CLERK OF KAYSERİ: NATURE, SOCIETY, AND EMPIRE IN THE MANUSCRIPTS OF YAZICI MURTAZA

BATUHAN AKSU

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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Batuhan Aksu

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The thesis of Batuhan Aksu

has been approved by:

Assoc. Prof. Derin Terzioğlu (Thesis Advisor) _____

Prof. Çiğdem Kafescioğlu _____

Assoc. Prof. Faisal Husain (External Member) _____

August 2025

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Batuhan Aksu, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Clerk of Kayseri: Nature, Society, and Empire

in the Manuscripts of Yazıcı Murtaza

This thesis examines how a mid-level Kayserite clerk from the early eighteenth century described and evaluated the urban and rural communities in the Ottoman lands. A versatile man from the village of Gesi in Kayseri, Yazıcı Murtaza worked as a clerk (*yazıcı*), farmer, teacher, and muezzin and traveled widely across the Ottoman lands, reaching as far as Basra in the East and Albania in the West. He also produced two volumes of manuscripts, one containing his travelogue and the other his poems, but both of which provide rich observations about his universe. This thesis analyzes and contextualizes this rich material in dialogue with other contemporary sources and secondary literature on Ottoman urban and environmental history.

By reconstructing how a modest clerk from Central Anatolia viewed the world around him, this study also adds a hitherto neglected perspective to the existing scholarship on the early eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, which has so far focused mainly on the worldviews of Istanbulite elites, and to a more limited extent, denizens of major Arab towns like Damascus.

ÖZET

Kayserili Kâtip: Yazıcı Murtaza'nın El Yazmalarında Tabiat, Toplum ve İmparatorluk

Bu tez, on sekizinci yüzyılın başlarında orta dereceli Kayserili bir katibin Osmanlı topraklarındaki şehirli ve kırlı toplulukları nasıl tanımladığını ve değerlendirdiğini incelemektedir. Kayseri'nin Gesi köyünden çok yönlü bir adam olan Yazıcı Murtaza, katip, çiftçi, hoca ve müezzin olarak çalışmış ve Doğu'da Basra'ya ve Batı'da Arnavutluk'a değin uzanan Osmanlı topraklarında geniş bir şekilde seyahat etmiştir. Ayrıca, biri seyahatnamesini, diğeri şiirlerini ihtiva eden iki ayrı el yazması da üretmiştir, ancak her ikisi de onun evrenine dair zengin müşahedeler sunmaktadır. Bu tez, bu zengin materyali diğer çağdaş kaynaklarla ve Osmanlı şehir ve çevre tarihi hakkındaki ikincil literatürle diyalog içinde analiz eder ve bağlamına oturtur.

Bu çalışma, Orta Anadolu'dan gelen mütevazı bir kâtibin etrafındaki dünyayı nasıl gördüğünü yeniden yapılandırarak, şimdiye kadar ihmal edilmiş bir bakış açısını, esas olarak İstanbul elitlerinin ve daha sınırlı bir ölçüde de Şam gibi büyük Arap şehirlerinin sakinlerinin dünya görüşlerine odaklanan erken onsekizinci yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu hakkındaki mevcut akademik çalışmalara da ilave etmektedir.

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I ask for forgiveness from Murtaza if this thesis attributes to him anything he never intended. He once metaphorically claimed that his profundity is like a sea full of pearls. Hence, only someone from the people of the sea (*bir ehl-i bâhir*), meaning a wise person, can discover him.[1] It will be an unforgettable pleasure if the author of this thesis can be one of them via this humble attempt.

[1] "Derûnın Yazıcı deryâ, derûnında nice dür var/Bulup çıkarmağa muhtaç bir ehl-i bâhir gerekdür." Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eşʿâr*, fol. 11b.

For my parents and Istanbul.

I will remain indebted to their memories for life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Secondary literature 2

1.2 Aims, methodology, and outline of this study 6

1.3 A concise biography of Yazıcı Murtaza 8

1.4 Description of the manuscripts 13

CHAPTER 2: DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LAND OF RUM, ITS CITIES AND COMMUNITIES AND THE REALMS BEYOND 21

2.1 Introduction 21

2.2 Demarcating the boundaries of Rum 22

2.3 Commentary on the lands outside Ottoman borders 26

2.4 Describing different communities under Ottoman rule 31

2.5 Murtaza's representation of Ottoman cities 39

2.6 Conclusion 58

CHAPTER 3: DESCRIPTIONS OF NATURE AND NATURAL DISASTERS 61

3.1 Introduction 61

3.2 Depicting nature 62

3.3 Natural disasters 76

3.4 Agricultural and viticultural activities 90

3.5 Conclusion 96

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION 98

APPENDIX: VISUALS ABOUT MURTAZA AND HIS MANUSCRIPTS 101

REFERENCES 115

LIST OF APPENDIX FIGURES

Figure 1 and 2. Cities and towns Murtaza visited in *Seyâhatnâme* 101

Figure 3. Tombstone attributed to Murtaza in Gesi 102

Figure 4 and 5. The closed primary school (*sıbyân mektebi*) of Gesi 102

Figure 6. Murtaza's handwriting in *Eş'âr* and *Seyâhâtnâme* 103

Figure 7. Murtaza's signature and his note in *Seyâhatnâme* 103

Figure 8. The binding cover and the first folio of *Eş'âr* 103

Figure 9. The binding cover and the front doublure of *Seyâhatnâme* 103

Figure 10. Changes in handwriting in *Seyâhatnâme* 104

Figure 11. The land of Rum in the Ottoman World in Murtaza's *Seyahatnâme* 104

Figure 12 and 13. Murtaza's Tour of Istanbul 105

Figure 14. The fountain inscription of Gülnuş Emetullah Valide Sultan 105

Figure 15. Murtaza's recording of the inscription of Valide Sultan 106

Figure 16. The tombstone inscription of Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha 106

Figure 17. Murtaza's recording of the tombstone on the marginalia 106

Figure 18 and 19. The map of Kayseri and Gesi, Kayseri's villages in *Eş'âr* 107

Figure 20. Murtaza's failed travels for the Hajj and the Mughal India 107

Figure 21. The major routes of rinderpest in 1709, according to Murtaza 108

Figure 22 and 23. The restoration inscription of the Grand Mosque 108

Figure 24. Murtaza's recording of the inscription on the marginalia 108

Figure 25. The court record about the appointment of Murtaza Halife 109

Figure 26 and 27. The second and third folios of Murtaza's prose travelogue 111

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Historical works since *the Histories of Herodotus* have all been a form of "inquiry" (*ιστορία*) into a specific subject, despite the differing concerns of their authors.[2] Herodotus asserted that the reason for demonstrating his inquiry was to safeguard the past affairs of humans from oblivion and to remember their achievements along with their causes and consequences.[3] This thesis, which is a microhistorical inquiry into the life of a somewhat eccentric Ottoman scribe, traveler, and poet from Central Anatolia, follows this trajectory by examining how he perceived and portrayed the world around him.

Yazıcı Murtaza (1674-after 1744), originally a resident of Gesi village in Kayseri, traveled to various centers in the Ottoman realms as a low-ranking scribe for more than ten years.[4] After returning to his village, he endeavored to make a living as a muezzin, a khoja, and a farmer. In the same period, he also compiled two manuscripts, one of which contains his travelogue and the other his poems.[5] In these works, he provided extensive details about himself, his relations with his family and village community, and the different situations he lived through during his journeys. He also jotted down notes about a wide variety of events he witnessed, from births, deaths, and epidemics to earthquakes and agricultural disasters, and from the construction of new buildings to the changing prices of goods and pastoral activities over the years.

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[2] Herodotus, *The Histories,* trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 3.
[3] Herodotus, *The Histories*, 3.
[4] M. Yaşar Ertaş, "Giriş,", in *Arnavutluk'tan Basra'ya 18. Yüzyılda Kayserili Bir Kâtibin Seyahat Anıları*, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2020), 15.
[5] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, Milli Kütüphane, MS. 06 Mil Yz A 4277/2; Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, Milli Kütüphane, MS. 06 Mil Yz A 2428.

1.1 Secondary literature

This study mainly draws on three different bodies of literature as travel writing studies, contemporary chronicles, and urban history studies. These broad categories in the scholarship are relevant to the study of Murtaza from different angles. Contemporary chronicles reveal significant non-Istanbuli and non-elite insights into the eighteenth-century Ottoman world, allowing comparisons with Murtaza and his perspective. Urban and travel writing studies in the early modern Ottoman world provide helpful tools and sources for contextualizing the travels and town descriptions of Murtaza.

Until now, there has been very little study of Murtaza and his writings. Two of the early studies to mention Murtaza's travelogue were written by Bahir Selçuk and Halil Tuğluk in 2009. These studies focused on Murtaza's descriptions of Istanbul and Üsküdar.[6] Tuğluk also published stories about Bâkî, Nev'î, and Nef'î in the travelogue.[7] Nonetheless, these pieces failed to establish Murtaza's identity, merely addressing a few aspects of his works. Muhittin Eliaçık prepared some articles between 2009 and 2018, focusing on Murtaza's travels and descriptions of towns such as Istanbul and Amasya. The most prominent problem with his studies is that he misread Murtaza's name as "Resmi-i Kayseri."[8] Other early studies included Tuğba Kara's short study on Murtaza's depiction of Erzurum (2009) and Neslihan Koç

[6] Bahir Selçuk, İ. Halil Tuğluk, "Bir Mecmuanın Işığında 18. Yüzyılda İstanbul," *Akademik Bakış*, 6 (2009), 212-224; Bahir Selçuk, "18. Yüzyıla Ait Bir Mecmuada Üsküdar," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 4, 3 (2009), 2119-2132.
[7] İ. Halil Tuğluk, "Bir Mecmuada Bâkî, Nev'î (Yahya) ve Nef'î İle İlgili Bazı Latifeler", in *Journal of Turkish Studies*, (Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2009), 993-1006.
[8] Muhittin Eliaçık, "Resmi-i Kayseri Seyahatnamesi'ne göre şehirlerin kuruluş yeri özellikleri," in *Geçmişten Günümüze Şehir ve Çocuk*, (Samsun: Canik Belediyesi Yayınları, 2009), 241-244. Muhittin Eliaçık, "Bilinmeyen Bir Seyahatnâmede Tüm Yönleriyle İstanbul," in *Osmanlı İstanbulu II: II. Uluslararası Osmanlı İstanbulu Sempozyumu*, (İstanbul: 29 Mayıs University, 2009), 249-265. Muhittin Eliaçık, "Resmî-i Kayserî Seyahatnâmesinde Amasya ve Çevresine Dair Bilgiler," in *Uluslararası Amasya Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı: 2. Cilt*, (Amasya: Kıbatek Yayınları, 2017), 1013-1017. Muhittin Eliaçık, "Kayserili Resmî ve Seyahat Defteri," in *Şehir: Kültür-Sanat*, (Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, Issue 20, August 2018), 53-56.

Keskin's very general paper that did not mention the other studies (2019).[9] These studies, too, misread the author's name and did not mention Murtaza's writings other than the travelogue.

Finally, in 2020, M. Yaşar Ertaş published Murtaza's travelogue in modern Turkish transliteration and revealed his correct identity in his concise introduction (2020).[10] Ertaş, who regarded the travelogue predominantly as a memoir, did not take into consideration the poems and other remarks of Murtaza in the manuscript. Mustafa Demir, on the other hand, provided a modern Turkish transcription of Murtaza's poems in his master's thesis (2020) but did not mention Murtaza's travelogue, nor did he cite the studies by other scholars.[11] He developed and modified the introduction of his thesis by publishing it the following year, together with Seydi Kiraz.[12] Although Erhan Afyoncu referred to Murtaza in 2022, he mistakenly mentioned his works among the seventeenth-century works.[13] Ertaş and Demir made a symposium presentation in which they discussed Murtaza's works as "ego-documents" in 2023.[14] Finally, Ertaş prepared an article on the self-perception of Murtaza based on his poems in 2024.[15]

Insofar as Murtaza's manuscripts document his times and the world around him, they may also be compared with "contemporary chronicles." In this regard, a study of pivotal importance is Dana Sajdi's *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau*

[9] Tuğba Kara, "18. yüzyılda bir müellif Resmi Kayseri'nin mecmuasına göre Osmanlı şehir algısı: Erzurum örneği," in Geçmişten Günümüze Şehir ve Çocuk, (Samsun: Canik Belediyesi Yayınları, 2009), 245-250. Neslihan Koç Keskin, "Bir 18. Yüzyıl Seyâhatnâmesi'nden "Seyahati ve Hayatı Beraber Okumak"," in Geçmişten Günümüze Seyahat Edebiyatı: 4. Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Kurultayı Bildirileri, (Elginkan Vakfı Yayınları, 2019), 653-670.
[10] M. Yaşar Ertaş, "Giriş," in Arnavutluk'tan Basra'ya, 15.
[11] Mustafa Demir, "Sergüzeşt-i Âşık Yazıcı Murtazâ," Master's Thesis, (Hitit Üniversitesi, 2020).
[12] Seydi Kiraz, Mustafa Demir, "Halk Edebiyatında Taşlama: Yazıcı Murtaza Örneği," in Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları, (Issue 23, Spring 2021), 203-237.
[13] Erhan Afyoncu, Tanzimat Öncesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma Rehberi, (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınları, 2022), 15.
[14] Semra Çörekçi, "Report on the Symposium 'Ottoman Ego-Documents': Towards an Inventory of Ottoman Ego-Documents," in Ceride (Istanbul: Istanbul Medeniyet University, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2023), 190.
[15] M. Yaşar Ertaş, "Bir Benlik İnşası Olarak Kendini Yazmak ve 18. Yüzyılda Sıradan Bir Osmanlı Kâtibinin Benlik Algısı," The Journal of Ottoman Studies, (29 Mayıs Üniversitesi, Vol. LXIV (2024), 327-351.

Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant (2013). In this monograph, Sajdi skillfully unearths the life and work of Shihab al-Din Ahmad Ibn Budayr (a local barber-historian from Ottoman Damascus) through a careful reading of the chronicle that this barber wrote about the events he observed in his own lifetime.[16] Though Ibn Budayr is her main protagonist, Sajdi also introduces other constituents to reconstruct his macrocosm. Particularly, she discusses other "contemporary chroniclers" from Damascus and the wider region of Sham, or "Levant" as she calls it, providing vital non-Istanbuli and non-elite perspectives on the sociocultural changes in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire.[17] Sajdi's observations about Ibn Budayr's moralist outlook on the society of his time are vital for this study and will be utilized especially in Chapter Two to provide a broader context for Murtaza's similar reactions to the world around him.

Another body of scholarship that is vital for this study pertains to Ottoman and global travel writing.[18] It would be no exaggeration to say that the figure of Evliya Çelebi (1611-84?) dominates the field of Ottoman travel writing as the most renowned Ottoman traveler. There have been numerous studies on different parts of his travelogue, and at least one in-depth portrayal of Evliya Çelebi as a seventeenth-century Ottoman gentleman by Robert Dankoff.[19] Given the temporal proximity of

[16] Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013). For other studies in a similar line, see Kerima Filan, "Life in Sarajevo in the 18th Century (According to Mulla Mustafa's Mecmua)," in *Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Community: Essays in Honour of Suraiya Faroqhi*, (Brill), 2002. Marlene Kurz, *Ways to Heaven, Gates to Hell: Fazlizade 'Ali's Struggle with the Diversity of Ottoman Islam*, (EB-Verlag), 2011.

[17] See Dana Sajdi, "Peripheral Visions: the Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th-Century Ottoman Levant," PhD. Thesis. Columbia University. 2002. Dana Sajdi, "In Other Worlds? Mapping Out the Spatial Imaginaries of 18th-Century Chroniclers from the Ottoman Levant (Bilād al-Shām)," in *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*. (29 Mayıs Üniversitesi: Volume XLIV, 2014).

[18] For major works on global travel literature, see Carl Thompson (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* (Routledge, 2016), Tim Youngs (ed), *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (CUP, 2019). Ben Stubbs; Lee Mylne, *Re-thinking Travel Writing: The Journey of a Genre*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2007.

[19] For leading studies about Evliya Çelebi, see R. Dankoff, M. D. Sheridan, N. Tezcan, *Ottoman Explorations of the Nile: Evliya Çelebi's 'Matchless Pearl These Reports of the Nile' Map* (Royal Asiatic Society, Gingko Library, 2018). V. Kursar, K. J. Starčević, and N. Moačanin, *Evliya Çelebi in the Borderlands: New Insights and Novel Approaches to the Seyahatname: Western Balkans and Iran Sections*, (Srednja Europa, 2021). R. Dankoff, S. Kim

Evliya's travelogue to Murtaza's own writings, this study will draw on Evliya's text and the studies on it to complement and cross-check Murtaza's observations about some of the same places.

As far as the eighteenth century is concerned, Ottoman ambassadorial reports (*sefâretnâme*) have also received considerable attention, but will be less relevant to this study, as they pertain mainly to European capitals, none of which Murtaza visited.[20] More pertinently, there are also studies on Ottoman route manuals (*menzilnâme*) and Hajj narratives.[21] Even though Murtaza's travelogue was neither a route manual nor a Hajj narrative, it still exhibits some structural similarities to these texts, as will be explained in Chapter Two.

As a necessary element for examining Murtaza's narrative on urban centers, the thesis will also take into account the studies of urban representations in the early modern Ottoman world.[22] Focusing mainly on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu emphasizes the pictorial and narrative representations of Istanbul in this field.[23] For the early eighteenth century, we have Shirine Hamadeh's *The City's Pleasures,* which makes ample use of divan poetry to probe how elite Istanbulites

(ed) *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Celebi*, (Eland Books, 2011). R. Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi*, (Brill, 2006).

[20] For the genre and authors *sefâretnâme*, see Caspar Hillebrand, "Ottoman travel accounts to Europe: An overview of their historical development and a commented researchers' list," in *Venturing beyond Borders: Reflections on Genre, Function, and Boundaries in Middle Eastern Travel Writing,* (Ergon Verlag, 2013), 53-74. F. Reşit Unat, *Osmanlı Sefirleri ve Sefaretnâmeleri*, (Ankara, 1992). F. M. Göcek, *East Encounters West, France, and Ottoman Empire in the 18th Century*, (Oxford, 1987).

[21] For selected studies about the genre and products of *menzilnâme*, see Güllü Yıldız, "Travel Essentials: Nature as Represented in Ottoman Route Manuals (Menzilnames)," *Kadim* (Issue 9, April 2025), 45-70. Dženita Karić, *Bosnian Hajj Literature: Multiple Paths to the Holy*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022). Menderes Coşkun, *Ottoman Pilgrimage Narratives and Nabi's Tuhfetü'l-Haremeyn*, (University of Durham, PhD dissertation), 1999.

[22] For a comprehensive analysis of the studies of urban representations in Ottoman Istanbul, see Shirine Hamadeh and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, ed. *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul*, (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

[23] Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009). "Osmanlı şehir tahayyülünün görsel ve edebi izleri: Onaltıncı ve onyedinci yüzyıl menzilname ve seyahatnamelerinde şehir imgeleri," in *Kültürel Kesişmeler ve Sanat. Günsel Renda Onuruna Sempozyum Bildirileri/ Cultural Crossings and Art. Proceedings of a Symposium in Honour of Günsel Renda*, ed. Serpil Bağcı, Zeynep Yasa Yaman, (Ankara: Hacettepe Universitesi, 2011), 139-150. "Itinerant Gaze: Ottoman and Medieval Anatolian Architecture in the *Book of Travels*," in *The Book of Evliya Çelebi*, 310-324, ed. Nuran Tezcan, Semih Tezcan. (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2013).

observed the rejuvenation of the Ottoman capital in this time period.[24] There are also various studies by different authors about ceremonial, architectural, and sociocultural life in Istanbul during the same era.[25]

1.2 Aims, methodology, and outline of this study

The present study differs from the earlier studies on Yazıcı Murtaza in that it takes into consideration the whole of Murtaza's writings, namely his travelogue, his poems, and marginalia. More importantly, it uses this material to reconstruct and analyze the world of Murtaza in all its dimensions. The aim of this thesis is to write a microhistorical study based on Yazıcı Murtaza and his universe. As a historical method, microhistory supplies the most significant methodological instruments for analyzing Murtaza's mentality, thanks to its granular perspective of prioritizing spatial and temporal contexts. Besides, the thesis employs different insights from travel writing studies, contemporary chronicles, and urban history studies.

The introduction deals with Murtaza's life and two manuscripts in a concise manner. The second chapter, titled "Descriptions of The Land Of Rum, Its Cities and Communities and the Realms Beyond," examines his moralist responses to socioeconomic and cultural developments in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire. It also highlights how Murtaza interpreted the land of Rum with its towns, and polities beyond the Ottoman world. His perception and reactions to nature will comprise the

[24] Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).
[25] For other studies related to the eighteenth-century Istanbul, see Dana Sajdi (ed.), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (I. B. Tauris, 2014). Shirine Hamadeh, "Public Spaces and the Garden Culture of Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Early Modern Ottomans*, ed. V. Aksan and D. Goffmann. (Cambridge University Press), 2007. Sinem Erdoğan İşkorkutan, *The 1720 Imperial Circumcision Celebrations in Istanbul: Festivity and Representation in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2020). Ünver Rüstem, *Ottoman Baroque: The Architectural Refashioning of. Eighteenth-Century Istanbul*, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019). Muzaffer Özgüleş, *The Women Who Built the Ottoman World: Female Patronage and the Architectural Legacy of Gülnuş Sultan*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017). Ahmet Yaşar, "The han in eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century İstanbul: A spatial, topographical and social analysis," Boğaziçi University, PhD. Diss, 2016.

backbone of the last chapter, "Descriptions of Nature and Natural Disasters." It will examine how he faced and reflected freezing winters, earthquakes, and plagues at different junctures of his life.[26] While recording these natural disasters in detail, the chapter will underscore his seasonal agricultural activities, from threshing to harvest, as a farmer tied to the soil. The conclusion will recapitulate the findings of this microhistorical investigation, assessing its outcomes based on the previous chapters.

By reconstructing the world and worldview of a small-town clerk from Central Anatolia, the greater aim of this thesis is to expand on our understanding of the early eighteenth-century Ottoman world. As discussed in the previous section, the scholarship has explored the early eighteenth-century Ottoman world mainly from the perspective of high-level bureaucrats and Istanbulite literati, and to a much more limited extent, provincial elites and literati. Yazıcı Murtaza delivers a distinct interpretation of this era, for he was, on the one hand, part of the Ottoman bureaucracy and was, like most of the Ottoman ruling elites, Sunni Muslim and Turcophone; on the other hand, he differed from these elites in that he was of modest social means, self-identified as poor, and above all, had one foot in rural activities alongside urban ones. Though the city he came from, Kayseri, was a major commercial center in Anatolia, it paled in comparison to the imperial capital, Istanbul, and even Damascus, the hometown of the "commoner chroniclers" studied by Sajdi.

While Murtaza emerges as a significant figure for all these reasons, it is worth remarking that he also had some blind spots and limitations primarily stemming from his provincial perspective. As shown in Chapter Two, his indifference and aversion towards Christian Europe as well as Safavid Iran was one such blind spot, in contrast to the growing interest taken by Istanbulite intellectuals in the same lands around this

[26] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 33b.

time. The fact that Murtaza rarely mentioned non-Muslims, and when he did, they were typically from his village community, can also be attributed to his more communal and provincial profile.

1.3 A concise biography of Yazıcı Murtaza

Yazıcı Murtaza was born on March 28, 1674, in Gesi in the sanjak of Kayseri in Central Anatolia.[27] There is not much information about his early life and education in Kayseri. He married an unnamed woman at the age of eighteen and had ten children until his death. It must not have been easy to support his family at a time marked by the financial hurdle of the Wars of the Holy League (1683-99). Finally, he joined the lower echelons of the scribal service in the hope of alleviating his poverty and debts.[28] The state appointed him to Veliko Tarnovo (in present-day Bulgaria) as a jizya collector in 1696-97.[29] He returned to Gesi without witnessing the Ottoman retreat until the Treaty of Karlowitz.

Resuming his duty as a jizya collector in December 1699, he left Gesi and his family. During the next ten years, his travels took him from the Albanian highlands to Mesopotamian marshes. Murtaza continued to collect jizya as a scribe in the sanjaks of Skopje and Kyustendil in May 1700.[30] The state reappointed him with the same task for the sanjaks of Nikopol and Silistra eight months later.[31] He stayed in Istanbul for almost a year between 1700 and 1702, during which he took notes about the city's social scenery and architecture, recorded the inscriptions of newly built fountains, and commented on the increasing visibility of women in bazaars. During his trips to

[27] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 145b. 150b.
[28] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 183b.
[29] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 162b.
[30] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 162b.
[31] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 162b.

Ottoman towns in the Balkans, he further had the chance to observe different communities and their traditions with varying geographical conditions and the political limits in containing them.

To help pay his mounting debts, he entered the service of Amasyalı Mehmed and Köse Halil Pasha, two governors of Erzurum, during the years 1702-1705.[32] He hoped that "becoming part of the retinue of a pasha" (*paşalı olmak*) would provide a steady job with regular income to support his family under the aegis of an enlarging bureaucracy.[33] Besides his monetary concerns, he also desired to travel out of curiosity. He expressed that "at that time, it occurred to us that we should at least visit the provinces and earn five or ten purses of akçe without being idle (*âvâre*). We have a debt of about a hundred *guruş*; let us pay it. Subsequently, let us be a man of repute (*bir belli âdem*)."[34] However, his hopes of advancing to higher echelons of the bureaucracy were dashed with the downfall of his would-be patron, Râmi Mehmed (the first Grand Vizier from *kalemiye*), in the Edirne Incident (1703).[35] After the government appointed his new patron, Köse Halil Pasha, from the governorship of Erzurum to Basra, Murtaza followed him to Basra, where he stayed till 1708.[36] Although his fateful experiences during this journey increased his despair and misery, he also began writing his poems and travelogue during this period.[37]

In this period, Murtaza also witnessed a painful environmental transformation: the relocation of the Euphrates (1687-1702). This momentous event not only restricted his movement but also brought about regional famine and starvation, which he was

[32] Ertaş, "Giriş" 19.
[33] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 183b.
[34] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 183b.
[35] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 184a.
[36] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 194a-209b.
[37] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 150a. *Eş'âr*, fol. 31a.

also affected.[38] Indomitable tribal uprisings after this natural cataclysm disrupted the political composition with the rapid dismissals of governors.[39] The most significant event Murtaza witnessed on this occasion was the suppression of prolonged tribal revolts in Basra in December 1705. Turning from a commercial powerhouse to a conflictual borderland between tribal confederations and the Ottomans, Basra was under intermittent siege by the Muntafiq tribe (*Mıntıfik 'aşîreti*) since 1692.[40] Murtaza joined in the hazardous but successful siege as a *sekban* (irregular mercenary) and barely escaped being captured by the Bedouins.[41] His unfulfilled desire to go on pilgrimage and visit India accelerated his despair, urging him to return home after the dismissal of Köse Halil from the governorship.[42]

After reuniting with his wife and mother in April 1709, Murtaza was anguished to learn about the deaths of his three children. Another disaster awaiting him was one of the most lethal rinderpest cases in the early modern era, which resulted in the decimation of thousands of cattle, soaring prices, and endemic famine after November 1709.[43] The rinderpest proceeded at a diminishing pace with intermittent cases till the summer of 1713, leading Murtaza to jot down price fluctuations in essential goods and staples for 23 years until 1732.[44] After seeing the birth of four more children by his wife and his mother's death between 1710 and 1714,

[38] For the relocation, see Faisal Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan: The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire* (OUP, 2021).
[39] Husain, "Part III: Rumblings of Nature," in *Rivers of the Sultan*, 179-233.
[40] Matthee Rudi, "Boom and Bust: The Port of Basra in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 118. For Murtaza's views about the Muntafiq tribe, see *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 194b.
[41] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 20r.
[42] Hasan Pasha, the Governor of Baghdad, took the upper hand in this havoc, signifying a twenty-year rule by laying the foundation of his household (1704-24). See Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan*, 215-228. Murtaza mentions his significant role in the region several times, see Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 197b-198a, 209a, 212b.
[43] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 6a, 145b-146a.
[44] His records help historians trace the price movements in a Central Anatolian village in the early eighteenth century. For the economic life of the era, see Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 159-171. For the transcription of selected records about these goods, see Appendix.

he decided to leave Gesi for the last time, probably out of financial distress due to natural and familial burdens.

