

1 OTTOMAN CHRONOTOPE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN IN EVLIYA
2 ÇELEBI'S SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TRAVELOGUE *SEYAHATNAME*

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5 This article investigates the ways in which the Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi perceived and represented the
6 various political powers and cultural heritages in the Mediterranean, through a reading of his seventeenth-century
7 travelogue, *Seyahatname*. I argue that Evliya's text reveals the palimpsest of political power and cultural hegemony
8 extant in the Mediterranean of his time and attempts to legitimise Ottoman rule, employing several tropes and
9 narrative threads. For Evliya, the Mediterranean is primarily a battlefield that has witnessed the victories and defeats
10 of the Ottomans throughout their history. Evliya's *Seyahatame*, in that sense, is within the tradition of travel writing
11 in the service of imperial meaning-making and meaning-sustaining processes. I call the narrative structure under
12 which Evliya's observations are gathered the Ottoman Chronotope: a chronotope that highlights the project of
13 sustaining a commonwealth, through ties of commerce and faith. In Evliya's text the islands become a geography
14 where the Ottomans' sense of mission and empire is bolstered by 'old books' and oral narratives that he claims
15 were popular particularly among the Mediterranean Greek population.

16 **Key words:** travel writing, palimpsest, Evliya Çelebi, Ottoman Empire, chronotope, Knights of Malta, Mediterranean
17

18 In his introduction to *The Intimate life of an Ottoman Statesman* (1991), historian Rhoads
19 Murphey has described Evliya Çelebi's collection of travel writing as a 'vade mecum for
20 Ottoman administrators' (1991: 21). Evliya, as is the case with other holdings of the empire,
21 makes an inventory of the Mediterranean islands in his ten-volume travelogue. Having started
22 his 'travels' in the neighbourhoods of Istanbul and travelled extensively in Anatolia, in the 1640s
23 he set out on his overseas journeys, visiting several ports in the Mediterranean including Bodrum,
24 Malta, Crete and Rhodes. These were visits that mainly involved courtly missions, and as an
25 'embedded' chronicler, Evliya Çelebi's account, I argue, reflects an Ottoman worldview and
26 sense of history. After the initial circulation of a handful of manuscripts, Evliya's text was first
27 published in the nineteenth century and has, since then, come out in several different editions,
28 with publishers going back to the original manuscripts to correct errors and to look out for
29 sections omitted in previous publications of the *Seyahatname*. In order to better understand how
30 a text can contribute to a particular, Ottoman understanding of the world, its legitimisation and
31 sustenance, this article tries to tease out the relationship between chronotope, the mechanics of
32 how time and space are connected in the narrative, and the genre of travel writing. Examining
33 this nexus requires a discussion both of the Ottoman chronotope, and of the ways in which
34 Evliya's *Seyahatname*, literally, his 'travelogue', obeys the rules of the genre, if such rules may,
35 after all, exist.

36 The genre of 'travel writing' is, Michele Longino argues, 'recently formulated and
37 capacious, [...] [it] defies the rigor of classification. The criteria are fluid and accommodating.

38 Travel journals are, by their nature, unruly' (2015: 11). In her book on French travellers to the
 39 Ottoman Empire, Longino reminds us that travel notes defy categorisation, and that these notes
 40 are transformed into travel writing in different ways, some prioritising accuracy, some style.
 41 There are, however, certain general characteristics that transform the 'notes' to the category of
 42 'travel writing'¹ and these characteristics define the genre in which Evliya Çelebi is writing:

43
 44 Gone are the repetition, the tedious detail, the monotony and the chaos, and all of a sudden we are in
 45 an ordered world, where only the noteworthy is reported, in which observations have a point and are
 46 subordinated to a narrative structure where events lived are shaped into adventures and anecdote
 47 worthy of recounting. [...] However, in order to produce this readable and enjoyable text, one which
 48 will possibly attain even the status of 'literature', the traveller will have strayed far from reporting the
 49 exact and complete truth of his travel experience, supressing much detail, establishing order over
 50 random events (11).

51
 52 This 'establishing order' over random events sounds very much like a technology of the Empire-
 53 making/sustaining project itself. When we think of the task of the travel writer and the imperial
 54 administrator through these terms, we see that their methods coalesce, and one can see traces of
 55 this in Evliya Çelebi's text. All the characteristics that Longino lists as the elements that travel
 56 notes shed in order to become 'travel writing' are, as we shall see, still very much in evidence in
 57 Evliya's *Seyahatname* which retains an unruly structure. As the Ottoman Empire tries to set its
 58 coastline, islands and ports in order in what seems to be an impossibly stretched sphere of
 59 Ottoman influence, so does Evliya try to rein in the wilder aspects of his narrative strands. There
 60 are many fantastical stories throughout the ten volumes: candles that never cease burning, cats
 61 freezing in flight as they jump from one roof to another because of extreme cold, an underwater
 62 passage that connects Acre to the island of Cyprus: in the sections I will be looking at we come
 63 across such things as the body of Saint John that still bleeds on certain days. Despite all these
 64 fantastical embellishments, Evliya Çelebi's account still provides us with a certain panorama of
 65 the Ottoman empire in the seventeenth century, at the height of its powers.

67 **Travel writing and the Chronotope**

68
 69 Travel writing as a genre can be said to be the natural home of the chronotope, as the reader
 70 witnesses the narrator moving through space over a period of time. One can perhaps even suggest
 71 that travel writing has, as one of the earlier genres of writing, inspired the very idea of the
 72 chronotope — the space-time relationship and how it is expressed on the page—as an element
 73 of narrative that should be paid special attention in literary analysis. 'There exists a special group
 74 of genres,' Mihail Bakhtin argues (1981: 321), 'that play an especially significant role in
 75 structuring novels [...] Examples of such genres would be confession, the diary, travel notes,
 76 biography ...' thus placing travel notes firmly in the genealogy of the novel. According to him,
 77 the chronotope is that which fuses 'the spatial and temporal [...] into one carefully thought-out,
 78 concrete whole' (84). Bakhtin encourages us to observe how, through the chronotope, '[t]ime
 79 [...] thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and
 80 responsive to the movements of time, plot and history' (84).

