

# AN OTTOMAN GENTLEMAN OBSERVING IZMIR AT A TIME OF CHANGE: EVLİYA ÇELEBİ ON THE ROAD, 1670-1

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Izmir was the ‘mushroom city’ of the seventeenth-century Ottoman world: while a small town in the late 1500s, by the end of the seventeenth century, the city may have been home to nearly 90,000 people. If realistic, this figure would mean that by the late 1600s, Izmir probably surpassed Bursa and belonged to the major cities of the empire. This increase is even more remarkable as the Ottoman central authorities certainly did not promote migration into the cities: on the other hand, before the mid-twentieth century newcomers from the countryside probably were a condition sine qua non for rapid urban growth. Ever since the 1990s, historians have tried to identify the reasons for Izmir’s dramatic expansion.

## Urban History and Historiography

In this context, it is instructive to observe the changing concerns of professional historians and the reading public. In the 1950s, Münir Aktepe (1917-1996) began his lengthy series of studies on the buildings sponsored by the city’s Muslim inhabitants, which however, only appeared in book form in 2003, well after the author’s death.<sup>1</sup> Aktepe had planned to use the material collected for a comprehensive history of Ottoman Izmir, which never saw the light of day. In fact, before about 1990, only a handful of scholars including Tuncer Baykara and Necmi Ülker wrote monographs on Izmir.<sup>2</sup>

In part, this lack of interest was due to the condition of the city. It took a considerable amount of time before Izmir recovered from the war of 1919-22, the Greek occupation, the fire of 1922, the flight of the Greek-speaking inhabitants and the population exchange that followed in 1923-1924. During the early Republican period, many inhabitants of Izmir were thus newcomers, who did not have many (or indeed any) ties to the city apart from having ended up in this place as refugees from Anatolian and European theaters of war.<sup>3</sup> Observers who saw the city at various

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<sup>1</sup> Münir Aktepe, *İzmir Yazıları*, edited by Fikret Yılmaz, Izmir 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Tuncer Baykara, *İzmir Şehri ve Tarihi*, Izmir 1974; Necmi Ülker, *The Rise of İzmir, 1688-1740*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Michigan 1974; Necmi Ülker, “The Emergence of İzmir as a Mediterranean Commercial Center for the French and English Interest, 1690-1740”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4/1 (1987), pp. 1-37.

<sup>3</sup> Thus, while Izmir’s assiduous historian Münir Aktepe had been born in the city and seemsto have regarded it as his home, his family came from the area of Erzincan and Kemah: Aktepe, *İzmir Yazıları*, p. IX (introduction by Fikret Yılmaz).

times under the early Republic often spoke of the half-ruined city leaving them with a feeling of desolation.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, in the 1960s and 1970s, the current policy of ‘import substitution’ worked against Izmir. In order to allow capital accumulation by local entrepreneurs often with little prior knowledge or experience, economic policy decreed that most imported consumer goods would be prohibitively expensive. Thus, local producers could sell low-quality wares unsuitable for export markets. In consequence, cities such as Izmir, from the 1600s onward noted mainly as centers of importation and exportation, were marginal in the eyes of economic planners. However, this situation changed dramatically in the 1990s, when promoting export-led growth became a top priority and large numbers of migrants from Eastern Anatolia arrived in the city.

As often happens, history inspired historiography, and in the 1990s books on Izmir, which often were reworked dissertations, followed each other in rapid succession. Daniel Goffman focused on the early 1600s, Elena Frangakis Syrett on the eighteenth century, and Marie Carmen Smyrnelis on the city’s French community of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, a monograph on the Dutch living and working in Izmir commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of political and commercial relations between the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire -- and after 1923, Turkey took the place of the defunct empire.<sup>5</sup> Goffman pointed out that as long as the centralized administration of the mid-sixteenth century was in place, there was not much room for coastal towns such as Izmir to expand. After all, the sultans reserved the products of the fertile Aegean region for the state apparatus and the population of Istanbul. Therefore, the disruptions of the late 1500s and early 1600s were a precondition for foreign merchants entering the market and buying goods at higher prices than the Ottoman administration was willing to pay. Frangakis Syrett, on the other hand, showed that foreign merchants could not function without the trade networks established by the locals; while she concentrated mostly on non-Muslims, Evliya’s account, which we discuss here, shows that Muslim merchants were present as well. As for Smyrnelis, she made it clear that while merchants were the wealthiest part of Izmir’s foreign population, a significant number of French people survived on petty crafts and services. In terms of everyday life, they were indistinguishable from the local non-Muslims, but they

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<sup>4</sup> Aktepe, *İzmir Yazıları*, p. IX. The remark referred to here is by the editor Fikret Yılmaz. Having visited Izmir in the mid-1960s and again in 1975, the present author can confirm Yılmaz’s observations: from the first visit, she remembers that the area around the Izmir clock tower, today a hub of traffic, gave her the impression of being in a small and sleepy town. By 1975, hotels accommodating middle-class tourists did exist; but they might have running water only for a few hours in the mornings and perhaps the evenings.

<sup>5</sup> Fikret Yılmaz, *İzmir’de 400 Yıl/400 Years in Izmir: İzmirli Hollandalılar ve İzmir-Hollanda Ticarî İlişkileri/Izmirian Dutch People and Trade Relations between Izmir and Holland*, Izmir 2012.

retained their French identity because in this manner, they avoided paying the capitation (*cizye*) demanded from the sultan's non-Muslim subjects.