He desperately visited southern Anatolian towns as the clerk of a local agha, finalizing his journeys without presenting any descriptive or interpretive detail in his works in 1715.[45] He spent the rest of his life in the Gesi village, which he described as his "homeland, toil, and desire" *(vatanım, zahmetim, arzûm)*.[46] During this period, he earned his living by toiling in various jobs, from working as a hodja, teacher (*mu'allim*), mosque illuminator (*çırakdâr*), and muezzin in his village to running a vineyard farm in the countryside.[47] While carefully depicting Kayseri in his poems and jotting down its astronomical or seasonal developments in prose, he also sharply criticized his village community and Kayserites. He satirized different social groups, from merchants to bureaucrats, and accused them of turning back on him because of his moral counsel.

Besides social conflicts, a natural catastrophe pulverized Murtaza and the whole region. The 1717 Kayseri earthquake was one of the most destructive earthquakes in the area during the early modern era.[48] Nonetheless, the period of relative stability, which would later be dubbed the Tulip Era, aided the state in supporting architectural activities. Thus, the region recovered rapidly from this pernicious incident in a few years.[49] Recording the repaired or newly constructed monuments in Kayseri, Murtaza also participated in renovations by penning inscriptions or chronograms (1718-1723).[50] Despite the merry atmosphere of

[45] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 214a.
[46] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 21b. "Vatanım, zahmenim, arzûm Gesîye geldim şükür."
[47] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 153b., *Eş'âr*, fol. 1a. "Mu'allim idim etfâle beş on gitdi mektebimden," fol. 6b.
[48] Ali Koçyiğit and Oğuz Erol, "A tectonic escape structure: Erciyes pull-apart basin, Kayseri, central Anatolia, Turkey," in *Geodinamica Acta*, (Taylor & Francis, Volume 14, 2001), 142.
[49] For the state intervention against earthquakes, see Yaron Ayalon, "Natural Disasters and the Ottoman State" in *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, and Other Misfortunes*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), 61-108.
[50] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 35a-35b. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 19b-20a.

festivities in Istanbul, he persisted in wrestling with natural and familial hardships in his village. His struggle with his son Mahmud resulted in the latter fleeing and returning home thrice between 1719 and 1724. A virulent plague broke out among these domestic disputes, claiming the life of his son, Mehmed, in 1721.[51] Thus, he wrote elegies for one of his sons while cursing the other.

Despite registering political events (such as the Ottoman-Hotaki War in 1726), he mainly spent his final years dealing with his daughter Ayşe's wedding and his grandchildren's upbringing after 1728. His two grandchildren, Seyyid Ömer (1731-39) and Mehmed (1733-34), died before reaching puberty, and his twin grandchildren (Mehmed and Ahmed, b. 1737) died one year after their birth.[52] One court record provides the list of *menzilcis* (officials responsible for the communication between the routes as dispatch riders) in Gesi village in February 1740. It briefly mentions Murtaza Agha of Gesi's return from the Risvan tribe, among them, with one guide and two horses.[53] These *menzilci*s were often elected from the village population for a brief one-year term. It is likely that Murtaza, whose works significantly bear traces of the *menzilnâme*s (route manuals), also became a *menzilci* himself for a short while.[54] In July 1742, another court record remarked the appointment of someone named Murtaza Halife to the village mosque and primary school (*sıbyân mektebi*) as imam and hodja based on his experiences (Figure 4, 5, and 25).[55] The previous tasks and professional talents stated in the record strongly suggest that the person in question was our

[51] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 1a-8b.
[52] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 146b-147a.
[53] "Gesili Murtaza Ağa, Reşvan Ağası tarafından geldikde bargir iki, kulağuz bir." Abdullah Danacı,"133/2 Numaralı Kayseri Şer'iyye Sicili (H. 1155-M. 1742): Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirilmesi," Master's Thesis, Erciyes University, 2011, 351.
[54] For the role of the menzilcis in the Ottoman network system during Murtaza's age, see C. J. Heywood, "Some Turkish Archival Sources for the History Of the Menzilhane Network in Rumeli during the Eighteenth Century (Notes and Documents on The Ottoman Ulak, I)," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi*, Vols 4-5, 1976-1977, 39-55.
[55] Sevda Yıldırım, "133/3 Numaralı Kayseri Şer'iyye Sicili (H. 1155-M. 1742): Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirilmesi," Master's Thesis, Erciyes University, 2011, 230-231. COA, KŞS, 133/300, No. 647. For the transcription of the document, see Appendix, Document 1.

Murtaza. If true, this appointment was probably his final duty, as the last record he made was in 1744/45, about the wedding of the son of the Mufti of Amasya.[56] He would have been 70 or 71 years old at the time. While we do not know when he died, the only tombstone attributed to him in Gesi gives the date of his death as 1187 (1773). If this tombstone belongs to him, it means that he died at the age of 99 (Figure 3).[57]

1.4 Description of the manuscripts

The two manuscripts of Yazıcı Murtaza, titled *Eş'âr* (Poems) and *Seyâhatnâme* (Book of Travels), are preserved in the National Library of Turkey (*Milli Kütüphâne*) in Ankara and have no other copies that we know of. While they do not appear in the manuscripts themselves, the National Library ascribed these titles possibly because of their contents.

Eş'âr consists of 40 folios, with the dimensions of each folio being approximately 240x10 millimeters.[58] Since the manuscript does not possess a colophon, identifying the date of transcription is difficult. Nonetheless, the fact that Murtaza composed his last couplet in 1735 suggests that he compiled the poems after this date.[59] Its binding cover is a partially torn brown leather made of sheepskin that incorporates folios in manila (*âbâdi*) paper (Figure 8). The National Library registered it with the catalog number 06 Mil Yz A 2428. In terms of its durability, most folios have survived, and there are no signs of repair.[60]

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[56] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 40a.
[57] This finding is based on fieldwork studies I conducted in Gesi in May 2025. The villagers pointed out this place to me as his grave. In their view, Murtaza was a learned scholar and poet who penned poems about other villages. He traveled a lot and died nearly 250 years ago. He was at odds with his community, cursing those who did not pray at his grave. These details imply that Murtaza has somehow preserved his place in social memory.
[58] Yazıcı Murtaza, "Eş'âr," in *Milli Kütüphane*, accessed on Jun 14, 2025. https://portal.yek.gov.tr/works/detail/610383
[59] Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 35b.
[60] There are several torn folios after 8b, 30b, 32b, and 33b. Some couplets within the margins of folios 38-40 are hard to decipher.

As for its contents, *Eş'âr* is, as the title suggests, a collection of poems (*mecmûʿa-i eş'âr*). All the poems in this collection are Murtaza's, he did not include poems by other Ottoman poets. Without giving a particular title for his poems, Murtaza underscores at the end that he composed his *mecmûʿa* in thirteen chapters (*cüz*), collecting them inside a cover (*cild*).[61] Each *cüz* consists of different ghazals, ruba'is, single couplets (*müfred*), stories in verse (*destân*), and various types of folksongs, including *koşma*, *türkü,* and *semaî*. He organized his 143 poems around various subjects, such as elegies (*mersiye*), enigmatic verses (*muʿammâ*), and riddles (*lugaz*).[62]

Among these poems satires (*taşlama*), chronograms (*târih*), stories in verse (*destân*) about cities, and a verse travelogue (*seyâhatnâme*) are the most essential material used in this thesis. Murtaza's verse travelogue in the fifth *cüz* describes the 126 towns he visited in the same order as his prose travelogue, *Seyâhatnâme*. He portrays his homeland, Kayseri, with its villages and commercial and cultural features in the tenth *cüz*.[63] After Kayseri, Istanbul is the most detailed city with its architectural and sociocultural elements in the seventh *cüz*.[64] The thesis primarily uses these sections to scrutinize Murtaza's perception and impressions of Ottoman urban life.

[61] "On üç cüz eyledim peydâ…Bir mecmû'a olsa yani/Cild içre koydum anı." Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 40v.
[62] Demir, 8.
[63] Murtaza, fol. 38b, 39a.
[64] Murtaza, fol. 28a, 28b.

Table 1. Contents of the Thirteen *Cüz*s in the *Eş'âr*

	Folio
1. Introductory poem	1a-1b
2. Elegies (*mersiye*)	1b-10b
3. A poem and its *nazîre* (poetic parallel in the Ottoman literary tradition)	10b-11b
4. Satire (*taşlama*)	11b-14b
5. Verse travelogue	14b-22a
6. Satire (*taşlama*)	22a-27b
7. A story in verse (*destân*) about Istanbul	27b-30b
8. T*ürkü*s, ghazals, and *destân*s	31a-35a
9. Different chronograms (*târih*) and riddles (*lugaz*)	35a-36b
10. A story in verse (*destân*) about Kayseri	36b-39a
11. Enigmatic verses (*mu'ammâ*)	39a-39b
12. Different *müfred*s in marginalia	1a-40b
13. A concluding poem about himself and his *Eş'âr*	39b-40b

There is no indication in the text that Murtaza wrote his poems for a patron. Nonetheless, there are several clues about its intended readership. He penned many of his poems and completed his manuscript after returning to Gesi. In various *cüz*s, he addresses such groups of the village community as the "holy warriors who buy and sell" (*alışveriş iden gâziler*), urging them to "listen" (*dinle*).[65] Hence, his intended audience must have been his village community. The notes and seals of other readers belong to later periods, giving us no clue about the actual readers of the manuscript during Murtaza's lifetime.[66]

[65] "Dinle İslâmbolı haber vireyim," "Dinle imdi cânım sen bir hikâyet," "Dinle imdi bu garîbin pendini," or "Dinlen alışviriş iden gâziler," Murtaza, fol. 27b, 34b, 37a, 38a.
[66] A note written in pencil indicates that it had an owner named Ömer at an unknown time. fol. 36b.

As for the manuscript titled *Seyâhatnâme*, it consists of 214 folios; the dimensions of its folios are 200x147 and 180x132 millimeters in watermarked paper (Figure 9).[67] Judging by the handwriting, both the *Seyâhatnâme* and *Eş'âr* were written by the same person. (Figures 6, 10). Murtaza also signed his name in *Seyâhatnâme* (Figure 7).[68] Thus, he is presumably both its author and copyist, making this manuscript a holograph. Its registered catalog number is 06 Mil Yz A 4277/2.[69] In terms of its durability, it has survived except for a few torn and damaged folios.[70]

As for the transcription date, he provides a list of the towns he traveled to in 1715 at the end of the manuscript.[71] This is the reason why both the National Library catalogue and Yaşar Ertaş accept 1715 as the transcription date.[72] However, Murtaza states that he began compiling his *mecmû'a* in Basra in 1706, revealing that he compiled the bulk of his work for almost a decade.[73] Moreover, there are clues that he continued to add to this manuscript until the 1740s.[74] There is no indication that he wrote it for a patron. Instead, its intended audience must also have been his village community, similar to *Eş'âr*. He completed this manuscript after returning to Gesi in 1709. Apart from several exceptions, he primarily recorded the local events in his hometown between 1709 and 1739. In this local setting, he eventually imagines a

[67] Yazıcı Murtaza, "Seyâhât-nâme," in *Milli Kütüphane,* accessed on June 14, 2025, https://portal.yek.gov.tr/works/detail/606045. Although the Library registered Murtaza's name as 'Resmî-î Kayseri' for unknown reasons, the manuscript reveals that he chose 'Yazıcı Murtaza' as his *pseudonym*.
[68] "Sene 1132. Evimize geleli on bir sene oldu. Ecel karib oldu, nazarı tûş olandan du'â ricâ' olunur. Murtazâ," Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 159b.
[69] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 147a.
[70] Damaged folios include 1a, 1b, and 17a. Besides, a folio at the beginning of the travelogue was torn after fol. 144b.
[71] "1127 senesinde Kuşçu agasına yazıcı olup gezdiğimizde gördüğümüz kasaba ve şehirler bunlardır ki zikr olunur," Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 214a.
[72] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Arnavutluk'tan Basra'ya,* ed. M. Y. Ertaş, 16.
[73] M. Yaşar Ertaş, "Giriş," in *Arnavutluk'tan Basra'ya*, 21.
[74] Murtaza recorded the wedding of the son of the Mufti of Amasya in 1157 (1744). Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 40a.

readership (*okur yârân*) convened in a majlis, asking for prayer before his narrative of Istanbul.[75]

Murtaza divided his *mecmû'a* into two parts. The first part brings together a selection of poems from other Ottoman poets (fol. 1a-142b). In this section, Murtaza selected poems from various early modern Ottoman poets. There is no specific order or sequence in his selection. They primarily consist of ghazals and pentastichs (*tahmîs*) written over ghazals as a way of completion, named *nazîre*. The most cited poems in this part, with more than fifteen poems, belong to renowned Ottoman poets such as Fuzuli, Bâki, and Hayâli. Murtaza also jotted down verses from his contemporaries, like Raşid Efendi (1669-1735), the famous *re'îsü'l-kuttâb* (the head clerk) and *vak'anüvîs* (court chronicler).[76] There is a brief section concerned with a chronological list of Ottoman sultans until Ahmed III, a multiplication table, a text on the harms of satire, and a petition on the protection of animals from hunting (fol. 143a-144b).