81 Taking its cue from Bakhtin for the discussion of Evliya Çelebi's travelogue, this study
 82 similarly asks 'What is it that fuses space and time into one concrete whole in the Ottoman
 83 Mediterranean, or indeed, the entire Ottoman imperial project in Evliya Çelebi's account?' How

84 space becomes, or is made responsive to history, or indeed, how history itself becomes
 85 responsive to space is particularly pertinent to Evliya Çelebi's writing. Evliya Çelebi's narrative
 86 places the Mediterranean at the centre of the Ottoman empire-building project financially,
 87 geopolitically and even from a point of view of self-image and legitimacy. Evliya's travelogue
 88 casts its narrative net far and wide, beyond the Mediterranean and indeed even in lands where
 89 the Ottomans don't rule, and his approach to the lands in and around the Mediterranean is in
 90 keeping with the stories that Ottomans liked to tell about themselves. An understanding of the
 91 Ottoman destiny of becoming a world empire after the Roman model, rather than a conventional
 92 sense of getting acquainted with new places and cultures as a traveller, is what kneads Evliya's
 93 ten-volume travelogue into a unified whole.

95 **Evliya Çelebi and his *Seyahatname***

96
 97 Evliya Çelebi was born in Istanbul in 1611 to a wealthy family that had close ties with the palace.
 98 This allowed him a good education, and afforded him enough leisure to begin his travels. His
 99 excursions began with the exploration of Istanbul, and then he went on expeditions to all corners
 100 of the Ottoman Empire. Dilaver Cebeci describes the seventeenth-century Ottoman society that
 101 Evliya Çelebi lived in as the 'Turkish-Islamic culture and civilization' milieu (2009: 39).² Evliya
 102 became a *nedim/muhasip* (advisor)³ to Sultan Murad IV at the age of 24 (İnalçık, 2011: 331).
 103 His position enabled him to develop many connections with men of state, and his travels often
 104 happened within his capacity as *muhasip*. Halil İnalçık concurs that Evliya's descriptions of the
 105 many cities are part and parcel of his job as a *nedim* (332), but that we should not think of him
 106 merely as a state official. In any case, Evliya would have his readers believe that the state had
 107 very little to do with his travels: it all happened because the Prophet appeared to him in a dream.
 108 He refers to this dream a couple of times in the *Seyahatname* and instead of pleading 'Şefa'at ya
 109 Rasulallah' ('Grant me your intercession, prophet of God'), Evliya's tongue slipped and he
 110 pleaded 'Seyahat ya Rasulallah' ('Grant me travel, prophet of God') (Tezcan 2011: 54-57). This
 111 story of myth-making about his authorial self is in keeping with the kind of knowledge and
 112 experience Evliya Çelebi keeps himself open to and recounts throughout his *Seyahatname*, and
 113 is also indicative of the witty and often tongue-in-cheek voice he assumes in places.

114 Evliya started his travels in 1640 (İnalçık, 2011: 335) and continued travelling up until the
 115 1680's—historians agree that he compiled his ten-volume *Seyahatname* after he had visited all
 116 the places he writes about. In his article 'The *Seyahatname* in World Travel Writing' (2012),
 117 Sooyong Kim points to the uniqueness of Evliya Çelebi's venture and comments on the lack of
 118 in-depth scholarly interest in it as a travel narrative, with researchers very often mining the text
 119 more for information on specific regions and lifestyles. He maintains that there probably is no
 120 other travel narrative that is so long and exhaustive (2012: 362). This lack of interest in the text
 121 as 'travel writing' stems, he argues, from the genre problems I have also tried to outline above.
 122 There is, in Evliya's text, no attempt to make the account a flowing narrative, no interest in
 123 making it work as a conventional travel story. However, there is growing interest in Evliya
 124 Çelebi's work, as it is one of the more readily available accounts of the Mediterranean in the
 125 seventeenth century written from the point of view of an Ottoman, Muslim narrator. Robert
 126 Dankoff, who contributed greatly to Evliya Çelebi scholarship and helped popularise his writing
 127 in international academic circles by translating him into English, observes that Evliya's narrative
 128 straddles the personal, historical and informative and that 'just as it is hard to separate the

129 imperial and the personal aspects in Evliya’s motivation so it is hard to distinguish the act of
 130 travel from the reporting of it’ (2004: 151).⁴ In her study of *Seyahatname* as an inter-generic
 131 work, Mine Mengi observes that it is a narrative that makes use of several genres including
 132 history, city monographies, biography, autobiography, *menakıbnâme* and *letaifnâme* (2009:
 133 282).

134 One of the passages that Dankoff highlights in his study of Evliya Çelebi’s mentality, under
 135 the section titled ‘*Precedence*’, is about the Mediterranean captains’ guild complaining that the
 136 imperial decree has put them after the butchers’ guild at an imperial parade held by Sultan Murad
 137 IV, whom Evliya served. Indeed, Evliya seems to have observed the parade at first hand. The
 138 Mediterranean captains’ guild’s complaint articulates the very premise of this paper, the
 139 importance and centrality of the Mediterranean in the imperial project: ‘We service your Cairo,
 140 which is the gate of the Holy Cities. We make Istanbul plentiful and cheap with the goods of
 141 Egypt. We transport 70,000 pilgrims annually back and forth. Why is our service valued so little
 142 that the butchers should take precedence over us?’ (Dankoff, 2004: 86-87) upon which the Sultan
 143 appreciates the Mediterranean captains’ services repeating their very words and then adding
 144 ‘Also they are a band of ghazis and jihad warriors who engage in sea-battles with the Hell-slated
 145 infidels’, (87) and puts them before the butchers.

