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“Kurdistan in the 16th and 17th centuries, as reflected in Evliya Çelebi's  
*Seyahatname*”,

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# Kurdistan in the 16th and 17th centuries, as reflected in

## Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname*

Martin van Bruinessen

Some sixty years after Sharaf Khan Bidlisi completed his *Sharafname*, the celebrated Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi travelled extensively in Kurdistan. The ten thick volumes of his *Book of Travels* (*Seyahatname*) constitute a unique work almost unparalleled in the travel literature. The account of his travels in Kurdistan is unfortunately not yet completely available in print. At the time when the Ottoman printed edition of these volumes appeared, the archetype (the manuscript from which all later manuscripts appear to be copies, and which either was written in Evliya's own hand or dictated to a scribe) was not available to the editors, Necib Asim Bey and the great historian Ahmed Cevdet. Sultan Abdulhamid II's censors (or the editor's fear of the censors) moreover caused some alterations in the text as it was published. Only parts of Evliya's memoirs on Kurdistan have so far been published in a more satisfactory edition.<sup>1</sup> One important part has in fact never been published at all and is awaiting a critical edition.

Evliya's *Seyahatname* does not really fit any established genre, and it never became popular until this century. Evliya's contemporaries found his work badly organised and were probably put off by his interests in things that did not conform to civilised taste. It is precisely Evliya's "bad taste" that made him the most interesting of the Ottoman authors to late-20th century readers. Postmodernists may easily recognise a kindred spirit in his juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements, without sharp separation of the serious from the frivolous. We find government documents and dirty jokes, descriptions of mosque architecture and observations on local food and dress habits, legends about saints and gossip about political events side by side; all of this peppered with Evliya's own adventures and occasionally his skeptical comments on opinions of others.

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<sup>1</sup> The first three volumes in a series of partial editions of the *Seyahatname*, published by E.J. Brill in Leiden, contain parts of Evliya's Kurdish travels: Martin van Bruinessen & Hendrik Boeschoten (eds), *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir* (1988); Robert Dankoff (ed.), *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis* (1990); Korkut M. Buğday (ed), *Evliya Çelebis Anatolienreise* (1996).

Evliya made three major travels through Kurdistan.<sup>2</sup> The first trip, reported in vol 2 of the *Seyahatname*, only skirted the northern periphery of Kurdistan. It took place in 1646, when he was appointed as a customs clerk and chief *müezzin* to Defterdarzade Mehmed Pasha, the governor and commander-in-chief of Erzurum. He travelled to Erzurum by the northern Anatolian route, passing through Kemah and Erzincan. From Erzurum he made a trip to Azerbaijan and Georgia, before returning west by Erzincan again. His second trip, in 1649-50, took him from Damascus and Aleppo to Urfa, Mar'aş, Kayseri, Aksaray and Sivas, and hence to Arabgir, Harput, Pertek, Palu, Genc, Muş and the Bingöl mountains. The relevant sections (of vol. 3) are now available in a good edition and German translation (Buğday 1996).

The third trip, in 1655 and 1656, fills most of vol. 4 and the first part of vol 5. Evliya went to join his uncle Melek Ahmed Pasha, who was appointed as the governor of Van. He traveled to Van by way of Diyarbakir and Bitlis, spending enough time at these places to give us detailed and lively descriptions of them.<sup>3</sup> Finding the governor of Diyarbakir, Firari Mustafa Pasha, absent on a campaign to pacify warring Arab and Yezidi Kurdish tribes in the Sinjar mountains, Evliya was happy with a pretext for more travel, and followed Firari to Sinjar.<sup>4</sup> In Bitlis, Evliya was the guest of the independent-minded Kurdish ruler, Abdal Khan, whom he highly praises. Later he accompanied a punitive expedition from Van against Abdal Khan, observes how the khan is deposed, his rich library looted and his son elected in his stead. A year later Evliya passes a third time through Bitlis, finds Abdal Khan at the head of the emirate again and spends some time with the khan as a hostage. These experiences result in a more lively description of everyday life in one of the major Kurdish emirates than we find in any other source. Evliya must have heard here of the *Sharafname* and may have acquired some hearsay knowledge of its contents, but appears not to have actually read it. He mentions it only once in his account of Bitlis, among the books looted from the khan's library.