The second part is comprised of Murtaza's prose travelogue and memoirs (fol. 145a-214a) (Figure 26 and 27). Although Murtaza did not call the manuscript *seyâhatnâme*, the National Library named the entire *mecmû'a* "*Seyâhatnâme"* based on the second part. Though he viewed his work as a *mecmû'a*, he did not put any title at the beginning.[77] Nevertheless, he called his travelogue "The History of This Adventure" (*bu tevârih-i serencâm*) in the marginalia.[78]

He organized his account under eighty-nine chapters, each of which is devoted to a town he visited during his travels. Describing the towns between Kırşehir and

[75] "Ve buraya gelince bir meclis ola belki okur yârân bulunursa bir fasıla karârdır ve bize du'â ide. Zirâ ki du'âya muhtâç olduğumuza şüphe yokdur bu dünyâ fanidir," Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 148b.
[76] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 33b-38a.
[77] "Meger paşalı olmak derbedârın türbedârı olup âkıbeti benim gibi hikâyeci olmak imiş zirâ bu mecmû'adan isbât olundu," Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 183b.
[78] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 159b.

Istanbul, he concisely portrays their physical layout and inhabitants.[79] After Istanbul, he describes various towns in the Balkans, primarily settlements around the Danube and in Albania (Figure 1).[80] He illustrates the cities between Sakarya and Erzurum as the government sent Murtaza to Erzurum in 1702 (Figure 2). In this part, autobiographical elements gradually increase, as Murtaza relates his regrets and experiences. After recounting the places between Erzurum and Basra, the manuscript records tribal conflicts in Basra. Murtaza concludes his account by denoting other realms and his final duties.[81] Eventually, he kept his crucial notes related to his life and broader developments in the marginalia.

Table 2. Topics in the *Seyâhatnâme* in Basic Contours

	Folio
Collection of poems from Ottoman poets	1a-142b
Miscellaneous records (including a list of sultans until Ahmed III)	143a-144b
Towns from Kayseri to Üsküdar	145a-148b
Description of Istanbul	148b-157b
Towns from Küçükçekmece (Çekmece-i Sagir) to Veliko Tarnovo	157b-162b
Towns from Tekirdağ to Gjirokastër in Albania	162b-171a
Towns from Hendek to Erzurum	171a-185a
Towns from Erzurum to Basra	185a-194a
Description of Basra and tribal revolts	194b-212b
Other lands and his return journey	212b-214b
Miscellaneous records (including the list of stops for the Hajj route)	214b-215a

[79] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 148b.
[80] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 162b. For the route of Murtaza in his journeys, see Batuhan Aksu, "Yazıcı Murtaza's Travels," *MapHub*, accessed on August 15, 2025. https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/Yazici-Murtazas-Travels
[81] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 214b.

The notes and seals of other readers belong to later periods, limiting information about the readership during Murtaza's lifetime. An unknown person wrote the birth and death statements in the doublure, revealing that it had at least one reader in the nineteenth century. However, this later reader did not comment on Murtaza or his work, as his goal was to preserve familial records.[82]

Other ownership notes reflect broader developments, like interest in folk literature, in modern Turkey. Ali Koçak Esen, their former owner, signed both manuscripts before giving them to the National Library.[83] He was the son of Ahmet Şükrü Esen (1893-1944), who collected hundreds of manuscripts during his 30-year judicial career.[84] As the brother-in-law of the folklorist P. Naili Boratav, he opened inroads into Anatolian folk literature with his discoveries, such as presenting Dadaloğlu to the public.[85] A. Koçak Esen noted that he carried his manuscript collection in chests wherever he went.[86] Murtaza's works were among the pieces of this collection. We may surmise that Şükrü Esen purchased them when he served in Kayseri for seven years (1923-30).

While they were in the Esen family's holdings for almost 30-40 years, their audience was discernible as republican intellectuals. A. Koçak Esen clarified that these intellectuals circulated such manuscripts from hand to hand at his home.[87] Folk literature represented an essential step in creating the nation-state's cultural identity in Turkey as an inspirational basis, stimulating intellectuals like Esen to pursue the

[82] The reader laments the loss of his parents in 1791 and 1814 and notes getting married three and a half months after his mother died. He also celebrates the birth of his children (Şerife, his twins, and Ali) between 1816 and 1826, which indicates that the manuscript was in his hands for a long period of time. *Seyâhâtnâme,* fol. Doublure.
[83] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 1b. 2a
[84] A. Osman Öztürk, "İnsan Manzaralarından Bir Portre: Ahmet Şükrü Esen", *Kitap-lık,* (April 2002):177.
[85] M. Sabri Koz (ed.), *Ahmet Şükrü Esen'e Armağan,* (Kişisel Books, 2009), 13.
[86] A. Şükrü Esen, *Anadolu Destanları,* (Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 5.
[87] Esen, *Anadolu Destanları*, 5.

manuscripts copied in Anatolia.[88] Ultimately, A. K. Esen donated various manuscripts, including *Seyâhatnâme* and *Eş'âr*, to the National Library in 1962.[89]

[88] Arzu Öztürkmen, *Türkiye'de Folklör ve Milliyetçilik,* (İletişim, 1998), 128.
[89] Koz (ed.), *Ahmet Şükrü Esen'e Armağan*, 21.

CHAPTER 2

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LAND OF RUM, ITS CITIES AND COMMUNITIES, AND THE REALMS BEYOND

"Yet, it is the people of Rum that seek Islam.
Wherever you go, it falls to the people of Rum to seek Islam."[90]
Yazıcı Murtaza

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Murtaza's observations about the sociopolitical world around him. What kinds of observations did Murtaza make about the different cities and communities he got to know inside the Ottoman domain? What do these observations reveal about his conceptualization of "Rum"? What about his commentary on the lands beyond the Ottoman realms? From a more documentary perspective, what kinds of information do his writings provide regarding urban and rural lives in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire? Two cities stand out in Murtaza's narrative about Ottoman towns. One is Istanbul, the seat of the Ottoman Empire, while the other is Kayseri, Murtaza's hometown. Thus, in the latter half of this chapter, we will pay close attention to his description of these two towns and their inhabitants. Throughout the chapter, where possible, we will also try to answer how different or typical Murtaza's spatial imaginaries were compared to other contemporary Ottoman writers.

[90] "Yine de İslâmı arayan Rum taifesidir. Her nereye gidersen git İslâm'ı aranmak Ehl-i Rum'a gelmiştir." Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 191b.

2.2 Demarcating the boundaries of Rum

Cemal Kafadar wrote in a seminal article that "the word Rum or *diyâr-ı Rum* (the lands of Rum) for defining a cultural as well as a physical space (the lands of Rome, limited over time to the eastern Roman lands, ie., Byzantium) was adopted from earlier Arabo-Persian usage but … stretched by Turkish speakers to refer to the zone that they inhabited and in large part also governed."[91] Kafadar further observed that the concept and its cognate "Rumi," denoting people who were inhabitants of this physical and cultural space, enjoyed its "heyday ...from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries" and that the word "seems to have slowly fallen out of favor in the eighteenth century."[92] Within this framework, Murtaza's commentary about the "lands of Rum" would seem to exemplify a relatively late usage of the concept.

Murtaza, in his poems, adheres to the traditional borders of the lands of Rum, roughly consisting of Anatolia and the Balkans. He distinguishes between the lands of Rum and Sham in a poem he wrote for Rami Mehmed, dated 1703.[93] Likewise, in the elegy he wrote for his son, whom he lost to the plague in 1721, he separated Rum from Damascus, Hijaz, and Iraq.[94] Evidently, his verse definition of Rum was fairly conventional and in line with that of most of his Ottoman contemporaries. It is in his prose travelogue that Murtaza draws the geographical borders of the "lands of Rum" in a significantly different fashion. He writes:

"The border of those we call the People of Rum is Babadag, Silistra, Nicopolis, Belgrade, Bosnia, and Thessaloniki from the Rumelian side; this is the border. This is where the religion of Islam is sought; beyond this line [the issue of

[91] Cemal Kafadar, "A Rome of One's Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum," in *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*. (Num. 24, Brill, 2007): 7–25. 9. For other studies on the concept, also see Salih Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı Kimliği: 14.-17. Yüzyıllarda Rum / Rumi Aidiyet ve İmgeleri*, (Kitap Yayınevi, 2017).
[92] Kafadar, 18.
[93] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 35b.
[94] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 6a.

religion] is confused (*karışık*). The border on the Anatolian side goes through Erzurum, Diyarbekir, Maraş, Jerusalem, Damascus, the Noble, and Mecca, Medina, may God honor them. Beyond these, it is confused."[95]

This broad definition of Murtaza, which has been visualized in Figure 11, contains several important insights. First, Murtaza defines Rum according to religious criteria. Those core Ottoman lands where Islamic practices are observed are considered to be part of the lands of Rum, but not those regions, the majority of whose inhabitants did not adhere to (Sunni) Islam or practiced it in a way that Murtaza considers deficient. Second, even though the lands of Rum in Ottoman usage were commonly understood to comprise Anatolia and Rumelia but not the "lands of the Arabs" (*Arabistân*),[96] Murtaza's definition of "Rum" in this passage includes, in addition to Anatolia and a truncated part of Rumeli, Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina. This usage not only contrasts with the spatial imaginary of most other Rumi Muslims but also with that of Damascenes, who often distinguished their region as "the land of Sham" (which can be loosely translated as the Levant) from the lands of Rum. [97]

It seems that Murtaza wanted to strengthen the Islamic elements in his definition of "Rum," and thus expanded it to include also Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina. The last two were Islam's holiest cities and thus enshrined in the spatial imagination of educated Rumis. Furthermore, as Nir Shafir argues, during the period of Ottoman rule, Damascus and Jerusalem were important stations for Rumis

[95] "Yine İslâmı arayan Rum tâ'ifesidir her nereye gidersen git İslâm aranmak ehl-i Rum'a gelmişdir. Ehl-i Rum didigimiz haddi Rumili tarafından Babatağı ve Silistre ve Nigbolı ve Belgrad ve Bosna ve Selanik haddı budur. İslâm din aranur, bunlardan öte karışıkdır. Anatolı tarafının haddi Erzurum ve Diyârbekir ve Maraş ve Kudüs ve Şâm-ı Şerif ve Mekke Medine şerefullâh te'âlâ. Bunlardan ötesi karışıkdır." Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 191b.
[96] Kafadar, 16.
[97] Sajdi, "In Other Worlds? Mapping Out the Spatial Imaginaries of 18th-Century Chroniclers from the Ottoman Levant (Bilād al-Shām)", 388; Nir Shafir, "In an Ottoman Holy Land: The Hajj and the Road from Damascus, 1500–1800", in *The Journal of the History of Religions*. (Volume 60, Number 1, August 2020), 1-2.

on the pilgrimage route, and various Ottoman authors sanctified these regions as a whole in their works and travelogues. [98] It is apparent that Murtaza followed this tradition by listing these cities together and attaching the honorific title 'noble' (*şerif*) to Damascus.