146 Evliya’s travelogue inhabits that liminal space between an inventory of Ottoman
 147 possessions, and the travel notes of a witty author. In each place he visits he lists municipal
 148 buildings, the number of houses, the produce of the region and sometimes the characteristics of
 149 the inhabitants. Suraiya Faroqhi argues that Evliya Çelebi ‘views the Ottoman territories as an
 150 accumulation of cities, linked to one another by a network of roads’ (1992: 224). Some of these
 151 roads may, in true Evliya style, even be fantastical. In his account of Gaza under the heading ‘a
 152 strange and bizarre tale’—a construction he often uses to introduce elements of the fantastical
 153—he says:

154
 155 According to historians, 882 years before the birth of the Prophet, during the time of Alexander the
 156 Great, in the coastal town of Askalon near Gaza, there was a wide road in the sea that led all the way
 157 to the province of Cyprus. All land and sea merchants used to go to the island of Cyprus on this road
 158 [...] In the time of Alexander a Jew from Hama, bringing the Nile of Egypt with him to Hama through
 159 some magic, hurled the bottle with Nile water to the ground and thus the lake of Tene formed, leaving
 160 half of the road to Cyprus in water (Kahraman, 2005: 176).⁵

162 **The Early Modern Mediterranean**

163
 164 Much has been written about mobilities, networks and connections across the early modern
 165 Mediterranean. Indeed, the early modern Mediterranean was a geography of multicultural and
 166 composite states of the Habsburg, Ottoman and Venetian empires,⁶ and Evliya’s text bears ample
 167 witness to this. ‘The Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the
 168 Christian, that the whole sea shared a common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical
 169 problems and general trends if not identical consequences’ says Fernand Braudel in his seminal
 170 book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1995: v i, 14).
 171 There is, however, ‘a danger’ as Eric Dursteler warns us, ‘that the “black legend” of
 172 Mediterranean battlefields will be replaced with an equally imbalanced depiction of
 173 Mediterranean bazaars, that ignores the sea’s long history of antagonism, division,
 174 miscomprehension, exploitation, and violence’ (2011: 474). He adds that ‘the connected

175 Mediterranean need not be seen as an attempt to supplant the conflictual Mediterranean, rather
176 it complicates it by undercutting the notion of a sea of clear-cut boundaries, and highlighting
177 instead a sea of 'shared patterns' (475). Highlighting the question of violence, Longino argues:

178
179 The Mediterranean World was in the 1650's the very real world of the Ottomans – of pirates, corsairs,
180 kidnappings and shipwrecks, and slavery, and fearsome 'Others'. These 'Others' interfered with the
181 business of commerce and of piety. They interfered with the desire to tread in the footsteps of the
182 ancient civilizations of Greece, of Troy, of Rome. They got in the way of smooth passage to
183 knowledge, to pleasure, to profit. It was a treacherous world of high adventure, rife with anecdote (16).

184
185 It is interesting that Longino posits the Ottomans here as forming part of the 'others' who
186 interfered with trade and secular 'pilgrimages' of knowledge. As will be shown here, the
187 Ottomans justified their presence and further advance into the Mediterranean on almost exactly
188 the same grounds: to keep their own routes of trade and pilgrimage safe from the 'other', the
189 meddling Frank (shorthand, in the seventeenth century, for 'European'), particularly the
190 Venetians and the Knights of Malta.

191 It is also interesting to note that these 'ancient civilisations' that Western Europeans claimed
192 as their heritage presented a more immediate model to the Ottomans than many historians may
193 care to admit. Although Evliya never makes explicit references, it is clear that an imperial project
194 in the Mediterranean, by nature, will hark back to its Greek and Roman predecessors. The
195 Mediterranean has its own relationship between *chronos* and *topos*, its own chronotope, that calls
196 to mind the glories of the Greek and Roman civilisations; glories which the Ottoman Empire
197 aspired to and the Ottoman chronotope, as is evidenced in Evliya's text, tried to embody. There
198 is an inherent understanding that the Mediterranean, the islands, and the ports on the mainland(s)
199 ought to belong to one commonwealth; that an empire cannot call itself an empire if connections
200 between these ports are not maintained in an orderly manner. This is how Evliya emphasises the
201 importance of the port of Jaffa in the eastern Mediterranean:

202
203 Jaffa has a very good port. Many hundreds of ships come to Jaffa port from the island of Cyprus,
204 Tripoli, Saida, Beirut, Acre, Alexandria, and the ports of the castles of Rashd, Dimyat and Tayma, and
205 bring to Gaza, Ramla, the village of Lot, and Holy Jerusalem grain, goods, traders and visitors.
206 (Kahraman, 2005: viii, 164)

207
208 The idea of empire was, however, very much complicated on the ground, or indeed at sea, where
209 borders seemed very porous. Palmira Brummet argues that '[T]hey were places that, often
210 enough, were forced to pay allegiance (and taxes) to two masters. The borders of empire were
211 thus not so clearly defined as they might seem in official correspondence or maps' (2015: 35).
212 All the same, Evliya's text, though shifting spheres of influence can easily be gleaned between
213 the lines of his narrative, pushes for a more unified understanding of the Empire's holdings,
214 particularly in the eastern Mediterranean.

215 216 **The Ottoman Chronotope in the Mediterranean**

217
218 Evliya's accounts of his Mediterranean travels are distributed through several volumes in the
219 *Seyahatname*: in one section he travels along the Anatolian coast, in another he visits the islands
220 in the Mediterranean, in yet another he visits the Levantine coastline. The Mediterranean sections

of *Seyahatname* cover the years between 1640-1680, coinciding with the period that Murphey calls ‘the Ottoman resurgence’ in his article on the powers in the Mediterranean (1993: 186). After an investigation of the effects of the Ottoman and Venetian rivalry—which, Murphey argues, had profound effects on Ottoman society and economy, and was a manifestation of both sides’ nostalgia for glories of the fifteenth century—he concludes that the most important benefit that the Ottoman state reaped was a ‘refamiliarization with its Mediterranean environment after a long period of preoccupation with the affairs of eastern provinces’ (199-200). Part of this refamiliarisation will come, as we shall see, through the narratives that Evliya encounters in the Mediterranean, which help him connect a sense of history and place in his own narrative structure in the *Seyahatname*.

