

EVLİYÂ ÇELEBÎ
(b. 1611; d. > 1683)

LIFE

E.Ç. was born on 10 Muharrem 1020/25 March 1611 in Unqapanı (Istanbul) as the son of the imperial goldsmith (*quyumcubaşı*) Dervîş Meḥmed Zıllî Ağa (d. 1058/1648). He traces his paternal genealogy through Aḥmed Yesevî (d. 562/1166) all the way back to the imams of early Islamic history, a pedigree reflecting the folk stories of *ġāzīs* and dervishes preserved in Ottoman popular memory. At several points in his work E.Ç. claims that his ancestor Ece Ya^oqūb (13 c.?) originated from the Transoxanian region Mahān and came to Anatolia with Ertuğrul Ġāzî (d. 687/1288), trying to unite in his person the two main legitimating strands of the Ottoman dynasty, namely the Turkish and Islamic heritage. Even though his claim that his father was a warrior of faith under Süleymān I (926-74/1520-66) is anachronistic, his statement that he contributed as a court jeweler to pious works of art during the reign of Aḥmed I (1012-26/1603-17) is more reliable.

Born an Abkhaz and brought up as a slave-girl in the palace of Aḥmed I (d. 1026/1617), E.Ç.'s mother had family relations with leading statesmen and provincial governors of the time (e.g., Melek Aḥmed Paşa (d. 1073/1662) was her cousin), a fact which was to play a decisive role in his future life. As various references to relatives and real estate (e.g., a *çiftlik* in Sandıklı) found in his travelogue clearly indicate, E.Ç. had relatives in Istanbul as well as in several places like Demürçi (Demirci), Kütāhiyye (Kütahya), Brusa (Bursa) in Anatolia.

E.Ç. learned the essentials of a religious education at the undistinguished *medrese* of Ḥamid Efendi in Zeyrek (Istanbul). He then graduated from a school for Koran recitation, and attended public lectures in mosques as well as private lessons in the palace led by figures such as Keçi Meḥmed Efendi (d. 1054/1644), a teacher of Kātib Çelebî (d. 1067/1657). There are hints that E.Ç. frequented intellectual circles and made the acquaintance of well-known figures of the time such as Zekeriyāzāde Yaḥyā Efendi (d. 1053/1644).

In 1046/1636 E.Ç. was introduced to Murād IV (1032-49/1623-40) and began his studies in a wide variety of arts and sciences at the Palace School (*enderūn*). By the time he left the Palace as a cavalryman (*sipāhî*) (1048/1638), his extraordinary abilities as a witty and well-informed entertainer had been fully developed. E.Ç. was especially talented in music, Koran recital, and story telling and described himself as a bachelor (*mücerred*), mystical seeker (*dervîş*), humble (*faqîr*), and as someone who has many friends and interests (*hezār-âşinā*). Being deeply religious, he appears to have been affiliated with the Gülşenî branch of the Ḥalvetî brotherhood. However, he seems to have had strong sympathies for the Bektāşîyye and Mevlevîyye as well.

E.Ç.'s family background, his urban education as a perfect gentleman, and his astonishingly complete knowledge of the Ottoman lands make him one of the most paradigmatic¹ representatives of well-educated Ottoman individuals of his period. Even though the date of his death cannot be determined with certainty, his records concerning the unsuccessful second siege of Vienna (1094/1683) led most researchers to the conclusion that he passed away after this date. There is general consensus that he died in Egypt where he had been living for some time.

Practically all evidence of E.Ç.'s life is based on his own account. Since he was not a state official his name does not appear in official documents and registers. The only document known to mention him is a list of Ottoman embassy members to Vienna in 1665 in the Austrian archives. Although his pecuniary circumstances were satisfying, he made his living as a member of the mobile households of Ottoman grandees, many of them his kinsmen. A closer look at his itineraries reveals that he was in most cases on "official journey." His position can be generally described as a combination of entertainer (*muşāhib*, *nedīm*), muezzin and courier. His religious functions included the recitation of the first *ezān* after victories.

