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An Essay on the Place of the *Târih-i Gilmânî* in Seventeenth Century Ottoman Historiography

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Abstract

Considering seventeenth century Ottoman historical writing and the place of Mehmed Halife's *Târih-i Gilmânî* within it requires one to closely examine the social, economic, and political changes that took place in the seventeenth century Ottoman Empire. It was a century during which the empire was going through a substantial transformation, not only in political and economical terms, but also intellectually. The economic and demographic ramifications of the "seventeenth century crisis" would affect the entire system. Thus, the seventeenth century is considered to have been a crucial era in the history of the Ottoman Empire due to its changing internal dynamics and characteristics that were to give way to the modernization of the Ottoman State. This paper analyzes the place of the *Târih-i Gilmânî* in seventeenth century history writing

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emphasizing its linguistic and thematic peculiarities. Like many seventeenth-century chronicles, the *Târih-i Gilmânî* used the similar stylistic patterns portraying the world as *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Nonetheless, one ought to tread carefully when considering the linguistic style of the chronicle, which may include additional revelations between the lines. For example, words carefully chosen may reveal the closeness of the writer to high post officials, who were likely his protectors or commissioners. Therefore, one should be cautious in describing seventeenth century history writing as portraying the world *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Nor would it be true to disparage the existence of the sultan's personality in seventeenth century history writing as a non-issue.

Keywords: Ottoman, Chronicle, Seventeenth Century, Historiography.

Târih-i Gilmânî'nin 17. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Tarih yazımındaki Yeri Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Öz

17. yüzyıl Osmanlı tarih yazımını ve Mehmed Halife'nin *Târih-i Gilmânî* eserinin buradaki yerini anlayabilmek, 17. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda yaşanan toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasi değişimleri yakından değerlendirmeyi gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu dönem, imparatorluğun sadece politik ve iktisadi değil entelektüel anlamda da ciddi dönüşümleri yaşadığı bir yüzyıldı. "17. Yüzyıl krizi"nin iktisadi ve demografik sonuçları bütün sistemi etkileyecekti. Dolayısıyla, Osmanlı Devleti'nin modernleşmesine yol verecek olan değişen iç dinamikler nedeniyle, 17. yüzyılın Osmanlı tarihinde mühim bir dönem olduğu düşünülmüştür. Bu makale, lengüistik ve tematik özelliklerine vurgu yaparak *Târih-i Gilmânî*'nin 17. yüzyıl tarih yazımındaki yerini analiz edecektir. Birçok 17. yüzyıl kroniği gibi, *Târih-i Gilmânî* de benzer stil örüntüleri kullanarak içinde bulunduğu evreni *wie es eigentlich gewesen* şeklinde portre etmiştir. Ne var ki, kroniğin bu lengüistik stili değerlendirirken dikkatli okumak gerekir; zira müellif kelime aralarında ilave bilgiler ve yorumlar sunabilmektedir. Mesela, dikkatli seçilen kelimeler, müellifin aynı zamanda Sultan dahil hâmisî olan makam sahibi görevlilere yakınlığı hakkında da bilgi verebilir. Çalışma, hem 17. Yüzyıl kroniklerinde yazılanların *wie es eigentlich gewesen* olarak portre edilmesini, hem de sultanın kişiliğinin artık 17. yüzyıl tarih yazımında eksilen varlığı meselelerini değerlendirecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı, kronik, 17. yüzyıl, Tarihçilik.

Introduction

Considering seventeenth century Ottoman historical writing and the place of Mehmed Halife's *Târih-i Gilmânî* within it requires one to closely examine the social, economic, and political changes that took place in the seventeenth century Ottoman Empire. It was a century during which the empire was going through a substantial transformation, not only in political and economical terms, but also intellectually. The economic and demographic ramifications of the "seventeenth century crisis" would affect the entire system.¹ Thus, the seventeenth century is considered to have been a crucial era in the history of the Ottoman Empire due to its changing internal dynamics and characteristics that were to give way to the modernization of the Ottoman State.²