While stationed in Van, he again used every opportunity to travel, to which we owe important observations on Hakkari (which have not yet been edited satisfactorily).<sup>5</sup> Melek Ahmed Pasha entrusted him with a

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<sup>2</sup> The routes of Evliya's travels are conveniently summarised in Dankoff & Kreiser 1992.

<sup>3</sup> See van Bruinessen & Boeschoten 1988, Dankoff 1990. Evliya's description of Bitlis and his frank admiration for its Kurdish ruler, Abdal Han, were the subject of earlier studies by Köhler (1928), Sakisian (1937) and van Bruinessen 1992[1978].

<sup>4</sup> Evliya's account of the Yezidis of Sinjar and their defeat at the hands of Firari Mustafa was translated, after first printed edition, by Menzel (1911).

<sup>5</sup> Lale Yalçın-Heckmann (1991: 56), who used the Üçdal edition of the *Seyahatname*, notes that Evliya, unlike Sharaf Khan and the selected Ottoman documents published by Sevgen (1968-71), gives anthropologically interesting information on the tribes of Hakkari and local politics.

diplomatic mission to Iran, which resulted in a long but chaotic description of western Iran, parts of which are so obviously wrong that one wonders whether he actually ever saw Iran. He ended up in Baghdad in early 1656; his detailed observations show that he definitely was here, and also made the trip to the south that follows. Then follows a section that has long remained unknown because it is lacking in the printed editions of the text. Evliya travelled north from Baghdad, making a tour through southern Kurdistan to `Amadiya, Cizre and Hasankeyf, returning to Baghdad via Mosul. This section was never completed, and it appears that Evliya kept adding to it until his death. Whole pages are left empty or contain nothing but the headings of sections that Evliya intended to fill in. Here and there, there are errors in the order of the places Evliya says he passed. Nevertheless, the notes on this trip, which make up almost a third of the manuscript of vol. 4, deserve a critical edition. Together with other Ottoman and Persian works and documents from the same period, it will shed light on the part of Kurdistan of which we know least in the 15th-17th centuries.

Evliya passed by, and left notes on, the following places: Havar(e), Sine, Qizilja, Erbil, Kirkuk and the province Shahrazur, Nineve, `Aqra, `Amadiya, Cizre, Hasankeyf, Nisibin, Eski Mosul, Mosul, Takrit and Baghdad.

Evliya took copious notes on everything he saw while travelling, which he used decades later when he finally found time to write his *Seyahatname*. He moreover freely borrowed from other sources, official documents and various books that he read during or after his travels.<sup>6</sup> Because considerable time elapsed between the travels and the actual writing of the book, he did not always succeed in putting his travel notes in the proper geographical order. Some of his descriptions are so vague and confused that one wonders whether he actually visited the places he describes. This is for instance the case in his travels in Iran, where he appears to parrot a much older geographical work, Qazwini's *Nuzhat al-qulub*. It is not the case, however, in his descriptions of Kurdistan, which ring true even if they are poorly organised.

#### *The nature of the Seyahatname as compared with other sources*

The *Seyahatname* is not a systematic work as the *Sharafname* is, but it is a rich source on aspects of social and political life in Kurdistan that are neglected in other sources. It is one of the few Ottoman works of the period that yield some information on the position of women (Bruinessen 1993), on popular religious practices, sufi orders and the veneration of saints (Bruinessen & Boeschoten 1988, Bruinessen 1990), on

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<sup>6</sup> Meşkûre Eren (1960) has identified numerous written sources that Evliya used for his description of Istanbul in the first volume. This included histories in Greek, which he had read to him by a Christian bookseller. Similar research on the other volumes has not been carried out yet, but Eren's work gives a good indication of the sort of sources relevant for Kurdish history that Evliya used.

ethnic and religious minorities, languages and literature. Evliya's position as a companion of highly-placed Ottoman officials appointed to Kurdistan moreover gave him the opportunity to observe at first hand how the relations of the state with the Kurdish tribes and emirates worked in practice.<sup>7</sup>