In many cases he overtook a variety of other responsibilities such as ransoming Ottoman prisoners, collecting arrear taxes, war materials, and funds for different objectives. In Hungary he acted as a distributor (*qassām*) of booty (1073/1663). Military engagements were part of his life. He took part in a strife against the Ma^cnoğlu Lebanon, intervened during the Celālī revolts in Anatolia (1057/1647), witnessed the siege of Zerinvar (Yeñiqal^e) at the border to Croatia and participated at the Battle of St. Gotthard, leaving an extremely detailed report. After the completion of the conquest of Crete (Girīd) (1080/1670) he composed a *fethnāme*. He participated in the embassy of Qara Meḥmed Paşa (d. 1095/1684) to the court of Vienna (1075/1665) in the capacity of muezzin and was sent twice to Tabrīz (Tebrīz) to conduct negotiations with the Safavid governor (1057/1647 and 1065/1655).

There are, however, several significant important sections in his itinerary which were not commissioned by any officials. Some of these are simple deviations of the well-beaten track. Remarkable are his privately organized journeys outside the Ottoman realm. Among these are his trip to Russia in the retinue of the Crimean Khan Meḥmed IV. Girāy (d. 1075/1666) and his journey to the Sūdān, which had the character of full-fledged, adventurous exploration.

His ambition to get a survey of the entire Ottoman world is particularly visible in the ninth volume of his *Seyāhatnāme*, where he visits a number of Aegean Islands far away from the pilgrimage route. Nevertheless the astonishing completeness of E.Ç.'s work was mostly the result of numerous official and semi-official journeys. Towards the end of his active period of more than forty years of traveling E.Ç. had seen nearly all judgeships (*qazā*) of the Empire. Guided by his maxim "travel, trade, and pilgrimage" (*seyāhat*, *ticāret*, *ziyāret*), E.Ç. also made pilgrimages to shrines. In Anatolia alone he visited more than 200 holy places. He also paid homage to shrines in ^cIrāq

and finally performed the *hajj* to Mecca in 1082/1672. Maghreb and Cyprus are the only important omissions in the *Seyāhatnāme*.

WORK

① *Seyāhatnāme*

E.Ç.'s great travelogue *Seyāhatnāme* is a first person narrative in ten volumes, which combines the autobiography of its author with the most extensive geographical description of the Ottoman world. The *Seyāhatnāme* serves as a source for linguistic investigations in that it includes information about various foreign languages and for the development of Ottoman prose. Although most authors have exploited the *Seyāhatnāme* in one way or another, the fact remains that “the fundamental unit of the *Seyāhatnāme* is the entire work ... It has a unified plan and style.”² Its quasi-symmetrical structure using the descriptions of Istanbul (vol. 1) and Cairo (vol. 10) as “frame-books”³ as well as frequent cross-references within the work indicate that the *Seyāhatnāme* was composed with the help of a diary or other provisional notes.

The descriptions of towns (*evşāf*) follow a standard scheme and includes in most cases information concerning the town's history (including the legendary pre-Islamic past and the date of Muslim conquest), fortifications, mosques and other Islamic foundations with special attention to commercial buildings and bath-houses, as well as its inhabitants, their manners, speech and clothing, excursion spots, etc. Though the figures E.Ç. gives in his account are mostly limited to Muslim population, he also makes references to Christian and Jewish institutions, particularly to conspicuous monasteries and churches beyond the Ottoman core lands (e.g., in Echmiadzin [Üç Kilise], Košice [Kaşa], and Vienna [Beç]).