Furthermore, at the very end of the twentieth century, there appeared Goffman's contribution to a book on Ottoman cities authored together with Edhem Eldem and Bruce Masters. Together, these three authors gave readers an idea of how three major cities dealt with the European challenge, in the roughly two and a half centuries that separated the upsurge of İzmir around 1600 from the increasing Ottoman dependency of the mid-1800s. Shortly afterward, in the year 2000, there followed two volumes of collected studies by Mübahat Küçüköğlü.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Leiden University dissertation by Merlijn Olon covered the Köprülülü refurbishing, on whose beginnings in the castle of Sancakburnu Evliya Çelebi had commented as a contemporary.<sup>7</sup>

To date, the most recent contributions are by Mehmet Kuru, who has studied the role of climate in the changing fortunes of the city.<sup>8</sup> In the mid-1500s, Central and Southeastern Anatolia enjoyed rainfall sufficient for agriculture and sheep breeding; but in the last quarter of the century, droughts became more frequent and by the 1590s, they reached catastrophic proportions. On the Aegean seaboard however, rainfall remained sufficient for dry farming and stockbreeding, and in consequence, the area received significant numbers of migrants from Central and Southeastern Anatolia. Presumably, the labors of these people increased the local food supply and thereby made an essential contribution to the growth of İzmir.<sup>9</sup> Viewed from a different perspective, several studies of Ottoman trade and diplomacy that did not explicitly focus on İzmir helped to clarify the context in

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Goffman, *İzmir and the Levantine World 1550-1650*, Seattle, London 1990; Elena Frangakis Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700-1820)*, Athens 1992; Daniel Goffman, "İzmir: from village to colonial port city", in *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, İzmir, and Istanbul*, by Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters, Cambridge 1999, pp. 79-134; Mübahat Küçüköğlü, *XV ve XVI. Asırlarda İzmir Kaşasının Sosyal ve İktisâdî Yapısı*, İzmir 2000; Mübahat Küçüköğlü, *İzmir Tarihinden Kesitler*, İzmir 2000. Most of the articles in the latter volume concern the 1800s.

<sup>7</sup> Merlijn Olon, 'Brought under the law of the land': the history, demography and geography of crossculturalism in early modern İzmir, and the Köprülülü project of 1678, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden 2014; Evliya Çelebi b Derviş Mehmed Zilli, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 306, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Pertev Paşa 462, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi Hacı Beşir Ağa 452 Numaralı Yazmaların Mukayeseli Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, vol. 9, edited by Yücel Dağlı, Seyit Ali Kahraman and Robert Dankoff, Istanbul 2005, pp. 49-68 (including Sakız/Chios). On Sancakburnu see p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Mehmet Kuru, *Locating an Ottoman Port-city in the Early Modern Mediterranean: İzmir 1580-1780*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Toronto 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Mehmet Kuru, "A 'Magnificent' Climate: Demography, Land, and Labour in Sixteenth-Century Anatolia", in *Seeds of Power: Explorations in Ottoman Environmental History*, edited by Onur İnal and Yavuz Köse, Winwick/Cambridgeshire 2019, pp. 35-57.

which the latter functioned.<sup>10</sup> In the early 2000s, historians of Izmir mostly turned toward the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but even so, the harvest is rich: few Ottoman cities of the early modern period have aroused comparable interest.<sup>11</sup>

### **Evliya as a Subject of Historical Study**

Given the existence of this historiography, I propose that a change of perspective may be helpful; it is the aim of the present study to find out not how Evliya has contributed to our knowledge of the history of Izmir, but what his account of the city and its environs tells us about his ‘take’ on Ottoman society. Historians of seventeenth-century Ottoman worldviews and mentalities have discussed this question as well; but I think that we can find out more than is currently available.

From at least the 1950s onward, Evliya’s use of his sources has been a topic of discussion: by 1960, Meşkure Eren had established that when describing Istanbul, Evliya did not pay close attention to stating his sources and accurately reporting what he had learned from them.<sup>12</sup> Developing these observations while focusing on Evliya’s remarks on pre-Islamic Egypt, Ulrich Haarmann suggested that we should not view this author as a historian or geographer in the Islamic tradition of scholarship, but as the creator of a new genre, namely the travel narration in prose.<sup>13</sup> Taking this approach, we can explain why his contemporaries as well as the compilers of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century biographical dictionaries ignored Evliya. Certainly, his work was difficult to find in the libraries of the time, but more importantly, the literary community of the 1700s and early 1800s did not possess any categories in which to place his writings.

Intriguingly, the problem of ‘locating’ Evliya’s travelogue within a genre already established in the Ottoman literary world continued to bedevil historians of the recent past and indeed of our time. Halil İnalçık found the clever solution of viewing Evliya, who incidentally played only a minor role among the primary sources used by this eminent historian, as a ‘boon companion’. For İnalçık, Evliya was the elegant raconteur that played a role in Robert Dankoff’s interpretation of this

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<sup>10</sup> Edhem Eldem, “Capitulations and Western Trade”, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3, edited by Suraiya N. Faruqi, Cambridge 2006, pp. 283-335; Joshua M. White, *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean*, Stanford CA 2017.