Evaluating the socio-economical changes in the century concerned is not this essay's prime aim. Rather, it aims to appraise the changes in the historical works produced in the seventeenth century vis-à-vis the general changes mentioned above. As the entire system was being transformed in accordance with the changing circumstances in the seventeenth century, historical writing was also adjusting to changing internal dynamics, focusing on different problems and dealing with new issues that had not been addressed in the history writing of the previous century. While most sixteenth century historical works focused heavily on the ruler and his glorious epoch, it is believed that historical writing of the following century was concerned less with these, being more critical and more accurate in terms of the events and developments they recorded. But was it so? Did the historical works of this period represent a new kind of historical writing? Could we conceivably talk about a coherent seventeenth-century history writing in terms of its language, themes and content? Can the seventeenth century be regarded as one during which Ottoman history writing endeavored to "emancipate" itself? For the prime purpose of this article, how did the

¹ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change, 1590–1699," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Vol.II, 1600-1914*, eds. Halil İnalçık and Donald Quartert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 411-623.

² Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Modern Devletin Doğası: 16. Yüzyıldan 18. Yüzyıla Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, Trans. by Oktay Özel and Canay Şahin. (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2000).

Târih-i Gilmânî fit into the history writing of this period? How should it be read?

The following essay shall attempt to analyze the questions raised above by way of a three-part examination. In the first part, following a short introduction on sixteenth century historical writing, the common linguistic and thematic features of seventeenth century history writing shall be considered via the secondary literature that evaluated a considerable number of histories written in the aforementioned century, and drew a general framework, from which this essay intends to draw upon heavily. The second part shall focus on the *Târih-i Gilmânî*, initially considering its existing manuscripts and published editions, and later, emphasizing its linguistic and thematic peculiarities. Moreover, the content and the writer's approaches to different issues in relation to his own position in the palace shall also be scrutinized. The last section shall conclude.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: FROM THE *ŞAHNAMECİ* GENRE TO A MORE INDEPENDENT HISTORY WRITING?

Following a brief look at historical writing in the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, this section of the essay shall focus on the main characteristics of seventeenth-century history writing within the framework drawn in the works of Rhoads Murphey and Baki Tezcan,³ examining how it differed from the previous century.

Sixteenth century historiography is well described in the articles of Rhoads Murphey and Baki Tezcan. Both scholars, describing sixteenth century court historians as royal historiographers (*şahnâmecis*), agree with the fact that many histories written during the sixteenth century aimed to glorify Ottoman dynastic history. Rhoads Murphey proposes that this style, ushered by Selim I's era during which a large part of eastern Anatolia was conquered, reached its apex with Celal-zâde

³ Rhoads Murphey, "Ottoman Historical Writing in the Seventeenth Century: A Survey of the General Development of the Genre after the Reign of Sultan Ahmed I (1603-1617)," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, XIII (1993-1994), pp. 277- 311; Baki Tezcan, "The politics of the early modern Ottoman historiography" in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 167-198.

Mustafa's *Tabâkatü'l-memâlik*, completed in 1560. Furthermore, his style was also to influence Hoca Saadettin Efendi's *Tâcû't-tevârih*, completed at the end of the century. Both works shared the same stylistic pattern, glorifying the dynasty and recognizing its "overlordship."⁴

This view is well supported by Baki Tezcan, who states that several historical works produced between the 1550s and the early 1600s were commissioned by Ottoman sultans in order to create "an ideological hegemony over the interpretation of Ottoman history." Tezcan further argues that this was particularly noticeable during the reign of Murat III, whose solid absolutist goals caused the establishment of a strong Ottoman court historiography that was to "disseminate a particular understanding of Ottoman history," and in doing so another *şahnâme*ci, Seyyid Lokman, and his work the *Zübdetü't- tevârih*, played a crucial role. Although the attempt to control history writing failed in the sixteenth century, a more successful effort to propagate a regal interpretation of Ottoman history would be undertaken in the eighteenth century.⁵ This was, probably, partially due to the fact that the Ottoman state apparatus witnessed considerable growth in its bureaucracy during the course of the seventeenth century, which enabled the Ottoman court to impose its own sort of historical understanding upon official historians.⁶ But where does seventeenth-century historical writing sit in this equation?