There are blank spaces throughout the work, including paragraphs lacking names, numbers as well as headings. Other chapters describe only a small number of Friday mosques, skip the other buildings and special features altogether, but concentrate on “talismans” (*muṭasalamāt*) and sacred and holy places (*ziyāretgāh*).⁴ A striking aspect is E.Ç.'s predilection for statistical surveys which combine in many cases realistic numbers for inhabitants, buildings, etc. However, he sometimes also includes noisome exaggerations contradicting his own descriptions.”⁵

E.Ç. was concerned not only with the physical and monumental surface of the Ottoman world but also with a fuller understanding of the “Ottomanness” of the well-protected domains. He clearly discriminates the Ottoman *Rūm* elite from the other subjects of the Sultan, a feature which is particularly noticeable in the tenth volume of the *Seyāhatnāme* focusing on Egypt.

During his stay in hundreds of towns and cities and thousands of villages E.Ç. seems to have been in contact with almost the complete leading class of his era, including sultans, grand viziers, provincial governors, military leaders, and an immense number of local notables. Important personalities among these are Ottoman sultans such as Murād IV (1032-49/1623-40), İbrāhīm (1049-58/1640-48) and Mehmed IV

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(1058-99/1648-87) and rulers like Meḥmed Girāy Ḥān and Abdāl Ḥān of Bidlīs (d. 1065/1665?). Paşas such as Ketenci °Ömer (d. > 1035/1625-26), Defterdārızāde Meḥmed (d. 1066/1656), Silāhdār Murtażā (d. ?), Qara Meḥmed (d. 1095/1684), Özdemir °Oşmān (d. ?), İpşirli Muştafā (d. 1065/1665), Köprülü Meḥmed Paşa (d. 1072/ 1661) and Kethudā İbrāhīm (d. ?) played a major role as his protectors. E.Ç. spent 12 years in the service of Melek Aḥmed Paşa and followed this kinsman during his governorships at Sofia (Şofya), Diyārbekr (Diyarbakır), Van, Osijek (Özi) and Bosnia (Bosna).

Seyāhatnāme is a valuable source for many aspects of Ottoman politics, society, and culture. Even though E.Ç. compares his work with that of “other historians” and is classified by Bursalı Meḥmed Ṭāhir and Franz Babinger among others as a historian, nonetheless, the *Seyāhatnāme* cannot be regarded as a ‘history.’ Yet, the quality of the work as a first-rate ‘historical source’ is beyond question. According to Murphey and Dankoff E.Ç.’s “partisan remarks enrich rather than distort our understanding of Ottoman realities. Moreover, precisely by recording controversial and deeply felt contemporary opinion Evliya’s account achieves its unique standing and value as a source for the study of seventeenth-century Ottoman society and politics.”⁶ E.Ç. does not hesitate to decry Ottoman corruption, oppression and injustice both implicitly (by comparing the conditions during his time with those in previous decades, for example, with the age of Süleymān) and explicitly.⁷

Despite his general superior attitude toward non-Muslims, E.Ç. concedes that the Europeans are better skilled in building fortifications and complains about the decay of Islamic pious foundations in comparison with flourishing Christian institutions such as a monastery at Chios.⁸

Seyāhatnāme is not exclusively based on its author’s personal experience, who had a superficial knowledge of the contemporary canon of historical literature.⁹ In addition to oral traditions, E.Ç. used and, to a lesser degree, cited universal histories (Ṭabarī), Ottoman (Aḥmedī, İbrāhīm Peçevī, Muştafā °Ālī, Şolaqzāde, Sa°düddīn) and Arab chronicles (Maqrīzī), and referred rather vaguely to *müverriḥān* or *müverriḥīn*. Indefinable are indeed various Persian, Hebrew and Turkish histories (*Fārisī*, *İsrā’īlī* and *Türkī tevāriḥleri*). E.Ç.’s standard reference for pre-Islamic history in general and for Greek history in particular is the *Ta’riḥ-i Yenvān*, without doubt Agapios’ *Kitāb al-°Unvān*, an Arabic version of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, a history of the world from its beginnings until 941-42 A.D. E.Ç.’s knowledge about this work seems to be limited to its title.¹⁰ He moreover mentions maps and atlases among his sources, such as an *Atlas Minor*, a “Geography” (*Coğrafya*) and a “World Map” (*Papamonta*), but it seems, they, too, were not actually used by him.

