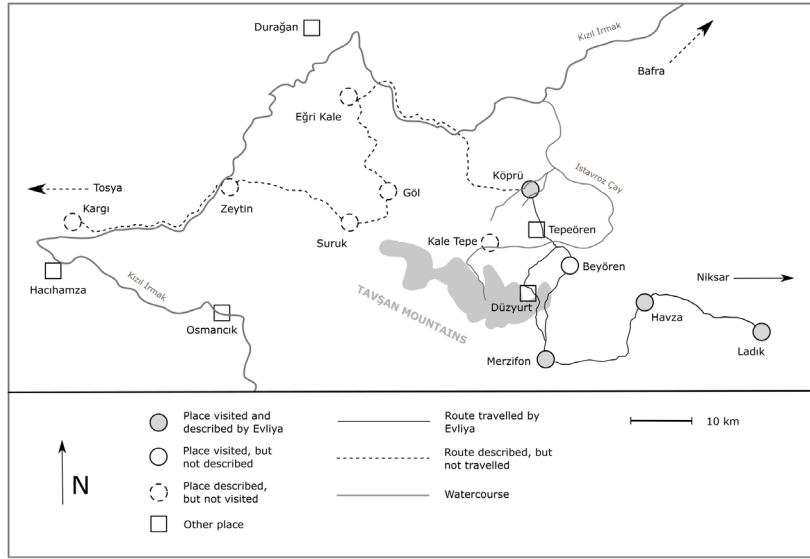


Fig. 2. Map of Evliya's Travels Around Vezirköprü



Fig. 3. Hollow Way on the Old Road Across the Tavşan Range (Author's Photo)



Fig. 4. The Road from Vezirköprü Towards Tepeören (Photo by Bünyamin Kıvrak)

15-26 Muh. "spent twelve days" in Merzifon

27 Muh. Departure from Merzifon "on the thirteenth day"

There are several possible routes across the Tavşan range from Merzifon to Köprü. Which one(s) did Evliya take? On 10 Muharrem, his route led north-northwest into the mountains to the upland plateau around Düzyurt, passing within sight of Koca Kale. Remains of an ancient settlement can be seen on the plateau north of Düzyurt⁴¹ and an old road, still traceable in the terrain, leads down from the plateau to the ford across the Istavroz Çay near Tepeören (Fig. 3)⁴². From here, Evliya could follow the Roman highway heading straight for Vezirköprü⁴³.

The text of the *Seyahatname* gives no clues to the route which Evliya took on his return trip to Merzifon on 12 Muharrem. On the following day, he "passed ... but did not stop at" Beyören; if stopping in the village was an option, then *geçmek* must here be understood as "pass through". Evidently,

⁴¹ Bekker-Nielsen & Winther-Jacobsen 2013; Winther-Jacobsen 2015, 96-97.

⁴² Bekker-Nielsen 2021.

⁴³ Bekker-Nielsen & Czichon 2015.

Evliya did not return to Merzifon by the road across the Düzyurt plateau but followed a slightly lower, more easterly route. On leaving Köprü for the second time on 14 Muharrem, he notes that the road ran “towards the qibla” and the direction of the former Roman highway leading south from Vezirköprü does in fact coincide with the kible as far as Tepeören (Fig. 4).

Evliya’s Travel Times and Distances

When describing Vezirköprü and its region, Evliya measures distances by the number of hours needed to cover them on horseback, his preferred mode of travel⁴⁴. In most cases it is possible, based on Evliya’s route description, to extrapolate the distances in km from a modern map. For the region around Vezirköprü, Evliya gives us the following travel times:

Folio	Origin	Destination	Hours	Km	Km/hour
348b	Göl	Soruk	6	11	1.8
347a	Merzifon	Amasya	15	40	2.7
349a	Köprü	Merzifon	12	35	2.9
348b	Köprü	Bafra	24	70	2.9
348b	Erdoğan Kale	Göl	6	18	3.0
347a	Merzifon	Osmancık ⁴⁵	16	53	3.3
348b	Soruk	Zeytin	6	22	3.7
347a	Merzifon	Lâdik	12	49	4.1
279b	Hacıhamza	Osmancık ⁴⁶	8	36	4.5
279a	Tosya	Hacıhamza	8	39	4.9
349a	Zeytin	Kargı	6	36	6.0
349a	Kargı	Tosya	6	44	7.3
348b	Köprü	Sinop	24	180	7.5
348b	Köprü	Erdoğan kale	5	43	8.6