Another important work to which the *Seyahatname* may be compared is Katib Çelebi's *Cihannüma*, the major Ottoman geographical work, which contains large sections on the Kurdish provinces of the Empire. It was completed in 1648, a few years before Evliya's Kurdish journeys. The author not only compiled information from numerous older sources but also wrote partly on the basis of personal experience; he had been in the company of grand vizier Hüsrev Pasha during the campaign to reconquer Iraq after the second Persian occupation (1629).<sup>8</sup> The *Cihannüma* describes the major caravan routes, with lots of interesting information on the places along them. Charmoy, the translator of the *Sharafname*, made ample use of the *Cihannüma* in his commentary, and in fact a large part of his ethnographic and geographical introduction consists of a translation of the relevant sections of Katib Çelebi's work. In order to bring some order into Evliya's disparate notes, the *Cihannüma* no doubt will also serve as a useful reference work.<sup>9</sup> It is systematic in a way the *Seyahatname* is not, but less informative on the actual life of actual people.

Recently, another but much later *Seyahatname* that contains valuable information on Kurdistan was reissued, Mehmed Khurshid Efendi's *Seyahatname-i hudud* (Hurşîd 1997). The author was a member of the boundary commission that in the years 1848-52 surveyed and established the border between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, from Basra to Bayezid. His book, an essential work of geographical reference, is full of detailed statistical information, including population statistics by village and tribe.

Where Evliya differs from the more systematic historians and geographers is in his indifference to bureaucratic detail and administrative division. He does not discuss province by province and administrative district by administrative district but jumps across the map to make comparisons. No doubt his contemporaries were also aware of the ethnic complexities of each region but they spoke about them less explicitly than Evliya, who was interested in variety, and who proudly wrote down samples of dozens of different languages and dialects and anecdotes about numerous heterodox sects.

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<sup>7</sup> There are of course numerous Ottoman documents on actual practice (as against formal rules) of these relations, but these have hardly begun to be explored. An interesting study, that confirms some of Evliya's observations, is Kunt's analysis of the account-book of Diyarbakir's governor (1981).

<sup>8</sup> This war with the Ottomans was not forgotten a quarter century later, and Evliya relates of many towns how they had submitted themselves to Hüsrev Pasha after the interlude of Safavid occupation. For a summary statement of the events of that period, see Longrigg 1925: 56-68.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately no critical edition of the *Cihannüma* exists as yet. The version that was published by Ibrahim Müteferriqa is useful but unsatisfactory from a scholarly point of view. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, a distinguished historian of Ottoman-Safavid relations, has stated his intention to prepare a critical edition of this work.

In official Ottoman parlance, Kurdistan was the name of a province (*eyalet*), an administrative unit. For Evliya, the term refers primarily to the Kurds as an ethnic category, irrespective of political and administrative boundaries. He uses it in a number of different ways. Once he describes an inhospitable region as "*Kürdistan ve Türkmenistan ve sengistan*", which perhaps is best translated as "a land of Kurds and Turcomans and rocks", and in which one perceives something of the educated urban dweller's disdain for rough and frightening rural folk. In other passages, however, it is clear that he has a definite geographical region in mind:

"It is a vast territory: from its Northern extreme in Erzurum it stretches by Van, Hakkari, Cizre, `Amadiya, Mosul, Shahrazur, Harir and Ardalan to Baghdad, Darna, Dartang and even as far as Basra: seventy day's journeys of rocky Kurdistan. If the six thousand Kurdish tribes and clans in these high mountains would not constitute a firm barrier between Arab Iraq (*sic!*) and the Ottomans, it would be an easy matter for the Persians to invade Asia Minor (*diyar-i Rum*). (...) Kurdistan is not as wide as it is long. From Harir and Ardalan on the Persian frontier in the East to Damascus and Aleppo [in the West], its width varies from twenty-five to fifteen day's journeys. In these vast territories live five hundred thousand musket-bearing Shafi'i Muslims. And there are 776 fortresses, all of them intact."<sup>10</sup>

In this passage, Evliya emphasises the special importance to the Ottoman Empire of Kurdistan as a protective buffer. He appears to be repeating an argument that we find in Idris Bitlisi and many later Ottoman historians as well as in the *Sharafname*, namely that it is the relative independence of the Kurdish emirates and tribes that serves the Empire's security interests best. This argument is made most explicitly in the "Counsel for Reform" (*Nasihatname*) by `Aziz Efendi (Murphey 1985). The observation that the Kurds are all good Sunni Muslims (of the strict Shafi'i school of law) is an essential part of this argument, for it makes them appear as reliable allies against the Shi'i Safavids in Iran. Idris and Sharaf Khan in fact put so much emphasis on the Sunni affiliation of their fellow Kurds that one feels they made an effort to convince Ottoman audiences of their people's loyalty to the Ottoman state. From other sources (and other passages in the *Seyahatname*) we know that there were not only many (non-Sunni or even non-Muslim) Yezidis but also adherents of various other heterodox sects in Kurdistan.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bağdat K. 305, fol. 219a.