<sup>11</sup> On the transformation of the city in the mid-nineteenth century, compare Sibel Zandi Sayek, *Ottoman İzmir: The Rise of a Cosmopolitan Port 1840-1880*, Minneapolis and London 2012, pp. 8-23. In this section, the author discusses the urban geography of the mid-1800s with reference to previous history.

<sup>12</sup> Meşkure Eren, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi Birinci Cildinin Kaynakları Üzerinde Bir Araştırma*, İstanbul 1960.

<sup>13</sup> Ulrich Haarmann, “Evliya Çelebis Bericht über die Altertümer von Gize”, *Turcica*, 8 (1976), pp. 157-230.

travelogue as well.<sup>14</sup> A raconteur could easily move from one mode of narration to another, a skill that made it unnecessary to place him in any established category.

After all, Ottoman historians of the second half of the twentieth century showed no intention of giving up on Evliya's travelogue as a source of data on architectural monuments, popular culture and food, while philologists appreciated the word lists that he compiled for languages encountered on the way and which often were surprisingly accurate.<sup>15</sup> As there was not much discussion of the difficult question whether we can mine a piece of imaginative literature as a source for historical data, the two approaches developed next to one another without a great deal of reciprocal input.

During the last decade, this issue became acute -- although it remains unresolved -- once Evliya's map of the Nile had appeared in print. After returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca and settling in Cairo, Evliya had not lost his interest in travel and exploration. In fact, when over sixty, he embarked on what was probably his most adventurous journey, when he set out for Eastern Africa to find the sources of the Nile. Apart from the description of the territories traversed, Evliya or someone in his circle produced a detailed map of the Nile region, to the extent that the explorers had seen it.<sup>16</sup> The recent editors of this map have concluded that Evliya and/or his collaborators produced a work of high quality, which means that we have to take him seriously as a producer or at least as a purveyor of geographic information. We still do not know enough about the underlying structure of the *Seyahatname* to predict when Evliya wanted to purvey information and when he intended to entertain; after all, our understanding of what seventeenth-century educated Ottomans considered amusing is still imperfect despite recent attempts to solve this riddle.<sup>17</sup>

### **Evliya as a Man of the Aegean Elite**

'Man of Istanbul' is the title of a chapter of Robert Dankoff's Evliya Çelebi biography, and there is no denying that the Ottoman capital was the center of

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<sup>14</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Memoirs and Travel Notes of a Boon Companion", in *Evliyâ Çelebi: Studies and Essays Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of his Birth*, edited by Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan and Robert Dankoff, Istanbul 2012, pp. 226-31; Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi*, Leiden 2006, pp. 153-214.

<sup>15</sup> Hendrik Boeschoten and Martin M. Van Bruinessen (eds.), *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir: The relevant section of the Seyahatname: Edited with translation, commentary and introduction*, Leiden 1988; Marianna Yerasimos, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi'nde Yemek Kültürü: Yorumlar ve Sistematik Dizin*, Istanbul 2011, 2nd edition 2019; Marinos Sariyannis, "Of Ottoman Ghosts, Vampires and Sorcerers: An Old Discussion Disinterred", *Archivum Ottomanicum* 30 (2013), pp. 195-220.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Dankoff and Nuran Tezcan (eds.), *Evliyâ Çelebi'nin Nil Haritası "Dürr-i bî-misâl in Abbâr-ı Nil"*, Istanbul 2011.

<sup>17</sup> For an attempt to answer this question see Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, pp. 184-188.

Evliya's world.<sup>18</sup> However, when we read the section of the *Seyahatname* concerning the Aegean region between his family's home of Kütahya in the north to Aydın Güzelhisar (today: Aydın) in the south, we discover the traveler's secondary identity as part of a family well established in the Aegean coastlands.<sup>19</sup> Evliya's father, the goldsmith Mehmed Zilli seems to have owned significant property in the region; unfortunately, the author does not tell us which houses or landholdings had come to the family by inheritance and which ones, Mehmed Zilli had purchased with his earnings as a goldsmith. Whatever the backstory may have been, at a time when Evliya perhaps was still quite young, his father possessed a well-appointed farmstead near Sandıklı, in the province of Kütahya.

During the reign of Murad IV (r. 1623-1640), at a time remaining unspecified, Mehmed Zilli had arranged for an engagement of one of his daughters to a senior governor named İlyas Paşa, originally from the nearby town of Balıkesir. When the latter rebelled against the sultan in 1630-1631, however, the goldsmith – probably terrified -- broke off the engagement. In response, the frustrated fiancé kidnapped his bride, married her and plundered the Sandıklı farmstead, claiming that his wife had brought the latter into the marriage as her contribution to the new household, known as *cihaz/cebi*.<sup>20</sup> Apparently, it did not trouble İlyas Paşa that according to the sharia, the family of the bride was free to make this contribution or not, and the groom could not legally seize it without the permission of Mehmed Zilli. However, this was but one lawless act among many others. In the end, the rebellious pasha had to seek shelter in the impregnable castle of Bergama, from where he only emerged when another pasha persuaded him to go to Istanbul and seek the forgiveness of the

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<sup>18</sup> Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality*, pp. 9-47; Hakan T. Karateke and Helga Anetshofer (eds.), *The Ottoman World: A Cultural History Reader, 1450-1700*, Oakland CAL 2021, pp. 338-347, 356-373. I heartily thank Hakan Karateke for providing me with a copy.