As Murphey explains, seventeenth century historical writing shared some common features, such as circumventing "pretentious language" and taking problem-solving-oriented approaches. The inclination to articulate very detailed descriptions of contemporary developments

⁴ Murphey, "Ottoman Historical Writing," pp. 278-279. Necib Asım, in one of his articles written in the early twentieth century, describes those "historians" name by name. See, Necib Asım. "Osmanlı tarihînuvisleri ve müverrihleri: şahnâmeçiler" *Tarih-i Osmânî Encümeni Mecmuası*, II/7 (1327), pp. 425-435; idem, "Osmanlı tarihînuvisleri ve müverrihleri." *Tarih-i Osmânî Encümeni Mecmuası* II/8 (1327), pp. 498-499.

⁵ Tezcan, "Ottoman historiography," pp. 171-172.

⁶ For a detailed work on this matter see, Rhoads Murphey, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Ottoman Administrative Theory and Practice during the Late Seventeenth Century," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies: Medieval and Early Modern Periods (Summer, 1993), pp. 419-443

that occurred in the Ottoman Empire also became more common among seventeenth-century historians, who often included in their works “verbatim accounts of discussions held in the imperial council (*divân-ı hümayûn*).” Moreover, since they narrated daily dealings taking place in the palace, where they worked and lived as the sultan’s servants, their narratives included everyday vernacular expressions. This was not something to be found in a sixteenth century chronicle, which was impelled by its very nature to specifically address the sultan’s character and image. These characteristics of seventeenth-century history writing thus make the reader feel she/he is in fact present during the narrative.⁷ Rhoads Murphey reached these common peculiarities of seventeenth century Ottoman historiography by evaluating works of such chroniclers as Kara Çelebi-zade, Solak-zade, Katip Çelebi, Abdi Paşa, Mustafa Naima, and Mehmed Halife. Therefore, Murphey’s arguments shall be at the core of this essay when attempting, in the following section, to examine whether Mehmed Halife’s history fits into this general framework.

The above-mentioned thematic and linguistic characteristics may be considered evidence of how seventeenth century history writing differed from that of the sixteenth century. Although it cannot be claimed that the *şahnâme* genre disappeared entirely, after the reign of Ahmed I (1603-1617) a noticeable decline was observed in the popularity of this sort of history writing due to the “changing patterns of royal patronage.” The respective reigns of Murad IV (1623-1639), İbrahim I (1639-1648), and Mehmed IV (1648-1687) witnessed historical works that had a direction to solving problems and reforming the administration as well as to creating new strategies in order to tackle fiscal and military defects.⁸

Thus, considering these characteristics of seventeenth century Ottoman history writing, the seventeenth-century historian is believed to have provided “factually accurate description [of events] ... to portray the world *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.”⁹ This was the case in many works written in this period; however, it does not necessarily follow that their

⁷ Murphey, “Ottoman Historical Writing,” pp. 279- 280.

⁸ Ibid. p. 279.

⁹ Ibid. p. 282.

narration was entirely neutral. Their personal relations with and closeness to people holding important posts in the Sultan's court might well have been a significant determinant in their histories. Hence, it is not difficult to surmise that they would not hesitate to cast their own views on many matters.¹⁰

Mehmed Halife penned the *Târih-i Gilmânî* during this period, which saw changing attitudes in history writing in the Ottoman Empire. Did it share the characteristics of the seventeenth century historical works mentioned above? The next part shall attempt to examine this.

THE *TÂRİH-İ GİLMÂNÎ*: REPRESENTATIVE OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY OTTOMAN HISTORY WRITING?