<sup>11</sup> Evliya refers to Yezidis throughout, finding them not only at Sinjar (cf. Menzel 1911) but also in Bitlis and Hakkari (Dankoff 1990). On other heterodox sects in Kurdistan and elsewhere, see Bruinessen 1997.

The author whom Evliya quotes most frequently on early Kurdish history is an Armenian historian (or class of historians) whom he names Mighdisî, and who so far cannot be identified.<sup>12</sup> The legends that Evliya attributes to this Mighdisî relate early Kurdish history to two other complexes of legends: the tales of the Prophets (*qisas al-anbiyâ*), and the Iranian tradition of the *Shahname*. Evliya's Mighdisî attributes a venerable age to the Kurdish language, explaining it as (one of) the earliest language(s) to be spoken after the Flood:

"According to the chronicler Mighdisî, the first town to be built after Noah's Flood was the town of Judi, followed by the fortresses of Sinjar and Mifariqin.<sup>13</sup> The town of Judi was ruled by Melik Kürdim of the Prophet Noah's community, a man who lived no less than 600 years and who travelled the length and width of Kurdistan. Coming to Mifariqin he liked its climate and settled there, begetting many children and descendants. He invented a language of his own, independent of Hebrew. It is neither Hebrew nor Arabic, Farsi, Dari or Pahlavi; they still call it the language of Kürdim. So the Kurdish language, which was invented in Mifariqin and is now used throughout Kurdistan, owes its name to Melik Kürdim of the community of the Prophet Noah. Because Kurdistan is an endless stony stretch of mountains, there are no less than twelve varieties of Kurdish, differing from one another in pronunciation and vocabulary, so that they often have to use interpreters to understand one another's words."<sup>14</sup>

Throughout his travels, Evliya gives brief samples of several of these dialects. They include a word-list in what he calls the Sohrani dialect (spoken near Mifariqin), a song in the Ceziri dialect, a long poem in the Rojiki dialect (which appears in fact to be Turkish grammatically, with a high proportion of Armenian

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<sup>12</sup> The name appears to be a variant of Maqdisî and therefore suggests that this author hailed from, lived in, or had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Evliya's Mighdisî certainly is not one of the Arab historians known as Maqdisî, nor do the stories Evliya quotes correspond with any of the major Armenian chronicles. In some contexts, Evliya appears to use Mighdisi as a general name for Armenian clergymen. Cf. Dankoff 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Judi is the name of the mountain on which according to the Qur'an Noah's ark landed. It is generally identified with the present mountain of that name east of Cizre. Mount Sinjar is also associated with the legend of the Flood: before reaching Judi, Noah's ark was almost wrecked when its keel scratched the peak of Sinjar. (This story, told by Evliya, was also recorded among the Yezidis in the present century, e.g. by Wigram & Wigram 1914: 336.) Mifariqin (also Mayyafariqin, present name Silvan) was the capital of a Kurdish dynasty, the Mervanids, ruling in the 10th-11th centuries. See al-Fariqi 1984.

<sup>14</sup> *Seyahatname* IV, Ms. Bağdat Köşkü 305, fol. 218b-219a. Evliya gives a variant of the same story on fol. 212b, where the Flood is dated at 4490 years before the Prophethood of Muhammad, and where Melik Kürdim is more unambiguously the first ruler of Judi, already in Noah's lifetime. The passage on fol. 219a continues with an enumeration of Kurdish dialects and a sample of Kurdish that Evliya recorded near Mifariqin (analysed in Bruinessen 1985).

words), a few phrases in the Hakkari dialect, and a *qasida* in the dialect of `Amadiya.<sup>15</sup>

Mighdisi (and Evliya's other sources for early history) not, of course, the sort of sources one would use to reconstruct what actually happened in the distant past. But they give us an insight in how the Kurds perceived themselves (and were perceived by their direct neighbours) in Evliya's time. For the pre-Islamic period, Evliya mentions various Iranian dynasties as ruling Kurdistan. Not all parts of Kurdistan are associated with the same dynasties; some of the dynasties are presented in a favourable light, others negatively.