<sup>19</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, pp. 12-84.

<sup>20</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 45. Evliya includes a colorful description of the abduction, telling us that when İlyas Paşa arrived from Manisa with a large retinue, Mehmed Zilli fled to a garden in terror. Later, İlyas Paşa had to leave Manisa after causing major damage to the townspeople.

For a detailed and very instructive monograph on the career and revolt of İlyas Paşa, see Zübeyde Güneş Yağcı, "Bir İsyân ve Etkileri: Balıkesir'de İlyas Paşa İsyânı", in *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Eşkıyalık ve Terör*, edited by Osman Köse, Samsun 2009, pp. 63-81. Apart from the relevant chronicles, Güneş Yağcı has pieced together information from various local court registers.

For an example, namely an extract from the Manisa qadi registers concerning the plundering of the town after the entry of İlyas Paşa, see M. Çağatay Uluçay, "Karaosmanoğulları'na Ait Bazı Vesikalar", *Tarih Vesikaları*, II/9 (1942), p. 198. On İlyas Paşa's attack on Manisa, caused by a dispute between him and the *mutasarrif* of Saruhan, further see Feridun Emecen, *Tarihin İçinde Manisa*, Manisa 2006, p. 5. As books published outside of Ankara and Istanbul are often hard to find, I particularly appreciate Prof. Emecen's kindness in providing me with a copy.

sultan. However, this move failed, as Murad IV was not willing to excuse the pasha's various acts of defiance and had İlyas Paşa executed. While Sultan Murad confiscated the property of the deceased rebel, he did not touch that of Evliya's sister. Unless the pasha had divorced her, and there is no evidence that this had happened, she likely died in Bergama shortly afterward, in her husband's lifetime and probably soon after her marriage. For her name, which according to some sources was İnal, did not occur among the deceased pasha's wives in the estate inventory of the latter, dated 1632. Decades later, in 1671, Evliya made a point of refurbishing İnal's gravesite, by that time in a state of abandonment.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the farm in Sandıklı, whose richness Evliya may have exaggerated, the family possessed houses in Kütahya, Bursa and Istanbul.

Thus, we can view the author as a descendant of the Aegean notability, whose members were active in trade but invested in rural holdings as well. After all, such notables were not necessarily a product of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tax farming practices, as set out by Cağatay Uluçay and Halil İnalçık.<sup>22</sup> Already in the early 1500s, the Aegean region had been home to people benefiting from family *vakıfs* or enjoying their retirement from official duties; these people must have been an informal elite supporting the sultan's control, especially when the holders of military tax grants were away on campaign.<sup>23</sup> Likely, Evliya's father had belonged to this milieu, and Evliya benefited from family contacts when passing through the region. In particular, he described his two-week stay on the island of Chios as something that according to modern understanding resembled a vacation, although this concept did not exist in the seventeenth century. On the island, Evliya was the guest of a pasha that he called Mühürdarzade without mentioning his given name, but to whom he referred with great respect.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it makes sense to read this chapter of the *Seyahatname* as the assertion of Evliya's Aegean roots on the one hand and his contacts with the Istanbul elite on the other.

When describing his travels in the Izmir region, however, Evliya seems to have valued local connections at least as highly as his links with dignitaries owing their positions to the central administration. Before leaving a given town, the traveler

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<sup>21</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> Uluçay, "Karaosmanoğulları'na Ait Bazı Vesikalar"; Halil İnalçık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration", in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, edited by Thomas Naff and Roger Owen, Carbondale and Edwardsville; London and Amsterdam 1977, pp. 27-52.

<sup>23</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, "Local elites and government intervention in the province of Anadolu", in *The Province Strikes Back: Imperial Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean*, edited by Björn Forsen and Giovanni Salmeri, Athens and Helsinki 2008, pp. 65-81.

<sup>24</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 59. This person was a relative of one of Sultan Murad's grand viziers and at one time, he had received an appointment to the governorate of Tunis; but by the 1600s, the local corsair cum military establishment had taken over and the governor had little power: White, *Piracy and Law*, p. 151.

made courtesy calls, saying goodbye to the notables of his acquaintance and listing their names in his description of the town at issue. In this group, a certain Ahmed Ağa, who hosted Evliya in Izmir, is of special interest: according to the author, Ahmed Ağa was a rich merchant, who established pious foundations in and around the city. Certainly, there must have been more than one Ahmed Ağa sponsoring charities; but it is possible too, that one of the founders on record in the nineteenth-century *vakıf* registers studied by Aktepe and more recently by Yasin Taş is identical with Evliya's friend.<sup>25</sup> Likely, a man of Ahmed Ağa's wealth and prominence used a family name at least occasionally, but to date it remains unknown.

### Confronting Violence

Aware of the ever-present danger of robbery, Evliya hired mounted guards to escort him, sometimes praising their martial qualities: upon occasion, he did not hesitate to employ young Greeks. In addition, he included stories, which showed that such an escort, apart from protecting his person and property, permitted him to intervene when he encountered people fleeing from their pursuers. We do not know whether some or indeed all of these tales were products of Evliya's invention. However, even if imaginary, and perhaps especially if imaginary, they are valuable for our purposes since they reflect what Evliya thought of the society in which he moved and his position in it.