Before making any evaluation about the place of the *Târih-i Gilmânî* within seventeenth century Ottoman historiography, it would be useful to mention the existing copies of the work.¹¹ There are three different manuscripts of the *Târih-i Gilmânî* in three locations: the first in Vienna, the second in the Topkapı Palace in İstanbul, and the third in the Turkish Historical Society Library in Ankara. The Vienna manuscript,¹² which was probably copied at a later date, ends abruptly in the middle of a sentence. In the case of the *Târih-i Gilmânî* Vienna manuscript, the modern historian's frustration is obvious due to the unexpected suspension of the narrative, although this should by no means discourage one to use it.¹³

The Turkish Historical Society Library's manuscript was donated to the library by Ahmet Refik (Altınay) soon after he re-published it in Ottoman Turkish in 1924 as an additional publication to the *Türk Tarih*

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 282- 284.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion on the existing copies of the *Târih-i Gilmânî*, see Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Târih-i Gilmânî'nin İlk Redaksiyonuna Dâir" *Tarih Dergisi*, No.27 (1973), pp. 21-40. Reprinted in Bekir Kütükoğlu, *Vekayi'nüvis. Makaleler*. (İstanbul: Fetih Cemiyeti, 1994).

¹² The Vienna manuscript is reprinted as facsimile in Buğra Atsız, *Das osmanische Reich um die Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts nach den Chroniken des Vecihî (1637-1660) und des Mehmed Halîfa (1633-1660)*. (Munich: Rudolf Trofenk, 1977).

¹³ Though incomplete, Bekir Kütükoğlu claims that the Vienna manuscript is the only *nüsha* of the *Târih-i Gilmânî*. For more information see Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Mehmed Halife," *IA*, VII (1957), pp. 579- 580.

Encümeni Mecmuası.¹⁴ It was translated into modern Turkish twice, and both translations used the Ahmet Refik edition as their original source. Although there are missing words and expressions in both the Turkish translations, they are almost identical to the Ahmet Refik edition in terms of content and so forth. The Tercüman edition, however, does not provide an index. Nor does it provide a table of contents, even though its original version includes one. In 2000, a doctoral thesis was completed by Ertuğrul Oral transliterating the Tarih-i Gilmanî based on the three different manuscripts' critical edition.¹⁵ Hence, the Ahmed Refik edition, the Ministry of Culture's translation, and Ertuğrul Oral's doctoral thesis shall be drawn on in this essay, omitting the Vienna manuscript and the Tercüman translation.

In order to better evaluate a historical source, one must consider the writer, their political affiliations, and the "stand-point of his[/her] professional identity". This helps the historian to determine the extent to which the writer of the book (or any document) placed importance on such values as detachment, distance, and so forth. However, in the case of the history writers of the seventeenth-century Ottoman state, these rather "modern" values should not be overly emphasized, since these writers were often in the very service of the ruler, and had close relations with some of the *ağas*, *paşas*, and/or *vezirs*. While historians were mostly from the state branches of finance (*maliye*) and the chancellery (*asafiye*) prior to the seventeenth century, a new kind of history began to be written by the "sultan's inner circle of palace advisers and household attendants, the *enderunî* historians."¹⁶ Thus, it would be naïve to assume that they would hesitate to express their own opinion due to power-based conflicts between different factions in the palace.

¹⁴ Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*. (İstanbul: Orhâniye Matbaası, 1340).

¹⁵ For the Turkish editions see, Mehmet Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*, Kültür Bakanlığı 1000 Temel Eser, Prep. by Kamil Su (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1976); Mehmed Halife, *Tarih-i Gilmânî*, Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, Prep. by Ömer Karayumak (No place and date). Ertuğrul Oral, Mehmed Halife. Tarih-i Gilmanî, PhD thesis (İstanbul: Marmara University, 2000).

¹⁶ Murphey, "Ottoman Historical Writing," p. 281.

Now, let us turn our attention to the concerning chronicle and its author. The writer of the *Târih-i Gilmânî*, Mehmed Halife,¹⁷ being one of these “*enderunî* historians,” was a member of the top ranking chamber (*has oda*), which enabled him to be at the side of the sultan, and witness “the most dramatic episodes of seventeenth-century Ottoman history, including palace coups and political demonstrations.”¹⁸ Some of these included the deposition and killing of Ibrahim I, the Kösem Sultan event, the so-called *ağalar saltanatı*, many expeditions and the like. The writer certainly did not narrate these events by way of such “modern” approaches as detachment and distance. While he recorded the events as they happened, he also recorded them as the man of an *ağa*, *paşa*, and/or a faction.