Thus Evliya associates, on the authority of Mighdisî, the name of Shahrazur with Zur, an alleged son of the legendary Iranian dragon-king Zahhak, and that of Kerkuk with a later descendant of Zahhak, Mugul Karkuk, who is said to have reconquered Shahrazur from the hands of the Umayyad ruler Marwan Himar. The blacksmith Kawe, who overthrew Zahhak, is remembered in the name of a district centre (*sancak*) in Shahrazur, Merkawe.<sup>16</sup> It is only appropriate that Faridun, who in the *Shahname* version of the legend was made king after the uprising, is not associated with any place in Kurdistan. (In the present Kurdish versions of the story of Zahhak and Kawe, there is no mention of Faridun either.)

The Islamic conquest of Kurdistan is variously associated with the Caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab, `Ali, and the Umayyads, with a definite preference, in southern Kurdistan, for `Ali.

`Amadiya, Evliya tells us, was conquered by `Ali in the years of his caliphate. It owes its name however to its previous ruler `Imdan, son of Anushirwan (the Sassanid Chosroes). `Ali appointed a cousin, a son of his uncle `Abbas, as a governor to `Amadiya, and the 17th century rulers of `Amadiya — like those of Cizre, Hakkari and Bitlis — therefore considered themselves as Abbasids.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, Evliya gives the name of a certain Sultan Awhadullah as the earliest of the Kurdish Abbasids, the ancestor of `Abdal Khan of Bitlis as well as some other Kurdish lords.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bruinessen 1985; Dankoff 1991: 127-8.

<sup>16</sup> Bağdat K. 305, fol. 372a-b.

<sup>17</sup> Bağdat K. 305, fol. 376b.

<sup>18</sup> Bağdat K. 198a, 198b, 221b, 222b, 224a, 225a, 226a, 233b. Evliya suggests he heard the name of Awhadullah from `Abdal Khan in Bitlis, but this ancestor cannot be identified with any of the ancestral figures mentioned in the *Sharafname*. Cf. Bruinessen & Boeschoten 1988: 244.



Evliya must have been one of the very few Ottomans to visit more than one or two of the emirates. He spent most time in, and writes most about, Bitlis, contributing further to the bias in the literature (due to Idris Bitlisi, Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, Shukri Bidlisi, and some lesser authors) suggesting that Bitlis was the most civilised of the emirates. But he also visited the other large emirates, `Amadiya, Cizre, Hakkari and Hasankeyf, and passed through the smaller emirates of the northern edge of Kurdistan: Çemişkezek, Sagman, Pertek, Palu, Çermik, Genc and Ataq. The first three (of whose shifting relations with the Ottomans the *Sharafname* gives an interesting account) no longer were in Kurdish hands but had the status of ordinary Ottoman sancaks. In southern Kurdistan (on which the *Sharafname* is not very informative), Evliya informs us that the province (*eyalet*) of Shahrazur (with its capital at Kerkuk) had besides 18 ordinary *sancaks* also two fully autonomous Kurdish districts, Gaziyan and Mehrevan (fol. 372b). He did not visit these districts though, and his information may have derived from an older (and by the time of his visit obsolete) *qanunname*. Harir, Ardalan and Soran are mentioned as autonomous entities belonging to Shahrazur, and Evliya left some space open for notes on these emirates which he never completed (fol. 370b).

In describing the chief towns of the emirates, Evliya stuck to the same pattern that he used in his descriptions of towns and cities anywhere, although the degree of detail varied much from one place to another. He usually begins with an account of the history, culminating in the events by which the town came under Ottoman rule. This is followed by information on government and administration, and a list of officials. Next, the chief buildings are described in always the same order: the citadel and city walls, the mosques, madrasas, dervish lodges, water-fountains, private mansions, markets. Diverse bits of information on the population, local customs and culture conclude each description.