We begin with a story involving a small number of participants.<sup>26</sup> When on the way from Urla to Karaburun, the traveler encountered a young man who had just emerged from a major fight and who claimed to have fled from his hometown of Izmir. Against the prohibition of his father, the fugitive youth had decided to travel to Chios to follow a man whom he only called 'his *ağâ*', without saying anything about the ties that must have bound the two men. According to the story, there had been a major confrontation between the party accompanying the runaway and the relatives of the latter, who pursued the youngster and probably intended to take him home. Apart from several servitors, the father and a brother of the young man had lost their lives in this fight. Undeterred, the latter still planned to join 'his *ağâ*'. However, Evliya severely admonished him and insisted that the young man must now see to his affairs -- including his inheritance -- in Izmir, unceremoniously sending him off to confront his relatives 'back home'. Evliya does not say that he was a relation of the people at issue; presumably, he derived his right to intervene from the superior physical force of his escort, his age, and his position as a member of the Ottoman elite.

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<sup>25</sup> On two Ahmed Ağas establishing mosques in 17th-century Izmir, see Aktepe, *İzmir Yazıları*, pp. 33-38. Compare in addition Yasin Taş, *Osmanlı Dönemi İzmir Medrese ve Kütüphaneleri*, Istanbul 2020, pp. 66, 125, 217.

<sup>26</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, pp. 57-58.



Evliya makes the role of physical force even more apparent in a longer story, which focuses on robbers as well. When on the way from Chios to Ayasoluk (today Selçuk), on the dangerous stretch of road that Evliya called Alman Boğazı, his group encountered a number of riders in full flight. These men had visibly been in an armed confrontation and continued on their way after briefly explaining what had (supposedly) happened to them. Shortly afterward, another and larger group emerged, and as their leaders said the very same thing, Evliya noted that he now had to figure out who was telling the truth.<sup>27</sup> As the people in the second group seemed to be merchants, he concluded that they were probably the victims and decided to help in the pursuit. In consequence, there was another confrontation, with sixteen dead on Evliya's side. However, the men escorting the traveler captured twenty-eight of their opponents and thus could claim victory.

Thereupon, Evliya inserted a lengthy speech, which he supposedly made on the occasion.<sup>28</sup> After reminding his listeners that what had happened should remain secret, he pointed out that if they took their prisoners to the nearest authority, the robbers likely had jewels in reserve, which would secure them a favorable outcome in court. They might even convince the judge that Evliya's party was at fault. Therefore, the most sensible solution was to kill off the robbers and bury them where they lay. In any case, according to the sharia those men related to people who had lost their lives, were entitled to avenge their family members by killing the killers. The story ended with a further admonition to keep the affair secret and the statement that Evliya's escort cut off the heads of the men not claimed by anyone as objects of revenge.

Once again, we need to remember that there is no evidence that anything of the sort had ever happened in real life. However, even as pure fiction, the text indicates that Evliya, a highly educated man with good connections both to the elite in Istanbul and to wealthy merchants and other locals of property and status, considered it impossible to obtain even a modicum of justice from the authorities. Occurrences of the kind described by Evliya were routine at sea, but evidently, the countryside a few kilometers from İzmir was no different. Even more remarkably, Evliya, if we understand the *Seyahatname* correctly, was not an especially violent person; but outside of the cities, every man did what he considered necessary to deter robbers. As for the victims, if they took revenge over and beyond what the sharia permitted them to do, this was a matter, about which it was best to keep silent. As for the authorities of his time: Evliya certainly honored the sultan as the representative of Islam and on occasion, posed as a warrior for the faith although his active participation in battles was probably limited. At the same time, he seemingly agreed with the late sixteenth-century justice edicts/*adalet fermanları* of

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<sup>27</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, pp. 71-72.

<sup>28</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 72.

Murad III (r. 1574-1595): protecting the tax-paying subjects was not the strong point of either the Ottoman military or even the sultan's judges.<sup>29</sup>

### Izmir's Trade in the Light of Evliya's Observations

How did merchants cope with these conditions? Izmir certainly owed its seventeenth-century growth to European commerce, a point already made by Evliya Çelebi. Goffman had suggested that local cotton first attracted European merchants and that Iranian raw silk only became important at a later stage. Perhaps this changeover occurred when Izmir, for reasons that we only partly understand, took over a considerable part of the commerce previously focusing on Aleppo. Evliya is no help in deciding this issue: while he mentioned the active commerce of European merchants, he did not record the goods in which they specialized; and his remarks on the large caravans zeroing in on the city did not specify what kinds of goods they carried.<sup>30</sup> As obvious from many other parts of his travelogue as well, the author was not a merchant.