Murtaza's definition of the "Arab lands," on the other hand, is Mesopotamia-centered, following a diagonal line from Mardin to Basra.[99] In differentiating Rum from other lands, he compares it with Basra regarding several aspects of daily life. To illustrate, he contrasts their different prayer directions due to their geographical setting. While the people of Rum turn southward to Mecca, the people of Basra pray in a westward direction. Likewise, the crowing of roosters is another difference between the two lands due to their changing times. While roosters in Rum crow in the morning, roosters in Basra crow in the evening.[100]

It is striking that Murtaza excludes lands such as Albania, Thessaly, and Athens from his conceptualization of Rum (though these lands were part of the Ottoman territories in Europe) on the grounds that the religious practice in these lands was "confused." Murtaza used the word *karışık,* meaning confused or mixed, to signal the uncertainty he felt about the religious affiliations of those people who adhered to some form of Islam that did not conform to the norms of Sunni Islam as he understood them.[101] It must also be added that in his parlance, "religion" meant Islam, and Islam meant Sunni Islam. Murtaza noted many more "confused" people the further he moved from his homeland, Kayseri. He observes that in all the towns that he listed to the west of Serres in northern Greece, people are "confused" and most "do not seek

[98] Shafir, "In an Ottoman Holy Land", 3.
[99] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme,* fol. 186a.
[100] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme,* fol. 196a.
[101] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme,* fol. 167b.

religion."[102] Similarly, he notes that in Mosul and its surroundings, there are many who "seek Islam," but "confused" people are even more numerous.[103]

Interestingly, Murtaza also sometimes contrasted "Anatolia" with "Rum," the latter in such contexts denoting specifically Rumelia or the European parts of the Ottoman Empire. This brings to mind Kafadar's argument about how "Anatolia" would gradually replace "Rum" as a geographical designation after the late eighteenth century.[104] Murtaza's usage suggests that Anatolia in this broader geographical sense was already gaining currency in the eighteenth century. While describing Amasya, Murtaza claims that the people know the value of Islam thanks to the abundance of scholars and righteous people. He generalizes the conditions in Amasya to Anatolia, saying: "May my life be sacrificed for Anatolia! Rumelia is in ruins in terms of religion" (*Cânım kurbân olsun Anatolıya*. *Rumili dinden harâpdır*).[105]

It is worth underlining that Murtaza was not alone in contrasting Anatolia and Rum (i.e., Rumeli) in religio-moral terms. Two decades earlier, the Celveti sheikh İsmail Hakkı Bursevi (d. 1725) also contrasted the two regions in a broadly religio-moral manner, though reaching a very different conclusion.[106] As an Ottoman Muslim who hailed from the Bulgarian city of Aydos and thus a Rumelian himself, Bursevi ranked Rum (i.e., Rumelia) over Anatolia in terms of piety. He claims that God had purified the lands of Rum from deniers (*münkir*), meaning deniers of sainthood such as the notorious Kadızadelis, whereas Anatolia was full of them as well as celalis, the name given to soldiers-turned-bandits who had ravaged Anatolia throughout the seventeenth century. Consequently, he praises Rumelia as the land where God's

[102] "Lâkin insanı karışık din çokluk aranmaz," fol. 165b. "Lâkin Sirozdan berü ne kadar kasaba zikr olunduysa cümlesi karışıkdır din çokluk aranmaz," fol. 167b.
[103] "İslâmiyet arar çokdur lâkin karışık millet dahı çokdur," fol. 188a.
[104] Kafadar, 18.
[105] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 172a.
[106] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Tamâmü'l-Feyz Fî Bâbi'r-Ricâl: Atpazarî Kutup Osman Efendi Menâkibi (İnceleme - Çeviri - Tıpkıbasım)*, ed. Ramazan Muslu and Ali Namlı, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2020.

beneficence (*cemâl*) became manifest, while designating Anatolia as the land of the manifestation of God's wrath (*celâl*) [107] In Bursevi's imagination, Rumelia was also distinguished by the fact that the Ottoman sultans resided there.[108] Differently from Murtaza, and in line with general usage, Bursevi did not incorporate Sham and Hijaz into the lands of Rum, but he, too, held the "lands of the Arabs" in high esteem as the region in which God's beneficence (*cemâl*) and wrath (*celâl)* both became manifest and which thus stood for perfection (*kemâl*).[109]

2.3 Commentary on the lands outside Ottoman borders

Murtaza also offered some commentary about the world beyond Ottoman borders. It is important to point out, however, that he himself never ventured beyond the Ottoman realm and its former or contemporary tributaries, such as the Imamate of Yemen and the Bani Khalid. In fact, his commentary on the Ottomans' western neighbors was, even for its age, quite generic. He warns that going west of Albania would mean entering *daru'l-harb* (the abode of war). Framing Western Europe beyond the Adriatic as *Kâfiristân* (the land of the infidels), he announced his reluctance to travel to these lands as he did not need to see "infidels."[110]

However, some of the Istanbuli literati were writing much more informed works about European countries in this period.[111] Some of these literati, like İbrahim Müteferrika of Hungarian origin, stemmed from Christian European backgrounds themselves, while others owed their informed views to their experiences as Ottoman ambassadors to European countries. Examples in point would be Kara Mehmed in

[107] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Tamâmü'l-Feyz,* fol. 86b.
[108] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Tamâmü'l-Feyz,* fol. 87a
[109] İsmail Hakki Bursevi, *Tamâmü'l-Feyz,* fol. 87b.
[110] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 17b.
[111] For Müteferrika's description of different Western European powers, see İbrahim Müteferrika, *Usûlü'l-hikem fî Nizâmi'l-ümem*, ed. Coşkun Ünsal, (Ankara: TÜBA, 2022).

Vienna, Yirmisekiz Mehmed in Paris, or Said Effendi in Stockholm. [112] It would seem, however, that these more informed writers still constituted a minority of Ottoman Muslim literati. A professed lack of interest in the non-Muslim world was perhaps especially characteristic of those Muslim literati who came from towns in the Ottoman hinterland to the east. Despite coming from a larger city than Kayseri, for example, the Damascene scholar Ibn Kannan (d. 1740) also referred to all states under non-Muslim rule with the blanket term *bilad al-kuffar*, a synonym of *Kâfiristân*.[113]

Murtaza's commentary on Safavid Persia was also similarly limited. Despite the fact that he had lived in Basra, right on the frontier with Safavid Persia, for several years, his knowledge of Persia was restricted to a few buildings and traditions, like the rituals of Persians during their pilgrimages to the tomb of Imam Ali.[114] He demarcates Kars as "the end of the Persian border," calling the area beyond this frontier "Kizilbash." By way of cliché, he refers to the Persian soldiers as "the infidels of Persia" (*Acem kâfirleri*) in the context of their war with the Uzbeks.[115]

Again, Murtaza's highly cliché views of Persia contrast with the more nuanced views of the Istanbuli bureaucrats in this period. In particular, Ottoman ambassadors such as Dürri Ahmed Efendi (d. 1722) provided significant information about Persia as a sign of changing sociopolitical dynamics.[116] There was also a growing receptivity to more recent Persian cultural artifacts among Ottoman literati in this period.[117] On the other hand, Murtaza was not alone in his lack of interest in the Ottomans' Shii neighbor to the East. The contemporary Shami chronicler Ibn Budayr displayed a

[112] See F. Müge Göçek, "Comparison of Three Ottoman Embassies," in *East Encounters West,* 85-94.
[113] Sajdi, "In Other Worlds," 362
[114] Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 212a.
[115] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 182b, fol. 201b.
[116] Faik Reşit Unat, *Osmanlı Sefirleri ve Sefâretnâmeleri*, (Ankara: TTK, 1968), 59-61. Aydın Talay, "Dürri Ahmed Efendi," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (Volume 10, 1994), 34-35.
[117] For this growing receptivity, see, Can Erimtan, "The Perception of Saadabad: The 'Tulip Age' and Ottoman–Safavid Rivalry," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, D. Sajdi (ed.). 41-62, I. B. Tauris. 2014.

rather similar stance. Examining the spatial exclusions of Ibn Kannan and Ibn Budayr, Dana Sajdi observes that "while Ibn Kannān drew his borders primarily to exclude 'infidel' Christendom, Ibn Budayr drew his primarily to exclude 'heretic' Shīʿī Persia."[118]

Significantly, Murtaza had more to say on lands that lay to the East, most notably India (*Hindistân*). As will be discussed in the next chapter, Murtaza once tried to go to India, but since he had to abort his trip, we must conclude that he acquired much of his information about this land from the people he met in Basra, as this region was closely connected to India via long-distance trade. Indeed, Murtaza noted that many Indians came to Basra on their way to other Ottoman ports for commercial purposes.[119] In terms of information, he noted that India is bigger than the Ottoman Empire.[120] He also claimed that because horses were very expensive in India, elephants controlled by four soldiers were the main vehicle in warfare.[121] Murtaza also appears to have had some idea about Mughal political life. He states that Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707) was on the throne as "the Padishah of Hindustan" when he reached Basra. However, Augranzeb soon died without leaving a successor behind.[122] Comparing Mughal politics of succession with that of the Ottomans, Murtaza noted that “the rule among them is that when a sultan dies, his surviving children would fight and the victorious one would become the sultan.”[123] As an example, he gave Aurangzeb's younger son Shah Azam, who had become the ruler in just this manner. While this war of succession occurred between the Shah’s two princes, Muhammad

[118] Sajdi, “In Other Worlds,” 368.
[119] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 209b.
[120] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 209b.
[121] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 209b.
[122] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 209b.
[123] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 209b

Azam and Mu'azzam (Bahadur Shah I) (r. 1707-12), it resulted in the ascendancy of the latter to the throne.[124]

Murtaza also mentions "the Guris" (*Guriler*), who were a polytheistic community in Basra and presumably of Indian origin. He notes that they worship the ox by smearing ox dung on their foreheads every morning. Besides, they burn their dead in fires and also worship celestial objects.[125] A slightly earlier Ottoman writer, Evliya Çelebi, also provides similar information about this group, lending credence to Murtaza's observations.[126]

After India, Murtaza introduces Al-Ahsa (*Lahza*), located below Basra. At first, Murtaza presents al-Ahsa as a land of merchants and divers, emphasizing the extraction of pearls from its shores.[127] Later, however, his narrative focuses on the Bani Khalid tribe, whose rebellion in 1670 had briefly suspended Ottoman rule in the region and wrested Eastern Arabia from the hands of the Ottomans.[128] Murtaza designates al-Ahsa as being under "Arab" control, implying that Ottoman control was only nominal.

Murtaza notes that Bani Khalid leaders were wearing robes as annual gifts from the Governor of Basra as a sign of loyalty. He explains that the governor needed to show his authority by sending them to tribal leaders. Indeed, the Bani Khalid did not care about the Ottoman governor, as they had an invincible army of camels.[129] Moreover, they had the power to collect taxes from caravans and helped them complete their journeys from Basra to Aleppo in just twenty-five days. Thus, the

[124] Munis D. Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 311–317.
[125] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 204b.
[126] Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahâtnâmesi: 4. Kitap*, (YKY, 2000), fol. 362b.
[127] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 209b-210a.
[128] Hala Mundhir Fattah, *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia, and the Gulf, 1745–1900*, (SUNY Press, 1997), 95.
[129] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 210a.

Governor of Basra could not overcome the Bani Khalid, sending gifts on an almost equal footing.[130]

Eventually, Murtaza describes Oman and Yemen in southern Arabia. He emphasizes that a ruler with the title of "Imam" governs Oman from Muscat. This ruler had many fortresses and a strong army. In particular, his fleet of sixty galleys captured the infidel galleys by force but only collected zakat from the Muslim ones.[131] Indeed, Saif I (r. 1692-1711), the Imam of the Omani Empire, defeated the Portuguese with his navy, spreading his impact through the East African coast at that time.[132] Murtaza also notes that shaving beards and smoking tobacco were forbidden in Oman. Ultimately, he condemns the Ibadis of Oman for disliking Imam Ali.[133]

As for Yemen, he indicates that a ruler with the same title of "Imam" controlled this land. Ottoman rule here had ended in the mid-seventeenth century when the Zaydi tribes defeated the Ottoman army. In particular, he draws attention to the abundance of coffee in Yemen. He outlines its production and listed ports established for its trade, like Mocha, Bayt al-Faqih, and San'a.[134]

Based on these portrayals, we can conclude that Murtaza primarily drew attention to the sociopolitical traditions and local practices in his evaluations of neighboring countries. Their ties with the Ottoman regime were not decisive in his judgments. He did not condemn the Emirate of Bani Khalid and the Imamate of Yemen for breaking away from Ottoman rule. The main factor, however, was their relationship with Sunni Islam. On the eastern frontier, he condemns the Omanis for

[130] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 210a.
[131] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 210a.
[132] Abdul Aziz El-Ashban, "The Formation of the Omani Trading Empire under the Ya'aribah Dynasty (1624-1719)" *Arab Studies Quarterly*. (Vol. 1, Issue 4, 1979), 354-371. Salil Ibn Razik, "Seif-Bin-Sultan," in *History of the Imâms and Seyyids of 'Omân: From A.D. 661–1856*, Translated by George Percy Badger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92-93.
[133] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 210a.
[134] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 210a-210b.

not loving Imam Ali and celebrates the Uzbeks for fighting "the Persian infidels." Thus, while he adopted a harsh stance against Persia, which he had never fought, he appreciated the majority of the Marsh Arabs as Shafi Sunni Muslims, despite having fought them for years.[135]

2.4 Describing different communities under Ottoman rule

Throughout his writings, Murtaza also provides morally inflected commentaries on the diverse communities living in the Ottoman domains.[136] Despite his evocation of Anatolia as a geographical space with a defined religio-moral character, he does not refer to the predominantly Turkish-speaking Muslim communities in Anatolia as a whole. Rather, he differentiates them according to their place of residence and offers place-specific commentary. For example, he states that the people of Beypazarı are bad-tempered (*yanaz*); in Torbalı (Göynük), people are shameless, and in İzmit, the inhabitants are good and gentle.[137]

In this period, the word "Turk" did not yet denote an ethnicity based on native language and other shared cultural attributes. Rather, like "Arab," it was a somewhat pejorative term reserved for rural and, often, tribal populations with the added sense of rough and uncultured."[138] In line with this usage, Murtaza does not usually employ the word "Turk" to denote Turcophone communities in either Anatolia or the Balkans.[139]

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[135] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194a-194b.
[136] For the identity formation in different communities in the Ottoman world, see Baki Tezcan, K. K. Barbir (ed), *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World, A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).
[137] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 145b, fol. 146a, fol. 147a.
[138] Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule: 1516–1800*. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 29.
[139] The only instance in which he brought it up was to condemn the lack of knowledge of *'ilm-i hâl* among the "Turks," meaning presumably the Turcophone country folk. Besides, he utilized the term "Türkmân" to refer to rural Turcoman populations, like the denizens of Kırşehir. Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 145a. fol. 194b. For such Turcoman groups, see Ali Karamustafa, "Who were the Türkmen of Ottoman and Safavid lands? An overlooked early modern identity," in *Der Islam*, (De Gruyter, 97, 2, 2020), 476-499.