E.Ç. used bio-biographical compilations (*°ulemā tezkireleri*) up to °Aṭā’ī extensively and referred to nearly contemporary sources such as Meḥmed °Āşiq’s *Menāzirü’l-°avālim*. He had also access to lists of buildings constructed by Mi°mār Sinān. The first volume of the *Seyāhatnāme* contains a list of fiefs (*tumār*) according to a *qā-*

nūnnāme (supposedly from the reign of Süleymān I, but more probably from a redaction by ʿAyn-ı ʿAlī Efendi under Aḥmed I), which E.Ç. completed using relatively current data after the conquests of Mehmed IV in Hungary. Extremely valuable are the documents containing catalogues of craftsmen in Istanbul and Cairo.¹¹ Beyond this variety of sources E.Ç. consulted, or claimed to have consulted, court records, foundation deeds and other official records. E.Ç. copied many building inscriptions on the spot, but also simply used the chronograms from various manuscripts without comparing them with the originals *in situ*.

Research History

The ‘discovery’ of the manuscript by Josef von Hammer, his first efforts to translate some chapters from the first volume of the *Seyāhatnāme*, and the articles he published in the *Fundgruben des Orients* had initially no deep impact on research. The *Müntehabāt-ı Evliyā Çelebī* were small selections from the first volume, which appeared four times between 1259/1843 and 1279/1862 in Istanbul and Bülāq. These selections confirmed the general view, which considered the *Seyāhatnāme* an entertaining fairy tale. Nevertheless some leading intellectuals of the period such as Aḥmed Vefīq Paşa (d. 1308/1891) had an idea of the importance of this ‘authoritative traveler’ (*seyyāh-ı muḥaqqiq*).

The first volume of the *Seyāhatnāme* appeared as an edition for *İqdām* under the responsibility of Aḥmed Cevdet and Necīb ʿAşım [Yazıksız]. The editors proudly announced what they considered “a glorious national monument for the Turkish and Ottoman World,” while Necīb ʿAşım praised E.Ç.’s empirical acquisition of knowledge through traveling. No other text edition during the Hamidian period was so closely connected with the notion of ‘progress.’ The seventh and eighth volumes were satisfactorily edited by Kilisli Rıfat [Bilge] based on a larger number of available copies, whereas the editions of the ninth and the tenth volumes in Latin script are only passable.¹² Despite being based on the unreliable Pertev Paşa manuscript, the *İqdām* edition and its many paraphrases in modern Turkish remained the most cited text of E.Ç. for nearly a century.

The first period of research began with Franz Taeschner’s seminal study of E.Ç.’s itineraries in Anatolia. At that time the *Seyāhatnāme* was predominantly used as a source for historical-topographical studies, mainly in Southeastern Europe (Hungary, former Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece). Numerous monographs and articles were devoted to specific regions and towns. Translations with more or less extensive commentaries appeared in many European languages. Cavid Baysun’s article in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (1948) and Meşkure Eren’s doctoral dissertation on the sources of volume 1 (1960) opened new paths for research. Numerous popular editions and selections were published one after the other in Turkey (in Özön, Koçu, Danişman, and Parmaksızoğlu). The most reliable edition in modern Turkish was published by Yücel Dağlı et. al.

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R.F. Kreutel's thesis (1971) that the manuscript series S (see bibliography) is an autograph reflects the general consensus among scholars. Yet, it is contested by P. MacKay, who reviewed those manuscripts in 1975. It is also generally acknowledged that all editions and investigations should be based on the first eight volumes of these series, since the last two volumes show minor variations.