While Evliya noted the presence of foreign traders, he did not appear to see them as a threat to the businesses of Muslims. This remains true even though he remarked somewhat sourly, that beating up an infidel in the street was likely to cause trouble for the aggressor, as the victims would not hesitate to lodge a complaint, which could have very unpleasant consequences for the attackers.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, such fights in the street would have been beneath the dignity of elite figures and wealthy merchants; foreign visitors often noted that only those on the lowest end of the social hierarchy, particularly women and children, were likely to taunt non-Muslims in public places.<sup>32</sup>

Evliya seemingly had good connections with well-to-do Muslim traders, of whom the city contained a sizeable number: with a bit of exaggeration, he even claimed that 'the entire population' of Izmir lived by trade.<sup>33</sup> As noted, among the Muslim merchants, he was friendly with a person named Uzun Ahmed Ağa, whose wealth and generosity Evliya highlighted with relish. Possibly, the founder of the surviving seventeenth-century mosque named Ahmed Ağa Camii is identical with Evliya's friend, but we cannot be sure.<sup>34</sup> Among the structures devoted to business (*han*) the author mentioned the two *hans* of İmamoğlu/İmamzade, about whom

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<sup>29</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Adâletnâmeler", *Belgeler* II/3-4 (1965), pp. 42-149.

<sup>30</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Elliot, "Dress codes in the Ottoman Empire: the case of the Franks", in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, edited by Suraiya Faruqi and Christoph Neumann, Istanbul 2004, p. 116.

<sup>33</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, pp. 51-52; Aktepe, *İzmir Yazuları*, pp. 37-38 has suggested that this mosque survives under the name of Kestane Pazarı Camii.

Evliya's younger contemporary the French scholar and traveler Antoine Galland (1646-1715) provided further information.<sup>35</sup> Apart from land reclamation, İmamoğlu's wealth came from the mohair trade; he must have retained ties to his native Ankara but lived mostly in İzmir and developed an interest in the antiquities of the city, which was the reason for his contact with Galland. The latter attempted, without success, to buy a marble sculpture which İmamoğlu had taken into his house.<sup>36</sup>

Given these merchant acquaintances, Evliya noted İzmir's increasingly commercial orientation, apparent at first sight from the fact that several mosques were on the top floors of structures containing shops on ground level. As an additional indicator, we may point to Evliya's remarks on the movement of businesses and residences from the hill where Kadifekale was (and is) located toward the coast. In Evliya's time, the area surrounding the upper fortress had so few inhabitants, that gardens filled the walled enclosure.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the inhabitants used this area as a hiding place for their valuables; unfortunately, Evliya did not record any particulars, so that we do not know whether they installed containers in the walls of the abandoned castle or simply buried their goods. Apparently, the owners of money and valuables considered the seaside fortress as being too exposed: it is unclear whether they anticipated pirates or robbers active on land. Evliya used ambiguous language, for he mentioned *levendat*, 'master-less' armed men who might turn to thievery on land or on sea.<sup>38</sup>

Certainly, the Bay of İzmir has a narrow entrance; and a number of fortresses, which Evliya described in detail, protected the coast. However, it remains unclear whether the soldiers who garrisoned these strongholds, despite their claims to permanent vigilance, could always distinguish pirate ships from other craft. After all, even though by the second half of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman central government increasingly declined responsibility for the raids of corsairs from Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, ships from North Africa had access to the coasts of Anatolia and Syria. In the early 1600s, these intruders had despoiled the port of İskenderun not once but twice; and as the customs house was among the first buildings destroyed, the site remained non-functional for many months.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the captains of 'regular' merchant ships might turn to piracy if they thought the

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<sup>35</sup> Galland was in İzmir for the first time in 1677-1678; see Antoine Galland, *Voyage à Constantinople (1672-1673)*, edited by Charles Schefer, new preface by Frédéric Bauden, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Paris 2002, p. V.

<sup>36</sup> Suraiya Faroqi, "Wheat in İzmir: The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries", in *Déchiffrer le passé d'un Empire: Hommage à Nicolas Vatin et aux humanités ottomanes* (a festschrift for Professor Nicolas Vatin, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), Paris forthcoming 2022.

<sup>37</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> White, *Piracy and Law*, pp. 141-143.

occasion propitious; when it came to such matters, especially English traders had an atrocious reputation.<sup>40</sup>

### **Benefiting from Trade without Protecting It**

Through his education in the palace of Murad IV, Evliya as noted was a member of the Ottoman elite, although his father's background as a goldsmith may have raised some eyebrows among the sultan's servitors. After all, the number of people with artisan fathers who were close to the monarch must have been minimal. Perhaps, Evliya's position within but close to the margins of the Ottoman elite allowed the author to observe things that men closely implicated in the functioning of the governmental apparatus might not have noticed. Thus, for example, when beginning his description of Izmir, Evliya recounted an anecdote about the enormous riches, which the judges appointed to this place supposedly collected, although in the hierarchy of qadi-positions, the status of the qadi of Izmir was not very high.<sup>41</sup>

The central figure of this story was a certain Molla Ünsi Efendi (d. 1664-1665 when about eighty years of age), a contemporary of the grand vizier Köprülü Mehmed Paşa (1578-1661). According to Evliya's version of the story, at one time in his life, Ünsi Efendi had accumulated enormous debts, amounting to a hundred thousand *guruş*, although Evliya's figures are notoriously inaccurate. As a qadi of Izmir, this man however managed to collect twice that amount in gifts.