Mehmed Halife started writing his “history” in 1650 (10 Şevval 1060) and completed it in 1665 (24 Şaban 1075). He most likely recorded the events daily and, probably, in a fairly accurate manner. Nonetheless, as seen from the last paragraph of the book, it was copied in 1668, four years after its completion.¹⁹ This compels the reader to think that, during the copying process, the work might have been changed or modified in accordance with changing circumstances.

Although Mehmed Halife’s history can easily be read as a simple chronicle that intended to describe events as they happened, as many chronicles of its time did, it implicitly referred to very important details between the lines. This distinguishes the *Târih-i Gilmânî* from a “this happened, that happened” style of historical writing. Why Mehmed Halife needed to record the events of his own time is described in his

¹⁷ In the Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası edition of the *Târih-i Gilmânî*, Ahmet Refik wrote a critic on the concerning chronicle and its writer (pp. 3-6). For more details on Mehmed Halife see, Franz Babinger, *Osmanlı Tarih Yazarları ve Eserleri*, Trans. by Çoşkun Üçok. (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1982); Bekir Kütükoğlu, “Mehmed Khalife b. Hüseyin” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. VII, New Edition (1991), pp. 990- 99; idem. “Mehmed Halife” *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. VII. İsmail Gündoğdu analyzed the *Tarih-i Gilmani* in his short article around reasoning in Ottoman historiography. İsmail Gündoğdu, “Reasoning in the Ottoman Historiography: The Example of *Tarih-i Gilmani*” *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi/The Journal of International Social Research*, 2 / 9 Fall 2009. pp. 159-164.

¹⁸ Murphey, “Ottoman Historical Writing,” p. 281.

¹⁹ Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*. (İstanbul: Orhâniye Matbaası, 1340), p. 102.

history. He states that he decided to write the “unheard stories” in order to continue the histories written by his predecessors and to be prayed for by others.²⁰ These reasons may not have been the sole motive behind the need for writing a history. As explained above, while these “historians” were the servants of the ruler, they were appointed to posts via the influences of some *ağas* and/or *paşas*. It is probable to see very subjective views articulated by these historians in their histories. In the case of Mehmed Halife, it is clear from the *Târih-i Gilmânî* that he was the man of Koca Kenan Paşa and the *içoğlanı* of Yusuf Ağâ.²¹ Thus, some of the views he expressed may well have been written due to the power struggle fought between the factions to whom he was loyal, and various other groups in the palace.

For instance, it is apparent that he was unsympathetic to the ulema for being responsible for the deteriorating situation. According to him, as the şeyhülislam was the sole power that could depose a sultan by his *fetva*, the killing of Ibrahim I and enthronement of a seven-year-old boy (Mehmed IV), and consequently the administration being left under almost complete Janissary control, was the responsibility of the ulema. Mehmed Halife placed full blame on the shoulders of the ulema, which got involved with a palace coup while the Empire was going through a dangerous situation in Bosnia, Crete, and the Aegean.²²

Many historians in the seventeenth century wrote broad histories of the Ottoman dynasty by benefitting from the works of their predecessors and completed their works in the form of elaborate sequels.²³ Further, they gave details on the occurrences of floods, fires, earthquakes, births, deaths, and so on. These were features of historical writing common to any period of the Ottoman Empire. While these histories may be very useful primary sources to comprehend seventeenth-century inner-palace developments and power struggles between different factions, it ought not to be belittled due to these peculiarities. What distinguishes seventeenth century history writing

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 101- 102.

²¹ Ibid. p.3.

²² Mehmed Halife, *Târih-i Gilmânî*, Kültür Bakanlığı 1000 Temel Eser, pp. 24- 30.