Nevertheless, Murtaza was not insensitive to linguistic, cultural, and religious differences among the various Muslim communities in the Ottoman lands, and did not hesitate to offer sharp criticism about communities that struck him as different. Given Murtaza's strong Sunni Muslim confessionalism, one does not expect to find extensive discussion of the practices of non-Muslim communities. However, he briefly remarks on the customs of non-Muslim communities around Gesi as a sign of commitment to his village setting. Thus, he remarks on the celebration of Hıdrellez (and probably St. George's Day) by Christians on April 23 in Gesi.[140] He also briefly mentions the Armenian and Jewish communities in other towns.[141] In his narrative, two communities away from his homeland particularly stand out when recounting his experiences with detailed depictions: Albanians residing in Southern Albania and Marsh Arabs dispersed throughout Lower Mesopotamia.

2.4.1 Albanians: warriors, outlaws, and heretics

One group about which Murtaza had particularly negative comments to make was Albanians. Before examining his views, it is worth noting that Albania was undergoing significant transformations in the early eighteenth century. Alongside the rise of banditry, socioeconomic problems had resulted in the mass migration of Albanians to other parts of the empire. The Islamization of the region had also accelerated due to various factors, from the implementation of heavy tax burdens on non-Muslim Albanians to the activities of different Sufi orders in the region.[142] Culturally, Albania was divided into two parts. The North, populated by speakers of the Gheg dialects, had once been predominantly Catholic, and the South, populated by

[140] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a.
[141] Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 186b. , fol. 168b. 164a, 185a, 187b.
[142] Bernd J. Fischer and Oliver Jens Schmitt, *A Concise History of Albania*, (CUP, 2022), 87-88.

speakers of the Tosk dialect, had been predominantly Greek Orthodox. The patterns of Islamization also differed in the two regions, Islamization beginning later in the South and continuing well into the nineteenth century.[143]

Because of their mass exodus to other parts of the Ottoman Empire, where many of them became menial laborers, joined the janissary corps or irregular mercenary (*sekbân*) units, and took part in various protests and rebellions, Albanians were widely stereotyped as bandits. Antonis Anastasopoulos claims that there was an ulterior motive in this representation as "such epithets de-legitimized their presence in a given region and, furthermore, this was how it was hoped that the state could be motivated to take action against them."[144] The regime also regarded them as a threat outside Albania, as underclass single Albanian men made up networks of urban gangs in Istanbul and other cities.[145] They played a prominent role in urban uprisings such as the Patrona Halil Rebellion, and the regime usually ordered their expulsion from cities, albeit ineffectively.[146]

Similarly, negative judgments about Albanians were also voiced by contemporary Istanbuli chroniclers, like Subhi (d. 1769), Sami (d. 1734), and Abdi (d. 1764).[147] While Sami and Abdi often classified Albanians as riff-raff (*erâzil*) in their works, Subhi claimed that they were resorting to rebellion due to "the evilness of their

[143] Antonina Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as an Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective", in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. F. Adanır and S. Faroqhi, (Brill, 2002), 223-66.
[144] Antonis Anastasopoulos, "Albanians in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Balkans," *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Toward a Social and Economic History*, ed. Elias Kolovos, Phokion Kotzageorgis, Sophia Laiou, and Marinos Sariyannis, (Isis Press, İstanbul, 2007), 40.
[145] Fariba Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700-1800*, (University of California Press, 2011), 49, 57.
[146] Robert W. Olson, "Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul: Social Upheaval and Political Realignment in the Ottoman Empire," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, (Brill, May 1977, Vol. 20, No. 2), 185–207.
[147] Uğur Bayraktar, "Bir Terim Olarak "Arnavut": 18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Düşüncesinde Arnavutlar," in *Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (Vol. 11, Num. 1, July 2022,) 13. 1-38. Antonina Zhelyazkova, "Islamization in the Balkans as an Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective", in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. F. Adanır and S. Faroqhi, (Brill, 2002), 259.

sick nature" (*redâ'et-i fıtriyye-i sakîme*).[148] Sami further referred to the Albanians in Istanbul as "vermin" (*haşerât*), excluding them not only from the Muslim community but also from humankind.[149]

It is possible that Murtaza had already picked up stereotypes about Albanians as bandits before arriving in Albania. But it is also a fact that banditry was rampant in Albania at the time. However, as Anastasopoulos notes, the activities of armed groups in the Albanian countryside cannot be reduced to banditry alone; communities also armed themselves for survival under the circumstances.[150] Murtaza testified amply to the prevalence of banditry in southern Albania. He even joked that those who can reach Apollonia (*Pazargâh*) alive after traveling through bandit-infested territories are sure to live for a long time.[151] In addition, he complained about the rampant disregard for central authority in the region, noting that the people of Permet know neither the sultan nor his viziers, and recognize their local leaders as beg.[152] In Gjirokastër, rebellious Albanians did not recognize the authorities and always plundered the villages for sheep and mules, according to him.[153] Murtaza also complained about counterfeiters (*kalpazan*) in the Albanian countryside. Counterfeiting activities had become widespread outside Istanbul due to financial ordeals in this period.[154] Murtaza writes that Albanians in Korçe (*Görice*) are pure counterfeiters, observing that they issue fake *cedid-i zolota* and *para*.[155]

But it was not just the rampant lawlessness that disturbed Murtaza about Albania. The Central Anatolian scribe was perplexed and disturbed by the customs

[148] Subhi Mehmed Efendi, *Subhî Tarihi: Sâmî ve Şâkir Tarihleri ile Birlikte, 1730-1744*, (Kitabevi Yayınları, 2007), 63, 99.
[149] Felix Konrad, "Coping with 'the Riff-Raff and Mob': Representations of Order and Disorder in the Patrona Halil Rebellion (1730)," in *Die Welt des Islams*, (Volume 54, Issue 3-4, 2014), 393.
[150] Anastasopoulos, "Albanians in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Balkans," 40.
[151] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 168a.
[152] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.
[153] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.
[154] Pamuk, *A Monetary History*, 158.
[155] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 169b.

prevalent in this multi-lingual and multi-religious society on the westernmost edge of the Ottoman realms. He condemned Albanians for not knowing enough Turkish. He observed that the knowledge of Islam and Turkish disappears in Albanian towns after Edessa (*Vodina*).[156] Besides, Albanians in Korçe and Permedi did not know Turkish, and most of them in Petrich and Radovich did not "seek Islam."[157] As for Gijrokastër, people there knew neither Turkish nor Islamic practices.[158]

A recurring theme in Murtaza's observations about Albanians was their disregard for basic norms of the sharia. He writes that in Strumica, "the people, including the imam and the muezzin, never leave the tavern. They are all bandits. Once or twice a week, people are killed; they shoot each other day and night."[159] According to him, only six Albanians among the town populace did not drink wine, while the rest, including the imam, were "bandits" in Strumica.[160] He also notes with disapproval that none of the southern Albanian men wore a beard, not even those whose hair had gone entirely white. As proof of their shame and indecency, he described how they wore long shirts that came down to their knees and how they tied a rag around their private parts and were not embarrassed to sit like this in front of people.[161]

It is worth noting that when Evliya Çelebi visited southern Albania in 1670, he also made similar observations about the local costumes. Differently from Murtaza, however, Evliya did not censure the Albanians for wearing long shirts that exposed their private parts; instead, he saw their costumes as a sign of their fearlessness and

[156] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 169a.
[157] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 165a, 166b.
[158] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.
[159] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 165b. On the association of Albanians with banditry at the end of the eighteenth century, see Frederick F. Anscombe, "Albanians and 'Mountain Bandits," in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, ed. F. F. Anscombe (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 87-113.
[160] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 165b.
[161] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a. For his other descriptions of the Albanian garments, see fol. 165b.

bravery.[162] Incidentally, for all his antipathy for Albanian customs, Murtaza also appreciated their strong honor code, noting that he never saw a girl older than seven outside.[163]

Murtaza also criticizes Albanians for either not knowing or not abiding by the precepts of Sunni Islam. He employs the word "confused" (*karışık*) to signal his confusion about their religious affiliation.[164] Yet, he was also aware that many of the people in southern Albania were at least formally Muslims. He complained that in Gjirokastër, no one performs the obligatory prayers, though their mosques are exquisite.[165] The twenty to twenty-five taverns in the town's bazaar make him uneasy. He writes: "There is no one, young or old, imam or sheikh, who does not drink wine, and they openly drink it. They know neither shame nor sin *('ayb ve günâh*)."[166] Besides being deprived of mosques and churches, they do not believe in the Creator and the afterlife.[167]

In a particularly interesting passage, Murtaza reports that many people in Gjirokastër curse Muawiyah, know Persian well, and recite Hafez's poems and Sadi's *Gulistan* and *Bostan*. They even read the Old Testament and the Psalms. However, he claims that they did not know what Islam was.[168] Clearly, by Islam, Murtaza meant here Sunni Islam, whereas the people he was describing were evidently strongly philo-Alid, even Shiitizing Sufis of some sort. What is more fascinating is that several decades before Murtaza, Evliya Çelebi also wrote that the majority of the residents in Gjirokastër curse Muawiya and Yazid; they are familiar with Persian and compose

[162] Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyâhâtnâmesi,* vol. 8, 293-6. Also see Robert Dankoff, Robert Elsie, *Evliya Celebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions: Kossovo, Montenegro, Ohrid* (Evliya Celebi's Book of Travels), (Brill Academic Publishing, 1999), 80-87.
[163] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, 170b.
[164] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 167b.
[165] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.
[166] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.
[167] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.
[168] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 170a.

poetry. He further reports hearing from other people that one group in the town practiced ritual cursing of two Umayyad caliphs (presumably Muawiya and Yazid).[169] Unfortunately, it is impossible at present to identify the Sufi order or orders to which the inhabitants of Gjirokastër belonged. The first such order to come to mind, the Bektashis, would arrive in Gjirokastër a little bit later, in the second half of the eighteenth century, while other Sufi orders (the Melami-Bayrami, the Gülşeni, the Mevlevi, and the Halveti) were also gradually strengthening their bases.[170]

2.4.2 Marsh Arabs in Lower Mesopotamia: rebels and heroes

Murtaza labels the lands he traveled from Mardin to Basra as "Arabia" (‘*Arabustân*) and portrays its communities in detail.[171] His attitude towards these communities can be best described as ambivalent. On the one hand, he was critical of the harsh measures taken by the Ottoman regime against the Marsh Arabs and the urban population. On the other hand, the plundering activities of the tribes highly disturbed him.

Murtaza's use of the word “Arab” is similar to other contemporary Ottoman Muslim authors. In the Ottoman world at the time, “the word 'Arab'…was a somewhat derogatory term used by speakers of both Arabic and Ottoman Turkish to refer to a nomadic or semi-nomadic inhabitant of the desert or the rural hinterlands of towns.”[172] Likewise, Murtaza often used the word “Arab” to refer to the tribal inhabitants of the

[169] Dankoff, Elsie, *Evliya Celebi in Albania and Adjacent Regions,* 87.
[170] For the list of Bektashi and other Sufi lodges in the eighteenth century, see Enes Kavalçalan, "Arnavutluk'un Ergiri (Gjirokastër) İlinde Osmanlı Dönemi İmar Faaliyetleri," Phd. Dissertation, Akdeniz University, 2021. For the multi-religious structure of the region and the role of Melami-Bayramis in Albania, see N. Clayer, A. Popovic, and T. Zarcone, *Melamis-Bayramis: Études sur Les Trois Mouvements Mystiques Musulmans*, Isis Books, 1988. Nathalie Clayer, *Mystiques, État et Societe*, Brill, 1994.
[171] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 186a.
[172] Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, 27.