Evliya then proceeded to tell an anecdote. When Köprülü Mehmed Paşa asked his acquaintance the judge how old he was, the latter claimed to be three years old. To the grand vizier's objection that the two men had known each other for over half a century, the qadi responded that only three years earlier had he been able to repay his debts and thus renew his allegiance to the religion of Islam. As the words *deyn* (debt) and *din* (religion) look the same in the Arabic script, Evliya must have intended a pun. Remarkably for us but perhaps not for contemporaries, the grand vizier was not scandalized but merely responded that if this claim were true, he himself would have to be eight years old. After all, Köprülü Mehmed Paşa had held the office of grand vizier for exactly this period. Certainly, the definition of corruption in office as an indictable crime was over a hundred and fifty years in the future.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the enormous sums mentioned by Evliya indicate that he saw something unusual in the whole affair; while he did not express any overt criticism, perhaps the implication of his story was that Ünsi Efendi was extreme in his demand for gifts.

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<sup>40</sup> White, *Piracy and Law*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>41</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 9, p. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Cengiz Kırılı, *Yolsuzluğun İcadı: 1840 Ceza Kanunu, İktidar ve Bürokrasi*, Istanbul 2015.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this tale is the observation that other texts containing this anecdote gave it a very different slant.<sup>43</sup> From the biographical dictionary of Şeyhi (1668-1731), we learn that the historical Abdülatif Ünsi Efendi was an associate not of Köprülü Mehmed Paşa but of Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, the grand vizier's son and successor, whom he accompanied as a campaign judge in the offensive against Uyvar, today known as Nové Zámky, Slovakia. Among the many positions that he held for longer or shorter periods, at one time, Ünsi Efendi was in fact qadi of İzmir, but according to Şeyhi, he obtained this office well before joining the Uyvar campaign: the latter venture netted him his final appointment, as a qadi of Damascus, where he died.

Abdülatif Ünsi's career had started in a most inauspicious manner: for approximately ten years, he was unable to get any job at all. During this period, he may well have accumulated significant debts. According to Şeyhi, Ünsi was virtually bankrupt until he encountered Köprülü, but the author of this well-known biographical dictionary did not share the backstory with his readers. Moreover, Şeyhi said nothing about Ünsi's supposed use of his position in İzmir to enrich himself, merely praising the qadi's sociability and poetic talents.

While Ünsi Efendi became qadi of İzmir when already quite elderly, his biographer did not single out this appointment in any way. As for the link with Evliya's story, Şeyhi recorded that in a conversation with Köprülü, Ünsi supposedly declared that he was four years old -- not three, as Evliya had claimed -- because living as a bankrupt was not living. Only his association with the Köprülü's in recent years had allowed the judge cum bon vivant to live a life worthy of the name. As established by M. Fatih Çalışır in his doctoral thesis, Ünsi, once he was secure in the favor of Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, in his turn acted as a patron to the astronomer Köse İbrahim al-Sigetvârî, who thus could write up the astronomical observations collected during the grand vizier's campaign against Uyvar.<sup>44</sup>

We find similar information in the biographical dictionary of Safayî, who probably worked about 1725, but birth and death dates remain unknown.<sup>45</sup> Safayî emphasized the grand old age of Ünsi Efendi when the qadi visited the elder Köprülü, and stressed that the latter enjoyed the joke about Ünsi Efendi's being a

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<sup>43</sup> I am profoundly grateful to M. Fatih Çalışır, my colleague at Ibn Haldun University, without whose help I would not have known about this aspect of the story: Şeyhî Mehmed Efendi, *Vekâyi'ü'l-fuzalâ: Şeyhî'nin Şakâ'ik Zeyli Müellifi*, 2 vols. edited by Ramazan Ekinci with Derya Örs, Istanbul 2018, vol. 1, pp. 869-872.

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Fatih Çalışır, *A Virtuous Grand Vizier: Politics and Patronage in the Ottoman Empire during the Grand Vizierate of Fazıl Ahmed Paşa (1661-1676)*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 2016, pp. 153-154.

<sup>45</sup> Once again, I owe this reference to M. Fatih Çalışır: *Mustafa Safayî Efendi, Tezkire-i Şafayî (Nuḥbetü'l-Âsâr min Fevâ'idü'l-Eş'âr): İnceleme, Metin, İndeks*, (ed. Doç. Dr. Pervin Çapan), Ankara 2005, pp. 68-69.

child because he had recently cleared his debts after having been unable to do so for a very long time. Moreover, Safayi recounted that Ünsi could transform the miseries of a debtor's life into a comedy scene: when his creditors sent a messenger to demand repayment, Ünsi Efendi supposedly stole the horse of the latter, had it sold in the bazaar and used the money to give the messenger his accustomed tip. Safayi thus considered that despite his age, Ünsi Efendi retained an inclination for practical jokes and bon mots. By contrast, he omitted the more serious political troubles into which the judge seems to have gotten himself.

An anonymous chronicle however, was less reticent. From this source, written perhaps in the 1690s or early 1700s, we understand that Ünsi Efendi had participated in the military rebellion of 1656, known as the 'event of the plane tree' (Çınar Vakası) due to the many victims of the uprising, whose bodies the insurgents exhibited on or around a famous old tree near the Hippodrome.<sup>46</sup> Likely, this involvement was the reason why Ünsi Efendi could not get a position during the following decade. However, the anonymous chronicler considered that this personage ran up so many debts not because of a very small income but because he liked to feast with his friends. While this narrator castigated Ünsi's spendthrift ways, he did not say that the judge had oppressed the people of Izmir by his excessive demand for gifts.