²³ Murphey, “Ottoman Historical Writing,” pp. 282- 283.

from that of the previous century is the use of “authentic documentary material” that became a very common feature used in Ottoman historical works after 1650.²⁴ In this regard, the *Târih-i Gılmânî* contains similar features of seventeenth century historical writing. The *Târih-i Gılmânî* gives very detailed descriptions of events that may not be found in other contemporary sources. Mehmed Halife’s position in the palace gave him the opportunity to acquire exact copies of the texts he used in his history. For instance, he inserts an exact copy of a *defter* that elaborately presents the details of the financial reform-plan prepared by Tarhuncu Ahmed Paşa. Some financial figures of expenditures can also be found in this section. Following the complaint of Mehmed IV about the state revenues and expenditures (*Benim babam zamanında kul tâifesine mevâcib ve sâir masârıfa hazîne kifâyet iderdi, şimdi niçün kifâyet itmez sebebi ne ola husûsen benim harcım babam kadar*), Ahmed Paşa provided to the Sultan a detailed register that Mehmed Halife penned in his History under *El-masârifât* showing the state’s current situation in terms of its revenues and expenses. The long list prepared by Ahmed Paşa states that the expenditures exceeded revenues (*Hâliya hazîne defterleri mûcebince mu’yyen olan îrad mâlinden masârıf bin yedi yüz elli üç yük doksan üç bin sekiz yüz seksen beş ziyâdedir*).²⁵

In addition, the reader also encounters the exact copy of a letter (*mektûb sûreti budur*) sent by Konakçı Ali Paşa, the governor of Aleppo, regarding the Celâli leader, Abaza Hasan Paşa. The letter of the governor of Aleppo regarding Abaza provides a vivid description of the situation where more than four or five thousand rebels were discarded after providing protection papers (*def’-i eşkıya için ba’zı kimesnelere emânu’llâh ve emân-ı Resûlullâh kağıdların gönderdiğimiz için şakî-i mezbûrun ordusundan dört beş binden ziyâde âdem perîşân olub gitdiler*). Mehmed Halife also provided a list of beheaded rebels including the leader of the Celâlis Abaza Hasan Paşa (*bi-aynihî defter sûretidir bi-inâyeti’llâhî te’âlâ Hasan Paşa zorbaların başları esâmileri defteridir*).²⁶

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 286-287.

²⁵ See Ertuğrul Oral, *Târih-i Gılmânî*, pp.35-39.

²⁶ Ibid. pp.66-67.

The Great Fire of İstanbul in 1660 is also described in a very intricate way in Mehmed Halife's narration. He describes the fire under the heading of "*Şehr-i İstanbul fethinden berü bin yetmiş tarihine varınca ne meretebe devlet-i Osmaniyye'de ma'mûr ve dâr-ı gurûr oldukda bi-emrillâh ihrâk-ı bî'n-nâr ile harâb olduğunu beyân ider.*" As a resident of İstanbul, he witnessed the fire's devastating results including the actual area. In his description of the Great Fire of İstanbul in 1660, Mehmed Halife provides the exact hours for the beginning and the end of the fire began. He recorded that the fire conflagrated at five on Saturday of July in 1660 (*bin yetmiş tarihinde Zi'lka'de'nin on altısında ve mâh-ı Temmuzun dördüncü günü Cum'airtesi beşinci sâ'atde*). The exact location where the fire began (*Ahi Çelebi'nin câmi'i kurbünde kal'anın taşrasında*) and the details of the man who was responsible for the fire (*bir dûhan içici yaramazın elinden ateş isâbet idüb*) were important information Mehmed Halife supplied.²⁷ Mehmed Halife must have witnessed some portion of this episode himself. However, it can be inferred that some information was provided to him by people with whom he was acquainted. To show how badly the fire affected the locals, he informs his readers that the Imperial Gardener (*Bostancıbaşı*), Bosnevî İbrahim Ağa, allowed the locals in the royal garden (*has bağçe*). Moreover, sometimes, he provided some vague information most probably circulated among certain circles. For example, in order to explain how devastating the fire was financially, Mehmed Halife writes the goods burnt was worth ten Egyptian treasures (*nakl olunur on Mısır hazinesi denlü mal yanmıştır*).²⁸

As mentioned earlier, seventeenth century history writing may be regarded as a transition from the *şahname* genre to a rather positivist narration, the role of which was somewhat to present events as they happened. Tezcan suggests that compared to the previous century, "the actual personality of the ruler became almost a non-issue" in Ottoman history writing by the late seventeenth century.²⁹ However, claiming the complete disappearance of this genre in seventeenth century historical writing would be very naïve since many chronicles continued – albeit to

²⁷ Ibid. p. 78.