The other major player, after Venice, that shaped the Ottoman chronotope in the Mediterranean were the Knights of Malta who get several mentions in the *Seyahatname*. In Evliya’s narrative, Malta does not get its own entry: it could be that it was not recognised as a political entity at the time. It is the fleet of the Knights of Malta and that of Venice, forming a kind of mobile enemy archipelago in themselves, that we encounter throughout the travelogue rather than their places of origin. The Knights of Malta are recognised as being the historical custodians of Saint John’s corpse and are portrayed as a group of men who have been chased since Acre, through Bodrum and Rhodes. In the following section from the ninth volume which details Evliya’s trip to the Holy Cities of Mecca, Madina and Jerusalem, he goes into their story at length:

The tribe of Rum used to come to (Sebastiye) and visit Yahya’s (St John’s) body and give many gifts and sacrifices to the priests. Then the Malta kafir who were in Acre came here as pilgrims and being jealous of the wealth of the shrine, stole the body of Yahya, brought it to Acre, put it in a bejewelled casket and made a shrine there [...] Then king Tahir expels them from Acre and so they arrive in Tartus and start residing in a castle there [...] Then all the Turkish beys of Zülkadir, Germiyan, Selçuklu, Aydın, Saruhan, Teke and Menteşe lay siege to the castle upon which the Malta Kafir take Yahya’s body and the bones of Jesus’s donkey with them in a train of six galleons and go to the island of Rhodes. They live there for 200 years [...] and then Sultan Suleyman conquers Rhodes with the might of his hand. However, the body of Yahya had already been sent to Malta (Kahraman, 2005: v. ix, 484)

As we shall see, Evliya collects several other stories like this and urban legends as he travels the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, adding to an archive of narratives that provide a fitting backdrop to Ottoman conquests when the time comes. Thus, each island and port in the Mediterranean becomes a narrative node that crystallises the *chronos*, the time periods that the stories belong to, and harnesses the latter through the *topos*, the very islands and ports, in the narrative structure that I call the Ottoman chronotope and that Evliya helps build in his travelogue.

Evliya explains that Malta becomes the Knights’ last port of call and their headquarters. In his narrative, the spatial and the temporal are fused in the figures of the Knights of Malta for the Ottomans, as their predecessors, the Turkish *beys*, and then themselves, have been trailing them through time, in the expanse of the eastern Mediterranean. In this teleological relationship, the last island to which the Ottomans chase the Knights becomes their final home and also a kind of western border for Ottoman hegemony in the Mediterranean. So, in a way, the Knights play an important role in the determining of the Ottoman chronotope. As shown in the quote above, the Ottomans and preceding Turkish fiefdoms encounter the Knights of Malta in different ports and

267 islands of the Mediterranean, at different periods. This is a *thickening* and *accumulation* of the
268 Ottoman history of conflict and conquest in the Mediterranean. More often than not Evliya's
269 texts depicts the Knights of Malta as being in cahoots with the Venetians and strangely enough,
270 in *Seyahatname* we get to learn more about the Knights than we do about the state actor that
271 Venice is supposed to represent.

272 Although he has many close brushes with the Venetians and the Knights of Malta, in all of
273 his travels Evliya never gets to go to either Venice or Malta. Nevertheless, true to Murphey's
274 epithet of the 'vade mecum', in one of the later volumes Evliya lists all the countries and islands
275 of the Mediterranean in short encyclopaedic entries, and he has the following entry for Venice:

276
277 The Venetian State, The Great Curse
278 They call their kings Pencpirim. [...] All their cities border our cities. Whenever there is anything
279 against peace, they come like the Frankish mangy, go around for 20-25 years and then accept peace
280 reluctantly. They are a cautious and accursed people like the plague. (v. ii, 85)

281
282 The wording of the entry reveals the straightforwardness of Evliya's narrative when it comes
283 to his own political discourse, which one would be inclined to think was coincidental with that
284 of the Ottoman state, as his patrons were state officials. The entry makes it clear that the
285 Ottomans were often at war with the Venetians in the period 1650-1670.

286 While Çelebi's main *modus operandi* was mostly that of accompanying government officials
287 on their tax collecting missions, his travels in the Mediterranean did take him right into the thick
288 of battle with the Venetians, which goes some way to explaining his ire against them. In 1646
289 Evliya joined the Ottoman campaign to capture the Hanya Castle in Crete, a Venetian holding at
290 the time, right after he got back to Istanbul from his travels in the Black Sea, and which he
291 continues after this lengthy 'interlude'. Evliya reports on the meeting the Sultan held with his
292 viziers and clerics on the 'Maltese campaign' (2, 9). The interlude has its own subheading 'In
293 which we go on the Maltese campaign' (2, 9). The narrative moves diachronically, and Evliya's
294 Ottoman chronotope, the centrality of Ottoman fortunes in the Mediterranean, allows the
295 narrative to shift and travel through time and space—from the Black Sea to Mediterranean, from
296 an earlier loss of galleons to the Maltese, to the conquest of Crete. The Cretan section is also a
297 good example of how Evliya's travelogue, particularly for the Mediterranean islands, does not
298 highlight a sense of discovery, as you would conventionally expect from travel writing. Rather,
299 the Mediterranean and the islands are a stage upon which the Ottomans' sense of purpose and
300 destiny are being played out.

301 In line with his stories of other islands of the Mediterranean, Evliya starts his Cretan story
302 with the backstory of legitimisation of the campaign. As I shall show here, the gradual narrative
303 legitimisation occurs through the following plotment: it starts with an account of Turkish ships
304 being captured by the Knights of Malta, and continues with the Maltese depositing their wealth
305 in Venetian-ruled Crete, the Greek inhabitants recognising this as 'treachery' against Turks, the
306 Greeks foretelling the capture of the island by the Turks to get their possessions back, Evliya
307 returning victorious to Istanbul, and finally Evliya hearing a story from his father that explains
308 the religious reasons why Crete had to be conquered. The narrative structure that allows this kind
309 of chronology is the very Ottoman chronotope this paper aims to delineate.