Mesopotamian basin. Except for Basra, he referred to most Arabophone communities, especially urban ones, by their places of residence.[173]

Despite these commonalities, Murtaza's depiction of Marsh Arabs is significantly more detailed than that of earlier writers like Evliya Çelebi. [174] This is to be expected, as he stayed in this region for some five years. Drawing on his own experiences, he contrasted the military tactics (*kâide*) of the tribal Arab communities with those of the Ottoman army. He claimed that the tactics of the Marsh Arabs are all about trickery; when they lose a battle, they retreat very gradually, which helps them survive, whereas when the Ottomans retreat, they run away without looking back and crush each other.[175] The Ottomans also torture (*izâ*) or kill their captives, but such evil acts are unheard of among the Marsh Arabs.[176] Even if they rob their captives, they also give them medicine if they are wounded. If one captive dies, they bury him; if he is alive, they eventually release him. Murtaza attributes this to their commitment to Islam. Asserting that the culprit was the Ottomans, he noted that "the Ottomans did not leave them alone, their rebellion was due to their efforts to protect their honor (*ırz*)." [177]

Apart from their military culture, Murtaza praises the Marsh Arabs as modest people who do not desire fame and glory. They were even content with dates as their food. However, the Ottoman regime was not keeping its word against them.[178] The former sultans had given the ancestors of the tribal leaders land and property in Basra as *ocaklık* (family estates) with imperial decree. They had also assigned them a share

[173] Hathaway, 27.
[174] For the perception of the different Arabic-speaking communities by early modern Ottoman travelers, see İpek Hüner, "Traveling within the Empire: Perceptions of the East in the historical narratives of Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi on Cairo," Master's Thesis, Sabancı University, 2011.
[175] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194a.
[176] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194a.
[177] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194a, 194b.
[178] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194b.

from the provincial budget.[179] However, the Ottoman regime did not give them their rightful share because of its greed (*Osmânlı tamâ'kârlığı*). Thus, the main reason for their rebellions was to regain their former rights.[180]According to Murtaza, Ottoman greed had reached its peak on the last night of the siege of Basra. The army plundered the property of the people and burned everything. Fearful of the cruelty, Murtaza notes that "no infidel soldiers have committed such atrocities (*zulüm*) as our soldiers did against Basra that night."[181]

Nonetheless, Murtaza also criticized Marsh Arabs as a shameless community (*bir hayâsız tâife*), who demanded more clothes, pocket money, and coffee from the Governor of Basra out of greed.[182] Thus, Murtaza's account becomes contradictory at times, as he represents them to be modest and content in some passages and greedy in others. He underlines that they were disrespectful to their parents, rude, and shameless. They were also smoking hashish and tobacco in places called *haşişhâne*.[183] Eventually, they frequently gamble, get into debt, and run away from Basra to avoid paying their debts.[184]

2.5 Murtaza's representation of Ottoman cities

2.5.1 Murtaza's method of description

The representation of cities takes up an important part of Murtaza's travelogue. His representation of cities bears similarities with Ottoman *menzilnâmes* (route manuals).[185] In the words of Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, *menzilnâmes* are based on "a spatial

[179] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194b.
[180] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 194b.
[181] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 200a.
[182] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 195a-b.
[183] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 203b
[184] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 203b
[185] For the definition and discussion of *menzilnâmes* as travel accounts, see Güllü Yıldız, "Travel Essentials: Nature as Represented in Ottoman Route Manuals (Menzilnames)," *Kadim* (Issue 9, April 2025), 45-70.

paradigm that primarily conceptualizes topography as a route."[186] Various Ottoman intellectuals like Matrakçı Nasuh, Aşık Mehmed, and Evliya Çelebi had composed their works in the form of a *menzilnâme*; that is to say, they narrated the urban spaces they passed through in a linear manner.[187] Murtaza's "urban portraits" in depicting different Ottoman cities have similarities with the preceding Ottoman travelers, allowing us to compare or verify his spatial representations with theirs.[188]

In line with this tradition, in his prose travelogue, Murtaza lists 89 cities and towns he passed through on his journey from Kayseri to Basra. His descriptions of some of these towns are brief or while others are detailed. Usually, he first makes a note about the physical layout of the town in its entirety. When describing Komotini (*Gümülcine*), for instance, he first writes that it is in the middle of a field. Likewise, Erzurum is at the bottom of a mountain and on the edge of a distant field, he notes.[189] Following this, he examines the city's architectural elements, like the castle, the bazaar, or the mosque.[190] After architectural elements, he discusses the denizens of the city, their economic conditions, and agricultural products. In Komotini, he notes the presence of Jews living in the castle, whereas he depicts the inhabitants of Erzurum while describing its bazaars.[191] Eventually, he states that for both cities that everything is cheap and abundant.[192] In contrast, in some other cities, he comments on the high prices and scarcity of goods. He notes that many products are expensive in Kavala and

[186] Kafescioğlu, 141.
[187] Kafescioğlu, 140.
[188] One among many, there are identifiable similarities between his portrait of Istanbul with that of Evliya Çelebi although in a much narrower context. Both travelers remarked upon the city's gates and walls, then moved on to the imperial palaces and sultanic mosques, also interrupting their narratives to convey talismans or different stories for their readers. Evliya Çelebi, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi: 1. Kitap*, edited by R. Dankoff, S. Ali Kahraman, and Y. Dağlı, (Istanbul: YKY, 2008).
[189] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 182b.
[190] In Komotini, he first draws attention to the market and the castle, then portrays the mosque, the inn, and the bazaars. fol. 163b-164a. He first emphasizes the castle, the bazaar, and the market, then the inn, the bath, and the mosques in Erzurum. fol. 182b.
[191] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 182b
[192] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 164a, 182b.

Sapes,[193] and he warns that if ships loaded with goods do not come to Trabzon, there will be famine (*kızıllık*).[194]

Among all the towns that Murtaza describes, two cities stand out in particular. These are Istanbul (the imperial capital) and Kayseri (his hometown). Murtaza's more extensive commentary about these cities is worth examining in some detail, as it provides rich insights into the social, political, and religio-moral views of an Ottoman provincial clerk as well as valuable data about the physical and social transformations of these two cities in the early eighteenth century.

2.5.2 Istanbul: Murtaza's city tour

2.5.2.1 Sultanic monuments from a peripheral gaze

Aslı Niyazioğlu argues that many early modern Istanbulites composed works that introduce the city to its readers as a kind of "city tour." They suggested a different way of touring based on their sociopolitical position, even directing their differing readers to specific sites with instructions.[195] While some of these writers prioritized the sultanic monuments and urban life to praise the ruling elite, others stressed the significance of Sufi lodges over the cityscape.[196]

In this framework, Murtaza's description of Istanbul provides a relatively rare example of an Ottoman provincial visitor's perspective on the capital. As a low-ranking member of the scribal bureaucracy, Murtaza's tour of the city also privileged sultanic monuments, and as a close second, urban gardens, places that would probably also have been of interest to his Kayserite readers (Figure 12 and 13).[197]

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[193] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 163b-164a.
[194] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 181b.
[195] Niyazioğlu, Aslı, "Poets, Sufis, and Their City Tours," in *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul*, edited by Shirine Hamadeh and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu (Brill, 2022), 655.
[196] Niyazioğlu, "Poets, Sufis, and Their City Tours," 655.
[197] For further information about Murtaza's tour in prose and verse, see Batuhan Aksu, "Yazıcı Murtaza's Tour of Istanbul (Seyahatnâme)" and "Yazıcı Murtaza's Tour of Istanbul (Eş'âr and Seyahatnâme's Marginalia)," *MapHub*,

In a deliberate performative gesture, Murtaza begins his description of Istanbul by evoking a gathering (*bir meclis*) and asking for prayers from his readers (*okur yârân*).[198] This brings to mind the narrative style of the contemporary Damascene barber-turned-historian Ibn Budayr. Sajdi stresses that his chronicle bears the emotive perspective of a popular epic intended for public performance.[199]

Having resided in the Ottoman capital for more than a year, Murtaza claimed to know its every aspect.[200] When describing the city, he uses the names "Kostantiniyye" and "Istanbul" only twice.[201] He primarily prefers the word "Islambol" to emphasize the city's Islamic character. He also claims its uniqueness, saying "there is no city like this city we call Islambol, neither in Persia, nor among Uzbeks, nor in India, nor in Kafiristân in terms of its size, its multitude of people, and the strength of the religion of Islam (*din-i İslâmın kadri*)."[202] While he claims to have met with people from different lands, from Venice to India, while in Istanbul, he does not provide any details about these encounters.[203]

Murtaza's description of Istanbul's architecture begins with the city walls and gates. Following this, he describes the Topkapı Palace as a city by itself, like Kayseri, Diyarbekir, or Ankara.[204] By choosing the Topkapı Palace as the first major structure in his narrative, Murtaza places the power of the sultanate in the city at the axis of his narrative. After depicting the palace, he continues with the sultanic mosques, one of the essential architectural signs of sultanic power. Murtaza introduces and lists them

accessed on August 15, 2025. https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/yazici-murtazas-tour-of-istanbul and https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/murtaza-s-istanbul-verse

[198] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 148b.

[199] Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 157.

[200] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 156b.

[201] For Kostantiniyye and Istanbul, see: Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 31a-31b "Güft-i Kostantiniyye" and "Güft-i Der Kostantiniyye". For Istanbul, see Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 90b-91a "Ahvâl-i İstanbul'u" 172a "Selâtin-i İstanbul."

[202] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 148b.

[203] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 148b

[204] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 149a

with their architectural features. While doing this, he mentions the features that distinguish them from the other mosques in the city, such as their masonry (*kargîr*) structures and lead-covered domes.[205] He praises explicitly the Fatih Mosque as an uplifting place (*müferrih yir*) with a large courtyard, which provides relief to people in distress.[206]

Analyzing the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth-century sources about the Fatih Mosque, Çiğdem Kafescioğlu highlights that authors inside or closer to court circles appreciated it as an extensive complex by underlining "the beauty of the mosque, the importance of its educational function, and the extensive services it provided to the ulema, to travelers, and the people of the city."[207] In a similar way, Murtaza also discusses the functions of sultanic complexes with surrounding services and structures.[208] He indicates that large mosques have public kitchens (*imâret*) which serve soup and bread daily, with *zerde* and rice weekly.[209] Likewise, he notes that the four sides of the Bayezid Mosque are open to different urban facilities around the Grand Bazaar and Vezneciler.[210] Murtaza does not mention any shortcomings of these monuments. Thus, his representation of these mosques and the city's architecture in general very much affirms the role of imperial power in the city.

In describing the city's markets, Murtaza also refers to recent socioeconomic developments in urban life. As another set of markers for imperial power, he observes how new coins, such as *tuğralı altun*, *yeni sülüs*, and *yeni zolota*, are put into circulation.[211] He also appreciates the reconstruction of Bedesten around the Grand

[205] Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 149b.
[206] Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 149b.
[207] Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital,* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 86, 85-92.
[208] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 150a.
[209] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 155b-156a.
[210] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 150b-151a.
[211] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 153b.

Bazaar with stone arches and domes by the decree of Mustafa II.[212] He notes that those who could not afford restoration expenses sold their shops.[213] Nonetheless, the markets were perfect and rendered accessible by this sultanic measure, whether good or bad, cheap or expensive.[214]

Like other early modern Ottoman authors, Murtaza also mentions legends and talismans in connection with pre-Ottoman monuments.[215] Framing the Serpent Column as a talisman (*tılsım*) from pre-Ottoman times, he repeats the legend that snakes appeared in the city when Murad IV broke the column by mistake. Supporting sultanic rule once more, however, Murtaza praises, not blames, Murad's breaking of the Serpent Column in his narrative.[216]

Murtaza eventually orients their readers to Kağıthane on the outskirts of "İslambol." Niyazioğlu highlights that after Istanbul's expansion outside the city walls in the sixteenth century, "poets and sufis of later generations would expand the scope and content of their city tours."[217] Murtaza presents Kağıthane as a place where the sultan and statesmen entertained themselves and looked after their horses.[218] Thus, he maintains his ruling elite-centric narrative until the end of his tour.

Before passing on to other features of Murtaza's description of Istanbul, it is also necessary to note the places that are absent from his city tour. Interestingly, he does not exhibit too much interest in the city's Sufi lodges or Sufi life in general. Though he jotted down the fountain and tombstone inscriptions of many members of

[212] Mustafa II decided it after a catastrophic fire in 1701, see S. Eyice, "Büyük Çarşı," *TDV İA* (Vol. 6, 1992), 510-511, 509-513.
[213] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 156b.
[214] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 157b.
[215] For these legends, see Stefanos Yerisamos, *Türk Metinlerinde Kostantiniye ve Ayasofya Efsaneleri* (İletişim, 1993). Murtaza labels Hagia Sophia as an incomprehensible mountain-like building with its angel mosaics. He also confirms the rumour that it could hold 40,000 people by observing its congregation on the eve of a holiday. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 154b-155a.
[216] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 151a, 154a.
[217] Niyazioğlu, 668.
[218] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 157a.

the ruling elite, as we shall discuss below, he recorded the inscriptions on the tombstones of only two modest dervishes in Eyüp.[219] Murtaza also avoids describing buildings that were used exclusively by non-Muslim communities. To be sure, he notes that in Galata there were people from "seventy-two nations."[220] Likewise, he claimed to have met many foreigners in the city but devoted little space to them.

As a small-towner, Murtaza was clearly astonished by the opportunities of Istanbul. While everything from fruits to goods could be found here, Istanbul was also unique in terms of its scholarly life, bazaars, and gardens.[221] Perhaps to give a sense of the city's extensiveness, he also includes a list drawn up by Zekeriya Efendi (the judge of Istanbul) in 1577-8 about Istanbul's neighborhoods (11,143).[222]

Murtaza's account also contains several inaccuracies regarding the monuments of Istanbul. He mistakenly refers to Mihrimah Sultan as "Mihribân" when discussing the works she commissioned.[223] He makes no reference to Suleiman the Magnificent in the Şehzade Mosque, merely noting that a sultan commissioned it for his son.[224] For the Grand Bazaar, he made mistakes about the commission of pieces by Mehmed II and Mustafa II.[225] Although he lists the sultans in order of their accession to the throne (up to Ahmed III), these faults imply the limitations of his knowledge about Ottoman history.[226]

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[219] These are the gravestones of Abdülgani Gülşeni (the chief muezzin of the Eyüp Mosque, d. 1705) and an unknown Derviş Mustafa Agha (d. 1710). For the life of the former, see Fatih Koca, "Abdülğanî Gülşenî'nin Cumhûr Müezzinliği Tertîbi "Mahfel Sürmesi," *Rast Müzikoloji Dergisi*, (Volume V, Issue I, 2017), 1523-1534. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 22a, fol. 19b.

[220] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 147b.

[221] *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 148b, 157a-b.

[222] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 90b-91a. For Zekeriya's list, see, Mehmet Öz, "İstanbul Nüfusu: Fetihten XVIII. Yüzyıl Sonlarına Kadar," in *Antik Çağ'dan XXI. Yüzyıla Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*, (İBB, Vol. 3, 2015), 478-479.