For the majority of the journeys described, the average speed is below 5 km/hour, corresponding to the walking pace of a horse when allowance is made for stops to rest and feed. It is significant that all the journeys which Evliya experienced at first hand fall within this category. Travel speeds for the route Tosya-Kargı-Zeytin are 25 to 50% higher. In theory, a courier or a dispatch rider might be able to cover the 82 km from Tosya to Zeytin in a single day by requisitioning fresh horses en route⁴⁷, an option not available to the civilian traveller. The travel times found in the roadbooks of the *ulak*, however, are more or less comparable to those in Evliya’s narrative⁴⁸. Possibly Evliya has been misinformed, possibly the six hours should be understood as a round figure, “about half a day’s travel”.

That Sinop could be reached within two days from Köprü is an obvious error, as noted above. The figure of five hours for the journey from Köprü to Erdoğan Kale is equally improbable, even if we take

⁴⁴ Landry 2019, 52-55.

⁴⁵ *Ulak* roadbooks give the distance as 14 hours, equivalent to 3.8 km/h: Çetin 2013, 133-134.

⁴⁶ *Ulak* roadbooks give the distances from Hacıhamza to Tosya and Osmancık as nine hours in each direction, equivalent to about 4.2 km/h: Çetin 2013, 132-133.

⁴⁷ Heywood 2016, 276; 285-290.

⁴⁸ See note 45-46, above.

it to mean “to the foot of the mountain” and not including the 800 steps to the top. The proposed emendation of “five” to “fifteen” would give a more credible average speed of 2.9 km/hour.

In Evliya’s description of Merzifon, Hammer’s translation gives the distance from Merzifon to Köprü across the Tavşan mountains as “five hours”, but this figure is a conjecture on Hammer’s part⁴⁹. To judge from the context (describing the route from Merzifon to Samsun), it is possible that Evliya has confused Köprü with Havza.

Conclusions

The *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi makes for fascinating reading, and it is a mine of information on life in the Ottoman Empire. Evliya has a reputation for unreliability, not least due to his confused accounts of military campaigns against the Hapsburg Empire in book 7, but when describing the topography and settlements of the lower Kızılırmak basin, he evidently tries to keep his facts straight.

This is not to say that he always succeeds. The information which Evliya passes on can never be better than his sources; furthermore, his journal notes were taken in haste while he was occupied with recruiting irregular soldiers for a rebel army. Rereading his own notes many years later, Evliya would have only a hazy recollection, if any, of the landscape around Köprü. Maps of the region were not readily available and since Köprü was not on one of the “arms” of the *ulak*, its roadbooks could not provide the type of information he required. Considering the conditions under which Evliya worked and wrote, his description of Köprü and its region in book 2 is as good as could be expected.

The same cannot be said for Hammer’s English translation of book 2. Its numerous inaccuracies and omissions are potentially confusing to the reader and sometimes downright misleading as, for instance, when Hammer gives incorrect or conjectural figures. Perhaps Hammer did not find book 2 as interesting as book 1 dealing with Constantinople and took less care over its translation; no doubt he was more familiar with the topography of the capital than with that of northern Anatolia. His English edition remains useful, not least to the general reader with no knowledge of Turkish, but for research purposes and on points of detail, Hammer’s text needs to be checked against the transcribed edition of the Ottoman text or the most recent translation into modern Turkish (Dağlı & Kahraman 2005)⁵⁰.

Concordance Table

Ms. TS Bağdat 304, folio no.	Hammer 1850	Kurşun <i>et al.</i> 1999	Dağlı & Kahraman 2005	İğci & Kıvrak 2008
279a	94-95	92-93	207-209	
279b	95-98	93-95	209-213	
347a	214-215	206-207	478-480	
347b	215-216	207-208	480-482	
348a	216-217	208-209	482-485	99
348b	217-219	209-210	485-487	99-101
349a	219-220	210-211	487-489	101

⁴⁹ Fol. 347a.

⁵⁰ The author is grateful to Lâtife Summerer, Vera Sauer and the anonymous reviewer for their comments on earlier versions of this paper, to Selim Karagöz for revising the Turkish abstract and to Bünyamin Kıvrak for assistance as well as for permission to reproduce the photo of Vezirköprü (Fig. 4).

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