310 Without giving a specific date for the backstory, Evliya tells us that an Ottoman fleet had
311 been going to Egypt, with a lot of precious cargo—human and otherwise—when it was attacked

312 and captured by the ‘Malta kuffar’ (Kahraman and Dağlı, 2013: v ii: 94). The ‘kuffar’, plural for
 313 ‘kafir’, in this account of battle has very little religious connotation and is used to refer to the
 314 ‘enemy’. Greeks are rarely referred to as *kuffar* in Evliya’s travelogue. The word barely has any
 315 theological connotation here and is almost always used for those non-Muslims who take up arms
 316 against the Ottomans, as we shall soon see. Like the ‘cursed’ Venetians, the knights of Malta are
 317 referred to in the most derogatory terms reserved for enemies. This is how Evliya relates the
 318 incident:

319
 320 The *kuffar* [...] came to the (Turkish) galleon with six of their own and surrounded it on all four sides,
 321 and then poured their *kefere* soldiers into the galleon and fought there for three hours. In the end the
 322 *kuffar*, may their faces hit the ground, won the day and enslaved all the Muslims on board, including
 323 Esiri Mehmed Efendi (95).
 324

325 The Malta kuffar take the Ottoman spoils to the island of Crete where, Evliya tells us, the
 326 Venetians are ruling ‘400 thousand Greeks’ (95). Istanbul sends emissaries to the ‘balios and the
 327 konjalos’ (95)—terms used for Venetian administrators in Evliya’s text—and warns them to
 328 keep their side of the peace contract under which they have been operating in the Mediterranean,
 329 and not to give the Knights of Malta safe harbour. Venetians reply by saying that they are only
 330 obeying conventions by opening their ports to the ships of the Knights.

331 While the Venetian politicians try to justify their policy by the loopholes in their agreement
 332 with the Ottoman, the *Rum*⁷ priests on Crete, belonging to a culture that is more familiar and
 333 legible to the Ottomans, are represented in the text as having a better understanding of what this
 334 alliance with the Knights will cost the Venetians—Crete itself. According to Evliya, ‘the priests
 335 looked into their books and saw that this event had been foretold and that the Turks would come
 336 back to get their possessions’ (95). And so, Evliya and the campaign he is accompanying will
 337 fulfil this Greek prophecy in 1646. This looking into books and/or stars is a recurring theme in
 338 Evliya’s travelogue. All the places that the Ottomans invade and take over are somehow destined
 339 to fall under Ottoman rule, as recognised by the learned men of the people they are conquering.
 340 The reference to the books of the *Rum*, and not *kuffar* priests, is one of the instances in the
 341 travelogue that helps us understand the usage of the word *kuffar* for the Venetians and the
 342 Knights, and not for Greeks and other non-Muslims Ottomans are not at war with.

343 The legitimacy of the campaign on Hanya Castle in Crete seems very important for Evliya,
 344 and his effort to explain it tells us what kind of text it is that we are reading. He quotes from the
 345 fatwa that enabled the Sultan to declare war on the Knights of Malta: it has been religiously
 346 decreed that they present a danger to the free trade and pilgrimage of Muslims (86). The first
 347 thing that Istanbul does in preparation for the campaign is to send gold to the provinces of Cezair,
 348 Tunus and Trablus for gunpowder. At the start of the campaign the Ottoman fleet pretends to
 349 make for Malta to recover the pilgrims and their possessions but attack Crete instead—one will
 350 remember that in *Othello*, written some sixty years before the event, the Turks first pretend to
 351 head for Rhodes but then attack Cyprus. Evliya also harks back to the Cyprus war of 1570:

352
 353 The accursed, religionless *kafir* had not been at war since the Cyprus war against the sons of Osman,
 354 and so their soldiers were vigorous, their arms cheerful, other provisions plenty and their soldiers
 355 numerous, and so for seven days and seven nights, without rest, they pounded forty thousand cannons,
 356 many hundreds of thousands of an assortment of rifles and many cauldrons of grenades and lit up their
 357 castle with the lights they hung in the dark (99).

358 However, the time for the prophecy has come. Evliya tells the story of how a member of the *kafir*
359 comes to the Ottoman ranks to tell about the discord within the enemy camp. It turns out that the
360 Greek natives of the island, no doubt due to what they have read in their books as mentioned
361 earlier, want to surrender while the Venetians say they should defend and wait for support from
362 Venice. As with all the islands and castles in the Mediterranean, there is a palimpsest of
363 ownership and sovereignty in Crete as is revealed by the narrative provided by Evliya. The
364 Ottomans take the informant's advice and throw leaflets inside the castle, 'in Rum language'
365 saying that the Ottomans will not touch them if they agree to be a 'community that gives *haraj*'—
366 tax for non-Muslims. Moreover, ten Rum families come and convert to Islam 'and took on names
367 such as 'Ringlet Sinan' (100). The Venetians ask for ten days to leave the island but the Ottomans
368 give them only till the morning: 'and they got on their boats and made for their hell of a homeland
369 passing all the islands on the way' (100). Six days later a Venetian fleet along with six Maltese,
370 six Ducal and six Papal ships, a hundred 'kefere and fecere' come to retake the castle 'like a
371 seven headed dragon' (101), but they realise they cannot take it back and go back.

372
373 They saw that the port of the castle is occupied by the Ottoman fleet and all the lords of the seas and
374 the Algerians are standing to. All the walls of the castle are decorated with the banner of the Prophet
375 and all battlements and sides are filled with Muslim warriors, their belfries have become minarets, and
376 each minaret decorated with the Muslim banner. When they saw all this they sighed 'Farewell Hanya'
377 and left bereaved, with the Algerians taunting them from behind. (102)

378
379 This is a typical 'changing of the guard' moment that Evliya depicts, a Mediterranean island
380 being severed from one (Christian) commonwealth and annexed to another, with all the symbols
381 of this change displayed and given ample narrative space. Evliya goes on to embellish this point
382 of how the island ends up in the hands of the Ottomans as the rightful owner:

383
384 Then the general sent, to 9 provinces, the castles, and a remote people in the İsfakiye mountains in the
385 middle of the island of Crete, honourable men who had no greed or ill intent with assuring documents
386 that 'they naturally come and be givers of *haraj* and thus continue in their own homes with their own
387 families and pray for the continuation of the sovereignty of the Sultan. Those who do not keep this
388 covenant will have their possessions looted, their children enslaved and they themselves put to the
389 sword' (103)

390
391 Evliya recounts how Ottomans get many spoils from the conquest in any case and leave a
392 presence of 77000 troops, including 3000 'Egyptian soldiers' (103). Evliya also mentions that
393 'some officials who liked the island and remained', marking the start of a Muslim community in
394 the island of Crete, whose own stories of expulsion from the island will be just as dramatic when
395 it happens several centuries later with the end of Ottoman rule.