Evliya's most elaborate description of a Kurdish emirate is that of Bitlis, which has become relatively well-known through Köhler's and Sakisian's summary translations. As an example of one of the minor emirates, I summarise here his description of Palu:

The emir of Palu made his voluntary submission to Bıyıklı Mehmed Paşa, the vizier of Sultan Selim I, in 921/1515, and in return was granted possession of the district in perpetuity, as an autonomous government (*hiükûmet*) in the province of Diyarbakir. Rulership remains in the family. In official correspondence, the ruler is addressed with the honorary title *Cem-cenab*. The entire revenue of the district is granted to the ruler himself; no villages have been made into fiefs (*timar, ze`amet*) to support *sipahi* troops and their officers. There are no Janissaries or other central government troops in Palu either. In time of war, the ruler joins the imperial campaign with 2000 mounted soldiers.

Palu is the seat of a *qadi* with salary of 150 aqchas,<sup>19</sup> but it has no *mufti* or *naqib al-ashraf*. There are however a market inspector (*muhtesib*) and a tax collector (*şehir voyvodasi*).<sup>20</sup>

The fortress is small, unconquerable stronghold built on a steep rock beside the Murad (upper Euphrates) river. Not even Timur succeeded in taking it. The only inhabitants of the fortress are Ibrahim Beg and his soldiers. The fortress is not fit for ordinary habitation, for the ascent to it is extremely demanding. It has a secret tunnel leading down to the river for water-supply, and besides cisterns for [rain-] water. The town itself, below the fortress, consists of some thousand houses with clay roofs.

Roads connect Palu with Ergani and Egil in the west, each at a day's distance, with Harput in the north, also a day away, and towards the south with Diyarbakir at two day journeys' distance. Behind Palu is a village named Baghin, which is like one of the gardens of Paradise, and which belongs to the domains of the begs of Palu. It is famous in Kurdistan as a pleasure resort. A crystal-clear river springs from the rocks here, one of the three sources of the Euphrates.<sup>21</sup>

By itself, such information may appear unspectacular, but when combined with information available from other sources (especially archival materials, which have hardly been explored yet), Evliya's observations add colour and life. A systematic analysis of all observations on the emirates in the entire *Seyahatname* will also give a better insight in the variety among the emirates. As another example of the rich though disparate detail provided by Evliya, the following section of this paper presents parts of the (unpublished) passages on `Amadiya.

#### *Evliya in `Amadiya*

`Amadiya appears as the most autonomous and powerful of the Kurdish emirates. Evliya observes that, like any ordinary Ottoman province, it was divided into a number of districts but that all appointments to office were made by the *khan* of `Amadiya, not by the Sultan or the *vali* of Baghdad as elsewhere in Iraq. There

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<sup>19</sup> The salary is an indication of the importance attributed to a *qadi*'s jurisdiction. The *qadi* in the capital Diyarbakir had a salary of 500 aqcha.

<sup>20</sup> *Mufti* and *naqib al-ashraf* were usually centrally appointed religious officials. Their absence indicates that Palu remained also outside the Ottoman religious hierarchy, but for the *qadi*, who may or may not have been an appointee of the lord of Palu himself. The *şehir voyvodasi* collected the beg's revenue and therefore probably was his appointee.

<sup>21</sup> Bağdat K. 305, fol. 84b-85a. Cf. Bugday 1996: 240-243. In various other passages in the *Seyahatname*, Evliya gives additional information on Palu.

were no Ottoman fiefs (*timar*, *ze`amet*) to maintain a *sipahi* army, nor were there Janissary regiments or other Ottoman military officers in the province. In important political consultations (*divan*), the *khan* of `Amadiya was seated just below the (appointed) governor of Shahrazur, his status being only marginally lower. In Ottoman military campaigns in Iraq — this appears to refer to the recent reconquest of Iraq from Persian control — the *khan* was to take part with his own armed men, `Amadiya and Shahrazur together constituting the front guard while the troops from Diyarbakir province were the rearguard.