There are also a few studies devoted to questioning the credibility of specific descriptions and itineraries, showing, for example, that E.Ç. did not participate in the first Cretan campaign in 1055/1645. There are conflicting opinions as to the exactness of his descriptions of buildings. While M. Kiel argues that "he was much more precise and systematic than all other early travellers, eastern or western,"¹³ Dankoff's impression is that "apart from fortifications and bridges" Evliya attempted to be "precise and systematic" only for the living Islamic monuments of the places he visited, such as mosques, medreses, tekkes, public baths, hospitals, fountains, etc. When it comes to churches and monuments of bygone civilizations, Dankoff argues, "he tends to omit them altogether ... or else he falls back on fancy and cliché".¹⁴ Understandably E.Ç.'s account on Hungary, where he spent six years, "more time than in any other outlying province of the Empire," is extremely valuable.¹⁵

In recent years philological and linguistic studies as a precondition for a critical edition have gained more importance. R. Dankoff made the greatest contribution to the flourishing branch of Evliya-philology ("Evliology") with his editions, translations, surveys of the context, glossary of rare and foreign words (with Semih Tezcan), and finally with a comprehensive appraisal of E.Ç.'s life and work.

Seyāhatnāme is by far the best investigated text of Ottoman historiography and literature and remains a great source of information for all branches of Ottoman studies. The international character of the Ottoman research community is reflected in the rich bibliography of works published in nearly 20 languages.¹⁶

CONTENTS OF THE *SEYĀHATNĀME*

Volume 1 (1039/1630): [Istanbul]

The prophet encourages E.Ç. in a dream to travel
Istanbul with the Golden Horn, Bosphorus

Volume 2 (1050/1640)

Bursa

İzmit

Sinop-Trabzon-Mingrelia-Georgia-Abkhazia-Crimea-Black Sea (shipwreck)-Istanbul (1052/1642)

Bolu-Amasya-Niksar-Erzurüm

Nakhichevan-Tabrīz (envoy to the Safavid governor)-Baku-Georgia-Erzurüm

Qarş (1057/1647)-Erzurüm-Bayburd-Mingrelia-Erzurüm

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Erzincan-Merzifon-Anqara-Istanbul (Varvar °Alī Paşa (d. 1058/1648) turned rebel; Janissary revolt in 1058/1648)

Volume 3 (1058/1648)

Eskişehir-Qonya-İskenderun-Tyre-Acre-Şafed-Ḥamā-Ḥums-Ḥaleb-Şām
Dead Sea-Ramla-Ğazza

Urfa-Qayserī-Sivas-İskilib-Istanbul (1060/1650)

Rüscuq-Nigbolı-Özi-Silistre-Köstence-Filibe-Şofya-Edirne-Istanbul (1063-5/1653-55).

Volume 4 (1065/1655)

Malatya-Diyārbekr-Mardin-Sincar

Diyārbekr-Bidlīs-Aḥlat-Van

Bidlīs-Urmiya-Tabrīz (second envoy)-Erdebil-Hamadān-Qazvīn-Qum

Bağdād-Necef/Kūfa-Başra-Abadan-Başra-Bağdād

Erbīl-°İmādiye-Cizre-Müşul-Tikrīt-Bağdād.

Volume 5 (1066/1656)

Müşul-Si°ird-Van-Istanbul

Istanbul-Van

Van-Bidlīs

Bidlīs-Erzurūm-Toqad-Istanbul

Qırqlareli/Qırqkilīsa-Varna-Istanbul

Istanbul-Silistre (Rákóczi campaign 1067/1657)

Chotin-Özi-Istanbul

Istanbul (1068/1658)-İznik-Brusa-Gelibolı-Edirne (1069/1659)

Campaigns to Moldavia and Walachia-Edirne-Niş-Belğrad-Ṭemeşvar-Libhova-Yanova-Varad (siege)

Sarajevo (1070/1660)-Travniq-Zadar-Banaluqa-Zagreb-Üsküb-Köstendil-Şofya (1071/1661)-Semendire-Ṭemeşvar

Volume 6 (1071/1661): [Hungary]

Ṭemeşvar-(1071/1661: Transylvanian campaign)-Kolozsvár-Kaschau-Fogaras-Sibiu-Mohaç-Peç-Budin

Uyvar campaign

Estergon

Nyitra campaign

Belğrad

Mission to Herzegovina

Dubrovnik and Mostar

(1073/1663: Austrian campaign)

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Szigetvar-(Siege on Yeñiçal'e)-Qanije.