396 Evliya takes this moment to place the conquest of Hanya Castle and the process of Ottoman
397 legitimisation in historical context. Ottoman legitimacy and righteousness of Ottoman action in
398 the Mediterranean are revealed to constitute a crucial dynamic within the Ottoman chronotope
399 that Evliya is building in his text, a dynamic that becomes patently visible as he moves from one
400 island, one castle to the next, physically, discursively and diachronically. The Ottoman
401 chronotope, and its attendant teleology of an Ottoman Mediterranean, manages to hold, and
402 weave the different periods of Cretan history into the more general geography and political
403 project of the Ottoman Empire. When Evliya returns to Istanbul from Crete, the incorporation of

404 the island into the Ottoman chronotope continues when his father tells the story of how, the year
 405 that Evliya was born, the Sultan Ahmet Mosque was built (105). The Ottoman chronotope proves
 406 the pivot around which the Evliya's narrative finds the agility to navigate back and forwards
 407 through time. Evliya relates how after introduces a subheading entitled 'My dear father's strange
 408 and bizarre tale':

409
 410 'My dear son!' he said, 'listen well to this story as there are mysteries that are hidden within the holy
 411 mystery itself. Here is why the conquest of the island of Crete was first attempted during the time of
 412 Sultan Ahmed, and also listen how all scholars and good people prayed for the health of the Sultan.
 413 During the time of Sultan Ahmed, the year of your birth, they pulled down seven houses of viziers and
 414 notables on the hippodrome and started to build the foundations of a new mosque. (105)
 415

416 Evliya's father tells him about how when Sultan Ahmet cleared the ground to have the mosque
 417 built in the district that would later be called after him and the mosque he builds. The Sultan's
 418 advisers, including the sheikhs, told him that in order for the construction to continue, he must
 419 have a *waqf* for the mosque, that is, land and taxes that will go to the funding of the mosque
 420 complex. The precedent for the project, the sheikhs argue, is the Süleymaniye Mosque, built in
 421 1558 and the construction of which was made possible by the taking of Rhodes, Kos (İstanköy),
 422 Chalkis (Hereke), Telos (İlyaki) and Simi (Sönbeki) from the 'Malta kafir'. It is worth noting
 423 here that elsewhere in *Seyahatname* Evliya speaks of the Rhodes conquest as having provided
 424 Sultan Süleyman also with the funds to rebuild Jerusalem's walls as we know them today.

425 Some of Ahmed's advisors tell him: 'If you should take Crete from the Venetian *kuffar* in
 426 the Mediterranean you will have cleared the passageway of the traders between Istanbul and
 427 Egypt and of the Muslim pilgrims' but others warn that he cannot attack the Venetians as they
 428 have a peace treaty with them (106). Possibly as a preamble to hostilities, the Venetian Pencpirim
 429 is contacted and told to hand the castle over. The Venetians write a very flowery letter accepting
 430 the request on condition that: 'you [the Ottomans] give us Acre, Saida (Sidon), Beirut and
 431 Jerusalem where our holy relics are. It is not acceptable to ask for people's lawful inheritance;
 432 this is like asking a man to give away his pregnant wife.' (106). Evliya himself concedes that the
 433 pregnant wife metaphor is an apt one as Crete is a rich land providing tax and precious metals
 434 such as gold and silver. The mention of Acre and Saida make it clear that ports and cities in the
 435 Mediterranean are very much like chips on the betting and battling waters of the Mediterranean,
 436 and underline, as in the example of Jaffa, how these nodes of commerce and faith cannot be
 437 thought independently of one another, and that a political power, in order to claim a
 438 commonwealth, must rule over all.
 439

440 **Ottoman Chronotope: Trees, Prison Walls, Knights**

441
 442 While the second volume of Evliya's travelogue thus gives us an account of the Crete campaign
 443 and embeds the Rhodes story in it, in the ninth volume, Evliya takes a tour of the Anatolian
 444 Mediterranean coast, and gives us a narrative that reveals that not all Turkish ports are on friendly
 445 terms with the government in Istanbul. On this trip, Evliya visits Bodrum, 'taken from the
 446 Maltese kafir in 928 (1522)' (233). Bodrum is described as part of the 'Cezayir eyaleti'—
 447 *ceyazir*, meaning 'the islands', and *eyalet*, meaning province. There are two provinces that go
 448 by the name of 'cezayir' in the Ottoman Empire: 'Cezayiri garb' (the western islands), denoting
 449 Algiers itself, which became an Ottoman port in 1525, providing a base for attacks on European

450 ships, and 'Cezayiri bahri sefid' (the white sea islands), which are the islands in the Aegean. In
 451 any case, Kos, for instance, is mentioned as being part of the Cezayir *eyalet*, and as falling under
 452 the Rhodes *sanjak*.⁸ In this section of the travelogue, the history of Bodrum, Kos and Rhodes are
 453 treated together, not least because of their connection to the Knights of Malta.

454 According to Evliya, the castle in Kos was built by the Venetians and deteriorated when it
 455 fell into hands of the Knights of Malta. The Turkish conquest of Kos by the Ottomans in 1523 is
 456 also mentioned in the narrative, as another eventuality written in the stars and/or books. After
 457 acknowledging that at present most of Kos's inhabitants are non-Muslim, Evliya tells the story
 458 of the plane tree in the 'guild square', (238) explaining why it is as huge as it is. Before he takes
 459 the opportunity to provide a story of legitimation Evliya engages in some conventional 'travel
 460 writing', and explains the atmosphere in the square with the symbolic and physical tree claiming
 461 the centre of the town square:

462
 463 Under this great plane tree there are three platforms for coffeehouses with open roofs. All the travellers
 464 and nice people spend the time of day there. Under this tree is also an ablution space with twelve
 465 corners. The water from the fountain in the middle flows day and night and those who obey the divine
 466 call take ablutions. There are also taps you can drink from in all corners, and it is as sweet as the elixir
 467 of life. The whole town drinks from it. [...] The many thousand branches of this tree have intertwined
 468 in an inseparable manner. In short, it is strange and wondrous, a work of the Creator to be much
 469 marvelled at. (239)

470
 471 In Turkish culture, the plane tree continues to symbolize the Ottoman Empire to this day. These
 472 are trees that live long and reach a great size as depicted in the passage, accumulating time in
 473 their very trunk and branches. The intertwined branches here, in a way, also symbolize the
 474 interconnectedness of Ottoman lands. The tree marks the spot, or the *topos*, it marks the passing
 475 of time as the villagers themselves pass the time, *chronos*, under it- and it emerges as another
 476 marker that adds to Evliya's construction of the Ottoman chronotope.