According to this anonymous author, only when Ünsi Efendi attached himself to the Köprülüs did his fortunes improve, because the head of the household employed him to compose the document instituting a family foundation.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps the foundation at issue was the fortress cum mosque of Sancakburnu, which ensured that merchants and especially foreign merchants doing business in Izmir could no longer evade their customs duties.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, among the sources referring to Ünsi Efendi, only Evliya claimed that this qadi had enriched himself in Izmir by extraordinary gifts received from the locals, presumably for the most part merchants needing protection for their persons and goods. We have no way of knowing whether there was any truth to this claim of Evliya's. However, as the author confused Mehmed Köprülü and his son Fazıl Ahmed Paşa, Evliya's version of the whole episode seems doubtful. This confusion is even more surprising as the traveler had encountered the grand vizier Fazıl Ahmed Paşa in person at the Ottoman conquest of Candia in 1669, just two years before his visit to Izmir.

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<sup>46</sup> This reference too, I owe to M. Fatih Çalışır: Ramazan Aktemur, *Anonim Osmanlı Vekayinâmesi (H. 1058-1106/M. 1648-1694) (Metin ve Değerlendirme)*, unpublished MA thesis, Akdeniz Dünyası Araştırmaları Anabilim Dalı, Istanbul University, 2019, pp. 99-100.

<sup>47</sup> Aktemur, *Anonim Osmanlı Vekayinâmesi*, p. 100.

<sup>48</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 54.

However, if we take the anecdote as a piece of literary finesse without any claim to historical truth, Evliya's attitude is even more interesting. For it seems that he was the person who made the anecdote of Ünsi Efendi and his debts into a vehicle of criticism against qadis, whose acceptance of gifts meant that travelers could not count on protection and robbers escaped punishment.<sup>49</sup> While Evliya did not use the term for corruption '*irtikab*', this anecdote showed that he was very familiar with the reality.

### **In Conclusion**

Evliya's account of İzmir and the surrounding area is not only a description of routes and towns, of the type that we find throughout the *Seyahatname*, but in addition, we can read this section as an assertion of the author's local roots. In the Aegean region, his family held substantial urban and rural property, and although an artisan by training, Evliya's father Mehmed Zilli through his migration to Istanbul had established contacts to the governmental elite, to the point of arranging a marriage between one of his daughters and a prominent pasha. When the latter rebelled and carried off his bride against the will of her father, the court goldsmith supposedly took the matter to Sultan Murad IV, who seems to have sided with the 'old man' defending his family and property.<sup>50</sup> We can regard this success story as indicating that at least in a limited number of cases, a Muslim subject of the sultan might rise to prominence without an education in a madrasa, the palace school or the household of a provincial dignitary. Viewed from a different perspective, Mehmed Zilli belonged to a local notability of people whose ancestors had established family foundations in the Aegean region, and on whose cooperation the central government could count when governors and *timar*-holders were absent on campaign.

In İzmir, Evliya seems to have had friends among the local Muslim merchants, and the author enjoyed stressing that these men were both rich and charitable. As for the non-Muslim presence, Evliya was well aware of it and considered that the numerous ships from the lands of the unbelievers certainly made the city appear as a semi-Frengistan.<sup>51</sup> Even so, provided, that they paid their customs duties as the Köprülü establishment now obliged them to do, Evliya did not wish to see the foreigners leave. Despite the information that his merchant friends could have provided, however, the author did not say much about the goods

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<sup>49</sup> To explain why in the description of Chios he included the buildings of the unbelievers, Evliya claimed to have had the edification of his readers in mind: supposedly, non-Muslims kept their religious buildings in good repair and were too scared of Jesus, Mary and Saint Nicolas to steal the money that supported them: *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 66. The author went on to accuse the administrators of Muslim charities of despoiling the pious foundations in their charge.

<sup>50</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 45.

<sup>51</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 53.

traded and the caravans from Iran that brought silk to the port, and on occasion, plague epidemics as well.<sup>52</sup> The humdrum realities of commerce were of little interest; what counted were the profits and the ways in which the owners used their money.

We have no way of verifying Evliya's story about the inordinate gifts received by Ünsi Efendi or the tale about his battle with a robber-band, which reads almost like the scenario for a Wild West movie. Therefore, we can only view these anecdotes as literary devices. However, in these cases as in others, Evliya's inventions are meaningful because they reflect his views on certain socio-political questions. It is worth remembering that before entering the Topkapı Palace as a page of Murad IV, the author had planned to study Islamic religion and law; thus, he must have been aware that he was doing something illegal when he encouraged his armed guards to kill off even those robbers against whom no demand for legitimate revenge was pending. Furthermore, as Evliya insisted that the members of his company should keep silent about what had happened, he must have known very well that the killing was unacceptable in a legal sense.

To justify the slaughter, Evliya gave only a pragmatic excuse: Given the likelihood that the relevant administrators would take the robbers' valuables and let them go, killing the criminals before they had a chance to commit further crimes seemed a sensible precaution.<sup>53</sup> We may wonder whether Evliya had come to this conclusion because of the complaints of his merchant friends, but the *Seyahatname* does not allow us to answer this question.

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52 Daniel Panzac, *La peste dans l'Empire ottoman: 1700-1850*, Paris 1985.

53 *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, p. 72.



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