The districts of `Amadiya province (Bahadinan) — Evliya mentions `Aqra, Shikhoyi, Zakho, Duhok, Muzuri and Zibari — were themselves again autonomous units under hereditary rulers, who upon accession were formally recognised and instated by the *khan* of `Amadiya. There were also large tribal chieftains with formalised positions; Evliya mentions the Sindi and Selvane tribe, whose chieftains needed formal recognition from the ruler of Zakho.<sup>22</sup>

The capital of `Amadiya, where Evliya spent some time — the *khan* of the time, Seyyid Khan, put him up in the palace of the lord of Muzuri, near the Mosul gate — had a typically urban population. Most conspicuous were the *khan's* retainers (*nöker*), a standing army recognisable by its dress (unlike the tribal troops that were recruited in times of war). Then there were the merchants. These appear to have been of modest fortune and not to have engaged in long-distance trade like those of Diyarbakir, Mosul or Baghdad; they traded with Baghdad and the towns of Kurdistan. The third category were the artisans and shopkeepers, of whom Evliya has little to say (apart from the fact that they wore striped *şal û şapik*). The class that fascinated Evliya were the *ulama*, of whom there were many in town. They were all armed, carrying large daggers in their cummerbends, and had a reputation for being very martial and fierce in combat.

Once of these *ulama*, Monla Shirwî, was Evliya's informant on local cultural life. Evliya was aware that `Amadiya was a major centre of Kurdish culture. After a long digression on the various Kurdish dialects, he comments that the dialects of Cizre and Shirwan count as more refined and eloquent than the others, but that the most literary Kurdish is that of the Kurds of `Amadiya. As an example of `Amadiya Kurdish, Evliya cites a *qasida* by one of the local *ulama*, Mollâ Ramazân Kürdikî, of which the first few beyts are:

<i>Reyi li Asef diken</i>	<i>walih û heyranê `îşq</i>
<i>Dersê Aresto diden</i>	<i>serxweş û sekranê `îşq</i>
<i>`Eqlê kul er bête nîv</i>	<i>mektebê `îşqî demek</i>
<i>Dê bibitin mezhekî</i>	<i>tiflê hewesxwanê `îşq<sup>23</sup></i>

<sup>22</sup> Bağdat K. 305, fol. 377a-b.

<sup>23</sup> Bağdat K. fol. 380b.

Evliya's transcription of this *qasida* probably is the oldest extant copy of a Kurdish poem — all manuscripts of earlier Kurdish poetry that I am aware of are of much later date. According to Evliya, it was only one specimen from a rich corpus of Kurdish poetry that he encountered in `Amadiya. Clearly much has been lost in the course of the tumultuous history of the region. Due to Evliya we now know that Melayê Cezîrî was not an isolated phenomenon but simply the best remembered, and perhaps the best, of a much larger circle of metaphysical poets writing in Kurdish, which flourished over a considerable period.

#### *How to get further in the study of Kurdish history?*

The *Sharafname* remains the single most important source for Kurdish history, but in order to fully understand it we need to use whatever other contemporary sources we can find. Katib Çelebi's *Cihannüma* and Mustawfi Qazwini's earlier *Nuzhat al-qulub* are indispensable as geographical reference works, and for the historical context the *Sharafname* will need to be compared to the major Persian and Ottoman historical works dealing with the same region and periods (notably Tihrani's *Kitab-i Diyarbakriyya*, Hasan Rumlu's *Ahsan al-tawarikh*, Iskandar Munshi's *Tarikh-i `alam-ara-yi `Abbasi*, Na`ima's *Tarikh*). A systematic analysis of Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* — which has hardly begun — will usefully complement the information from the *Sharafname*.

But there is more to be done. The *Sharafname* is not really a history of the Kurdish people, it is a history of the Kurdish ruling families. It gives us a view from the top and has precious little to say about the ordinary lives of ordinary men and (especially) women. The same is true of most Ottoman and Persian chronicles. For social and economic history we need to find other sources. Evliya's *Seyahatname* is less elite-oriented than most other Ottoman works, and its use as a source on daily life in the 17th century has long been recognised. There are other rich sources that have hardly been tapped so far. The Ottoman archives contain rich materials on demography and economic history, some of which have recently been published (see the titles by Binark, Göyünç, Hütteroth, İlhan, Sevgen, Ünal, Yınanç).

Another category of sources that have hardly been used by Kurdish historians are the writings of their Christian neighbour peoples. Writing from a position of political subjection, Christian authors at times offer us the view from below that we miss in the Muslim sources. Scher (1910) and Sanjian (1969) have shown how much material of great relevance to Kurdish history there is to be found in chronicles in Aramaic and Armenian, respectively. Collaboration with scholars of those languages is likely to make significant contributions to Kurdish historiography.

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