477 The story that Evliya Çelebi tells of the tree makes references to the inevitable destiny of the
 478 Empire. The story of the tree is connected to the *hajj*, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and
 479 Madina, a right and a service that is cited as the primary reason why the Mediterranean must be
 480 secured for Muslims, just as in the argumentation of the sheikhs, referred to earlier on, who
 481 encourage Sultan Süleyman to take Rhodes. In this story, an Egyptian ship returning from the
 482 *hajj* is seized, the pilgrims are brought to Kos and tied to a plane tree. The pilgrims have *zamzam*
 483 with them and to prevent this holy water from falling into the hands of the kuffar, they pour it at
 484 the foot of the tree (110), and it grows to a great height. Here, Evliya goes on a riff about all the
 485 comparable big trees he has seen, particularly in the Caucasus. Again, as proof of how the islands
 486 are connected, Evliya talks about how after the conquest of Rhodes in 1522, the inhabitants of
 487 Pili Castle in Kos overthrew their Maltese overlords themselves and submitted to the Ottomans.

488 As Evliya travels from Kos to Rhodes his ship finds itself in the midst of eight kafir *kalyons*
 489 (galleons) and at this point in the narration Evliya himself and the readers get to see 'Ottoman
 490 history in the making'. The crew take refuge near the island of Simi and see a battle unfold, with
 491 the *kafir*, the word again denoting 'enemy' ships 'sounding their trumpets and bells' (254). When
 492 they realise that the *kafir* are attacking ships carrying Egyptian soldiers, Evliya's crew join the
 493 melee, shouting 'Avanta!' It is one of these moments where the 'common tongue' of the
 494 Mediterranean can be glimpsed in Evliya's text: a tongue made up of Turkish, Arabic, Greek and

495 Italian, and in this point in the narrative Evliya does not feel the need to stop and explain what
 496 this word means as he does elsewhere to explain dialects. Evliya does not tell us whether these
 497 *kafir* are Venetian or Maltese but does mention that when they capture the *kafir* ships, among
 498 their booty are ‘hundreds of weapons, 26 sweet Frank boys, 75 slaves and many antiques’ (255).
 499 After regrouping and distributing the booty the crew head towards their destination, Rhodes. In
 500 his narrative of Rhodes castle Evliya once again provides a justification for the capture of the
 501 island in 1522. The island is described as a port for the Knights of Malta, where they store their
 502 wealth and captives:

503
 504 More than twelve thousand Muslims were held captive here and they wrote on the walls of the
 505 dungeon:
 506 ‘I was in chains here for 40 years and still prayed’
 507 ‘I was captured three times’
 508 ‘I was captured along with 2 galleons-full of goods, was kept for 30 years and was caned 3 thousand
 509 times’
 510 ‘They balled my eye out, pulled out all my teeth and hanged me from my arms for three nights’
 511 ‘I was the Hanefi *kadı* of the Egyptian Sultan Inal and was *kadı* to all the captives’ (260)
 512

513 The Ottoman presence and history have literally been inscribed on the walls of the castle. Apart
 514 from the stories of people stranded and incarcerated on the island, there is, true to Evliya’s
 515 agenda, a prophecy, made by a sheikh called Yakoub Dede now buried in Marmaris on mainland
 516 Anatolia, that the island would be captured by the Turks (111). Thus Evliya’s Ottoman
 517 chronotope in the travelogue is revealed to be a function or accumulation of the various narratives
 518 that are already extant in the Mediterranean where history, in the words of Bakhtin, ‘thickens’
 519 on the very walls. The layers, or even the palimpsest of narratives left by Ottoman captives on
 520 the prison wall merge with the prophetic narrative of Yakup Dede to contribute to Evliya’s
 521 Ottoman Chronotope. The narrative of travel, then, becomes an account of an arrangement of
 522 collected narratives as much as it is an arrangement of time and space, to which he subordinates
 523 his observations.

524 It is in at the Lindos Castle in Rhodes that he looks at the Mediterranean and says it looks
 525 like a ‘lake’—calling to mind a metaphor often used by Ottoman historians, of the Mediterranean
 526 being an ‘Ottoman lake’. That the Mediterranean is central to Ottoman state’s conception of
 527 itself and of the world is also made apparent through the way in which Evliya tries to add up the
 528 miles he has travelled in the Mediterranean and comparing his distances with those of Ptolemy,
 529 as well as the way he tries to calculate the circumference of the earth (152). It is also at this point
 530 of the narrative that Evliya gives a comprehensive list of the islands in the Mediterranean, the
 531 form once again switching from travel/battle account to encyclopaedia (153).

532 Evliya’s travels in the Bodrum-Kos-Rhodes triangle also allow him to expand upon the
 533 historical forces that the Ottoman Empire has to contend with in the Mediterranean. It appears
 534 that Evliya has a certain degree of respect for the Knights of Malta, *kuffar* (enemy) though they
 535 are, due to their position of being the guardians of a holy relic. He observes that the Knights are
 536 difficult to beat *because* they have in their possession and guardianship the body of Saint John
 537 (Kahraman, 2005: v. ix, 283). He speaks of the Knights elsewhere in the travelogue as well but
 538 it is in the Rhodes section that Evliya relates the most extended version of the Knights’ story
 539 when he describes the Sencovan Mosque on the island—Sencovan being the Turkish
 540 transliteration of Saint John:

541 From the time of second Adam, prophet Noah, the sacred corpse of St. John was buried there as written
 542 in *Tevarihi Kıbtî* (Egyptian/Coptic Histories) and *Tevarihi Yunaniyan* (Greek Histories) These books
 543 write about all the things about jinn and beings before Hz. Adam descended to the earth, all Turkish
 544 and Arabic history books use it as a source and it is a true history. [...] The Malta kafir used to live in
 545 Alexandria and they were a shrewd tribe of Behice and Hannadi. During the time of King Filbat they
 546 fled Egypt (Kıbtî) and came to the castle of Acre. The castle was built by the Spanish and for 200 years
 547 they lived under their protection. They prospered and took it from the Spanish. During this time
 548 Damascus, Jerusalem, Bagdad and Urfa [...] were under the control of the Rum. All [...] including Iran
 549 paid taxes to Greek Alexander. In order to make their city a pilgrimage site they took the bones of St
 550 John from Beyt Sabastiye. They also carried the bones of Jesus's donkey to Remle. [...] the Malta
 551 Kafir say his neck still bleeds- John was murdered was because he did not sanction an Israelite king's
 552 wish to marry his daughter. (v. ix, 269)
 553

554 Thus, the Ottoman chronotope is placed within a much larger, fraught, almost cosmological
 555 history, when one considers the theological aspect of the connections. The histories that Evliya
 556 consults are Coptic and Greek, reinforcing the idea that the Ottomans recognised the various
 557 religious and cultural heritages of the Mediterranean in their understanding of the region.
 558 Evliya's travel in the Mediterranean enables him to visit the locations that have acquired
 559 importance in the region's palimpsest of civilizations and religions, including places that carry
 560 traces of the atemporal in the shape of holy relics. These Mediterranean loci become very special
 561 lieux de memoire and help construct a narrative in which Ottomans are added to the crucial
 562 genealogy of Mediterranean cultures.

563 Ultimately, the elements that guide the narrative in the Mediterranean sections of the
 564 travelogue are not so much the encounters with the inhabitants of the islands—except when the
 565 Greeks intervene, to some extent, to help the Ottoman cause—but the ships of the Knights of
 566 Malta and those of the Venetians. Against this background the travelogue takes on the mission
 567 of recounting the battles of the Ottomans which will lead to the Mediterranean becoming an
 568 'Ottoman lake' in the Ottoman world view. Thus Evliya's *Seyahatname* both anticipates and
 569 organizes empire in its form, and becomes, by virtue of its narrative itinerary, a study in imperial
 570 cartography. Informed by the imperial project, Evliya surveys the Mediterranean as the Ottoman
 571 prevalence reaches its zenith, and goes back to Istanbul to add to the expanding archive of stories
 572 about the basin. Added to that is the authority afforded to the mysterious Greek texts which
 573 foretell the coming of the Ottomans, and which bookend the authority of Evliya's own narrative,
 574 working towards the legitimation of Ottoman conquests. Evliya's unruly travelogue both adds to
 575 and catalogues narratives that the imperial project appropriates for legitimation of its acts of
 576 expansion. Thus, the places and stories of the Mediterranean become critically legible through
 577 this prism and come together in the narrative to produce a particular, Ottoman connection
 578 between time and space, the Ottoman chronotope.
 579

580 Notes

- 581
 582 1. There are a whole set of names for the travel genre that Jan Borm identifies, including 'travel book',
 583 'travel narrative', 'journey work', 'travel memoir', 'travel story', 'travelogue', 'metatravelogue',
 584 'travellers' tales', and 'travel literature', 'the literature of travel', and 'the travel genre' (See Borm 2003:
 585 13).
 586 2. Dilaver Cebeci. 2009. *Evliyâ Çelebi Ve 17. yüzyıl Osmanlı Toplumunu*. İstanbul: Bilgeoğuz Yayınları, 39.

- 587 3. ‘İslam devletlerinde padişahın her işte danıştığı yakını, danışmanı, bakıcısı *nedimdir*.’ (My translation:
588 In Islamic states, *nedims* are the close friend, advisor and minder of the sultan, to be consulted in all
589 manner of business) Halil İnalçık. 2011. Bir Musahibin Anıları ve Seyahat Notları. In *Evliyâ Çelebi*
590 (eds.) N. Tezcan and S. Tezcan, Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 331.
- 591 4. The following passage from Evliya’s text is also enlightening as to the reasons why Evliya wrote the
592 book. ‘In the years of my journeyings I saw thousands of strange places and experienced thousands of
593 wondrous events. Because we humans are creatures of forgetfulness, lest their traces be effaced and their
594 names be concealed, I began to make a record of noteworthy items—both man-made and God-made (i.e.,
595 naturally occurring)—and to write them down in order to provide memory-clues, using well-worn
596 expressions and a middling style, in accordance with the dictum, Talk to people according to the measure
597 of their intellects.’ Robert Dankoff and Sooyong Kim (eds). 2010. *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections*
598 *from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi*, London: Eland, 295.
- 599 5. A word on the *Seyahatname* texts that I am using. I have used the 2005 edition prepared for publication
600 by Seyit Ali Kahraman, along with the 2013 edition that Kahraman co-edited with Yücel Dağlı. The
601 translations from these texts are mine. ‘v’ stands for the specific volume. For more information on the
602 manuscripts and various editions of the *Seyahatname* see Robert Dankoff and Semih Tezcan’s ‘An Evliya
603 Çelebi Bibliography’ at [http://docplayer.biz.tr/168295-An-evliya-celebi-bibliography-robot-dankoff-](http://docplayer.biz.tr/168295-An-evliya-celebi-bibliography-robot-dankoff-and-semih-tezcan.html)
604 [and-semih-tezcan.html](http://docplayer.biz.tr/168295-An-evliya-celebi-bibliography-robot-dankoff-and-semih-tezcan.html)
- 605 6..Evliya Çelebi’s account of the Balkans and the Mediterranean meet in Cemal Kafadar’s study (see
606 Kafadar 2012).
- 607 7. In the text the word *Rum* is used for the Greek-speaking peoples of the islands. This term is also
608 ongoingly used for Greek-speaking peoples in Anatolia today. I use ‘Greek’ and ‘*Rum*’ interchangeably
609 in my article.
- 610 8. The *eyalet* and the *sanjak* are administrative units in the Ottoman Empire, with the *eyalet* being the larger
611 of the two.

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