²⁸ Ibid. p.79.

²⁹ Tezcan, "Ottoman historiography," p. 186.

a lesser degree – to present the ruler’s personality and character. As for Mehmed Halife’s history, the last section was written about the then sultan, Mehmed IV, exaggerating his personal details.³⁰ It may conceivably be argued that this was inevitable for a seventeenth century history writer who worked and resided in the palace as the sultan’s close servant. As a matter of fact, his very existence was the sultan’s favor. Nonetheless, while Mehmed Halife gives his chief loyalty to his patron, the Sultan, he was not afraid to criticize him. While criticism of a ruler within a monarchy could not be explicit, historians found indirect ways to do thus.

Although Mehmed Halife often underlined Mehmed IV’s virtues throughout the *Tarih-i Gilmani*, he seldom criticizes the Sultan about certain matters. Surely, he does not do so overtly due to understandable reasons. Sultan Mehmed IV, also known as *Avcı* (aka Hunter), spent days hunting around Edirne where he and his household resided for long periods. Mehmed Halife emphasizes the Sultan’s over enthusiasm about hunting critiquing him between lines. For example, the author of the *Tarih-i Gilmani* claimed that no Ottoman sultan was as inclined as Mehmed IV (*sayd ü şikâra ve sürgün avına şol meretebe heves itdi ki selef-i selâtininden bir kimse itmemişdir*). Related to these long royal hunting ceremonies, the Sultan and the palace stayed away from İstanbul for months. Mehmed Halife underlines the sultan’s long absence in the imperial capital by using a deliberately gentle tone. In this regard, Mehmed Halife uses a hidden form of language to show people’s discontent (*Padişâhımız Edirne’nin seyr ü sülûkünden şol meretebe mahzûz olmuş idi ki İstanbul halkı Padişâhın bir dahî İstanbul’a gelmedinden nâ-ümîd oldular*).³¹

CONCLUSION

The long seventeenth century was a crucial turning point in the history of the Ottoman Empire, due not only to its economical and political consequences but also its intellectual contributions. A new sort of history writing materialized in this century, which did not depict the ruler as a glorified figure, but rather portrayed him in the context of the

³⁰ Ertuğrul Oral, *Târih-i Gilmânî*, pp.112-121.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.111.

narrative. However, as many writers of this new kind of history writing were in the personal service of the sultan and other high post officials, these historians were the recorders as well as the witnesses of the events. Thus, though this new style substantially differed from the *şahnameci* genre in many ways, such as recording events as they happened and describing facts accurately, it would be pointless to assume complete neutrality on the part of these historians.

The *Târih-i Gilmânî* of Mehmed Halife has many of the thematic and linguistic features of seventeenth century Ottoman historical writing depicted both by Rhoads Murphey and Baki Tezcan; chronicling events “as they happened,” giving very detailed descriptions of historical occurrences, using exact copies of original imperial documents, and including direct speeches from various figures in his history are some of these. Like many seventeenth-century chronicles, the *Târih-i Gilmânî* used the same stylistic pattern - dividing sections as “the events happened during the tenure of such *vezir* or such *paşa*,” which may easily convince the reader that the work portrayed the world *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Nonetheless, one ought to read carefully when considering the linguistic style of the chronicle, which may include additional revelations between the lines. For example, words carefully chosen may reveal the closeness of the writer to high post officials, who were likely his protectors or commissioners. Also, although *gâzi* character of the Sultan is often underlined in the text, Mehmed Halife’s criticism of the ruler is also revealed between lines. Therefore, one should be cautious in describing seventeenth century history writing as portraying the world *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Nor would it be true to disparage the existence of the sultan’s personality in seventeenth century history writing as a non-issue.

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