Volume 7 (1074/1664)

Graz-Lake Balaton-Battle of St. Gotthard-Esztergom (1074/1664)-Belgrad

Vienna (1075/1665)-Várad-Cluj

Wallachia-Bucharest-Ochakov

Campaign against the Cossacks-Krakow

Crimea-Bāğçesarāy-Cherson-Đağıstān (1076/1666)-Terek-Astrakhan-Saratov-Kazan-(Ural)-Kalmukia-Azov (1077/1667).

Volume 8 (1077-81/1667-70): [Greece]

Cretan campaign (1079/1669)-Thrace-Aynaroz-Qavala-Selanik-Tirhala-Athens-Dodecanese, Qandia

Manya campaign, Zarnata

Yanya-İlbasan-Tekfurdağı-Istanbul

Volume 9 (1671): [Pilgrimage]

Istanbul-Kütāhiyye-Mağnisa-İzmir-Saqız Adası-Rodos-Ađana-Ḥaleb-Quds (1083/1672)-Şām

Hajj caravan-Medīne-Mekke-Medīne (1083/1672)-Qāhire.

Volume 10 (1672): [Cairo]

Qāhire-Tanta (Delta)-İskenderiyye- Qāhire-Nile-Funjistān (Mogadishu, Suakin, Hadendoa, Behnisa, Fayyūm)

Qāhire (events up to 1094/1683).

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¹ According to Dankoff: typical/archetypical.

² Robert Dankoff, "Establishing the Text of Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname: A Critique of Recent Scholarship and Suggestions for the Future," *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 18 (2000), 139.

³ Robert Dankoff, "Evliya Çelebi and the Seyahatname," *The Turks*, vol. 3, ed. Hasan Celâl Güzel (Ankara, 2002), 607.

⁴ See the chapter on Müşul, vol. 4, fol. 339-403.

⁵ See his "statistics" concerning the mosques and other buildings in Istanbul, vol. 1, passim.

⁶ Robert Dankoff, *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Ahmed Pasha (1588-1662) as portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travel (Seyahatname): With an Historical Introduction by Rhoads Murphy* (New York, 1991), 21.

⁷ See the examples put together by Robert Dankoff in "Evliya Çelebi and the Seyahatname," *The Turks*, vol. 3, ed. Hasan Celâl Güzel (Ankara, 2002), 619-621.

⁸ See vol. 9, 60b.

⁹ See the list of the books in the library of Abdâl Hân in vol. 4, 275a-276b.

¹⁰ Stéphane Yerasimos, *La fondation de Constantinople et de Sainte-Sophie dans les traditions turques* (Paris, 1990), 65.

¹¹ "For reasons remaining unclear, none of the relevant official records have surfaced up to date; and we depend on Evliya Çelebi and other literary men for a notion of their contents." Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden, Boston, 2004), xvi.

¹² Martin van Bruinessen and Hendrik Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir* (Leiden, 1988), 7.

¹³ See Bruinessen and Boeschoten, *ibidem*, 62.

¹⁴ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Foreword" to Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality. The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden, 2004), p.xvii

¹⁵ Gustav Bayerle, "Hungarian History According to Evliya Çelebi," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 8 (1984), 21-24.

¹⁶ Klaus Kreiser, *Materialien zu Evliya Çelebi: Bibliographie raisonnée* (Wiesbaden, 1992) [printed with Robert Dankoff, *A Guide to the Seyâhat-nâme of Evliya Çelebi*].

¹⁷ For a complete bibliography of publications on Evliyâ Çelebî up to 1991, cf. Klaus Kreiser, *ibidem* (endnote 16).

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