[223] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 149a.

[224] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 149b.

[225] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 156b.

[226] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol.

Murtaza also devoted two separate poems and other verse fragments to Istanbul.[227] In these poems, he also enumerates various features of Istanbul, such as its twenty-four gates and five to ten thousand neighborhoods.[228] Unlike his prose account, however, his poems focus more on his emotions about the city.[229] In the longest part of one of his poems, he describes the procession of the sultan to the Friday prayer. The Friday prayers were an important occasion when the people could observe the sultan in processions to the mosques.[230] Murtaza uses the occasion to praise the sultan. He also introduces the various officials who took part in the processions, giving information about their positions in the procession and their duties in state service. Unlike in the case of the sultan, however, he does not offer blanket praise for these officials, but notes that some of them were compassionate (*şefkat sâhibi*) while others were cruel and unjust (*zulûmkâr*).[231]

2.5.2.2 Social, political, and religiomoral critique

Despite celebrating sultanic power throughout his description of Istanbul, Yazıcı Murtaza actually had quite a bit of criticism to offer about the social life and the ruling cadre in Istanbul. Embracing a moralistic perspective was a typical attitude in the Ottoman historical and literary corpus.[232] At the same time, his moralism was also a response to the sociopolitical transformations of the eighteenth century.

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[227] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, "Güft-i Yazıcı," fol. 15a-16a "Güft-i Yazıcı," fol. 27b-30b, "Güft-i Der-Kostantiniyye," fol. 31b-32a.
[228] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 29b.Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 148b. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 15b. fol. 27b.
[229] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 27b
[230] Zeynep Yürekli, "The Sultan, His Monument, and the Critical Public," in in *A Companion to Early Modern Istanbul*, edited by Shirine Hamadeh and Çiğdem Kafescioğlu (Brill, 2022), 550. For a detailed analysis of processions in the later century, see Hakan T. Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa!: Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüzyılında Merasimler* (İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017).
[231] These posts include the Agha of Janissaries, Chief Mufti, Kazasker, Grand Vizier, other viziers, governors, nakibü'l-eşraf, reisü'l-küttâb, and defterdar. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 28b-29a
[232] For a discussion of the role of agency and morality in the Ottoman historical and literary tradition, see Gottfried Hagen and Ethan L. Menchinger, "Ottoman Historical Thought," in *A Companion to Global Historical Thought*, Wiley Blackwell Companions to History, ed. P. Duara, V. Murthy, and A. Sartori, (Chichester: Wiley, 2014), 97-102.

In his view, discord (*fitne*), evil, and wickedness (*şer u şurûr*) had taken hold around them because "the majority of the people [in the Ottoman realm] are after worldly pleasure."[233] Depicting his society in stark contrasts, he complained that while the ignorant (*nâdân*) took charge of state affairs, the learned (*dânâ*) were trampled.[234] The problems stemmed from the immoral and impious acts of state officials (*erkân-ı devlet*).[235] It was their shortcomings that had led to the recent military defeats and caused "the enemies of religion" (*adâ-yı din*) to "capture half of the [Ottoman] realm" (*zemînin nısfını*).[236] Murtaza also blamed ecological problems like drought on the appointment of undeserving people to state posts.[237] He lamented that brave aghas languished at home without bread when they could have served capably as viziers.[238]

Murtaza characterized the undeserving people in state posts as "pimps" (*pizevenkler*).[239] The metaphor of pimping was also commonly used in the chronicle of Ibn Budayr. In one such passage, Budayr related an incident of suicide, in which an evidently desperate man protested his ill-treatment by the authorities by jumping from the minaret, saying, "dying is easier than pimping with the state in this age." Sajdi suggests that pimping implied here the state's failure to maintain moral order, which "reduces its subjects to metaphorical pimping and prostitution, and to literal suicide."[240] In hyperbolic fashion, Murtaza, too, sometimes claimed that death seemed preferable to life in a world where merit and order had both disappeared.[241] Besides, just as Ibn Budayr "invokes an older, more pristine social and moral order [and] turns the chronicle from a complacent text into a platform of interrogation,"[242] Murtaza

[233] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 9a-9b.
[234] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 9b.
[235] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 9b.
[236] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. *9b*.
[237] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 9b.
[238] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 26b.
[239] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 25a.
[240] Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 155-156.
[241] Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 26b.
[242] Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 4, 8.

demanded moral order (*nizâm*), turning his manuscripts from a purely lyrical or pastoral work into an account of questioning.

It is almost certain that Murtaza knew neither Ibn Budayr nor his chronicle. By contrast, he was not only familiar with but also admired the Ottoman satirical tradition. He praised the renowned satirical poet Nef'i (d. 1635), related stories about him, and jotted down some of his poems about the ruling cadre in Istanbul.[243] In his view, Nef'i was "unparalleled among the poets in the art of satire" (*hicv*), as well as being "witty" (*hâzırcevâp*), "intelligent" (*'âkil*), and "wise" (*'arif*).[244] Similar to Nef'i, Murtaza also resorted to versification to criticize Ottoman society.

Murtaza occasionally wrote of the rampant sociopolitical problems of his time as signs of the approaching apocalypse. In one of his poems written in January 1703, he draws an eschatological panorama by forming a close connection between the recent catastrophes and the Antichrist (*deccâl*). He claims that these signs will soon prompt the Antichrist to arise and Israfil to signal Doomsday.[245] Nevertheless, he opined that the Grand Vizier Rami Mehmed in Istanbul would overcome them with his messianic qualities. Accordingly, Rami would repair the ramshackle world (*devvâr-ı kûhen*) with his order (*nizâm*), and ensure justice and righteousness as the Second Mahdi (*Mehdî-i Sâni*).[246] Rami patronized many scribes, and he could have been one of them, though their relations were unknown.[247]

Beyond the apocalyptic concerns, Murtaza's manuscripts reflect his opinion concerning the sociocultural issues in Istanbul. Various Ottoman Muslim moralists in this era claimed that women were increasingly violating their sociocultural

[243] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 20b-21a.
[244] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, 152b-153b.
[245] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 9b
[246] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 36b.
[247] As the government appointed him to Erzurum before the Edirne Incident, he could not witness his would-be patron's downfall.

boundaries.[248] In their view, their illicit activities include sexual transgression and rising visibility in Istanbul's bazaars and squares.[249] According to Shirine Hamadeh, these issues turned out to be an anchored theme of Ottoman and foreign representations of Istanbul.[250] In line with his contemporaries, Murtaza viewed these claims in Istanbul as a clear sign of moral disorder. Thus, he reflected his concerns about women around the courtyard of the Fatih Mosque: "If there were no bastard boys (*puşt oğan*) and adulterous women (*zâni avret*), perhaps light (*nûr*) would clearly descend on this city."[251] He condemns the visibility of adulterous women with their lovers, and the silence of people about it in the market. In this case, only a *tebdil-i hâkim* (a state official) takes them away. Thus, he prays to protect his coreligionist brothers from them.[252] Hamadeh stresses that "the courtyard of a mosque was a natural forum for men to linger after prayer, meet with friends, and exchange news."[253] However, it turned into a rival space of sociability as the sphere of women's activities expanded through it in the early eighteenth century.

Murtaza further complained that women were quite visible in other markets of Istanbul, and they even make a fuss (*cârislik*) in Kağıthane.[254] He argues that "so many women walk around in the market that are perhaps more than men, especially on Friday, the herd of women (*avret sürüsi*) cannot be counted."[255] In a similar outlook, Ibn Budayr labels the increasing visibility of Damascene women in public space as transgression. Sajdi stresses that his condemnation signifies the narrowing of

[248] Zarinebaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul*, 87. Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 16.
[249] However, various studies interrogate the pitfalls of claiming an increasing visibility of women for this age. See, Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, (CUP, 2010) and Elyse Semerdjian, *"Off the Straight Path": Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo*, (Syracuse University Press, 2008).
[250] Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*, (University of Washington Press, 2007), 110.
[251] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 150a.
[252] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 150a.
[253] Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, 124.
[254] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 155b, 157a.
[255] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 150a.

his patriarchal authority, one of his very few privileges, in social order.[256] Thus, we can stress that Murtaza was also concerned about the limits of his patriarchal privileges. It led him, like Ibn Budayr, to condemn the visibility of women due to the fear of losing his authority.

Besides sociocultural tensions, Murtaza followed architectural developments, mainly the launching of a building activity by the ruling class in the eighteenth-century Istanbul. It encouraged further settlement alongside the waterfront, enhancing the physical landscape. As a result, waterfront palaces, gardens, fountains, and tombstones emerged as the new landmarks.[257] In particular, Hamadeh discusses that fountains became "a predominant obsession" among the ruling class as a marker of the imperial authority or the self-identity of other patrons.[258] Accordingly, different members of the state hierarchy, from queen mothers to viziers, were involved in building them.[259] Different social groups, like aghas and effendis, also emerged as fountain endowers. In Hamadeh's view, they perceived fountains as cheap public trophies for social prestige.[260]

In this context, Sajdi claims in Istanbul that a new 'textspace' emerged to mirror a new public urban culture around recently constructed monuments by the Ottoman literati.[261] Without explaining his motivation, Murtaza selectively recorded recent fountains and tombstones, and his records can be a "textspace" reflecting his outlook on the new urban culture. The inscriptions he recorded were completed between 1701 and 1718 (1113-30 in the Hijri calendar). After leaving Istanbul in

[256] Sajdi, 30, 152.
[257] Zarinebaf, 18. Hamadeh, 3.
[258] Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, 7, 12. For a nuanced analysis about the proliferation of the fountains by the same author, see Shirine Hamadeh, "Splash and Spectacle: The Obsession with Fountains in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," in *Muqarnas* (Brill, Volume XIX, 2002), 123-148.
[259] Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, 12.
[260] Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures*, 81.
[261] Sajdi, 35.

1702, he returned to it only in 1715 to become a clerk again before his last journey.[262] Thus, he should have noted most of these inscriptions during this visit.

It is worth highlighting that his selections of the inscriptions are mainly from the ruling cadre, despite the rising number of fountains and tombs by Istanbulites from lower social ranks. They are expectedly to celebrate their patrons at court, revealing a consistent attitude with Murtaza's narrative of Istanbul.[263] To begin with, he recorded the inscription of the fountain beside the Valide-i Cedid Mosque, built by Gülnuş Emetullah, the mother of Mustafa II and Ahmed III.[264] The growing proportion of women to men and the increasing presence of queen mothers a crucial characteristics of fountain patronage.[265] In Hamadeh's opinion, this ornate structure is a notable example of this development.[266] Naima, the famous court chronicler, composed her inscription in 1709, claiming that she gave new life to Üsküdar with her charity (Figure 14 and 15).[267]

He also recorded a fountain belonging to someone named Mehmed Pasha. Its undated inscription clarifies that he became "*rikâb-ı kâimakâm*" (deputy grand vizier) but was later martyred.[268] Another inscription recorded by Murtaza belongs to the demolished bathhouse of Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim (d. 1730) in Şehzadebaşı (Figure 16 and 17).[269]

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[262] "Gayri mekrûh işlere dal çek zelâlet altı yıl/Tekrar Âsitâneye var gel bir hizmete kâtib ol." Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 22a

[263] Outside the ruling elite, he only recorded two fountain inscriptions (one to an unidentified İbrahim (1701) and one to an anonymous person (1712)). Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 20a.

[264] For the architectural patronage of Gülnuş Sultan, see: Muzaffer Özgüleş, *The Women Who Built the Ottoman World: Female Patronage and the Architectural Legacy of Gülnuş Sultan*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017). Tülay Sezgin Orman, "Yeni Vâlide Külliyesi," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Vol. 43, 2013), 433-435.

[265] Hamadeh, 79. Zarinebaf, 18.

[266] Hamadeh, 83.

[267] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 19b.

[268] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 18b. As the most famous person who assumed this duty and was later murdered at this time was the grand vizier Elmas Mehmed (d. 1697), the fountain probably belongs to him. See, Mücteba İlgürel, "Elmas Mehmed Paşa," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Vol. 11, 1995), 62-63.

[269] As one of his first works as Grand Vizier, the inscription (1718) details his rise from the corps of the baltacı (*teberdâr*) to the vizier in biographical details. It remarks that a new bathhouse was a necessity in the area, congratulating the new Grand Vizier as he made "the Old Palace" (Eski Saray) prosperous with the bathhouse. Semavi Eyice, "Damad İbrâhim Paşa Külliyesi," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (Vol. 8, 1993), 445-447. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 28a.

As for tombstones, Sajdi clarified that in the eighteenth century, they "began to bear more detailed biographies of the dead interred there. What ceased to be inscribed in books became inscribed in stone."[270] His records reveal detailed insights about the dead, like Amcazade Hüseyin (d. 1702), who signed the Treaty of Karlowitz during his tenure. Murtaza records his tombstone in Şehzadebaşı, which indicates that he served as Grand Vizier for five years as the deputy of Mustafa II.[271] It also celebrates Karlowitz as his most significant victory since his determination forced his spiteful enemies (*adû-yu kîne-hâh*) to seek peace and tranquility (*sulh ve salâh*).[272] In this way, his tombstone turns into a biographical work applauding the deeds of the deceased vizier.[273]

2.5.3 Kayseri: A commercial and cultural center

2.5.3.1 Imagining the hometown

Yazıcı Murtaza spent most of his life in Kayseri, allowing him to record its various geographical and sociocultural elements. While his narrative of Kayseri in the prose travelogue is incomplete due to missing pages from his manuscript, the fact that he covered the city in other parts partially compensates for this issue.[274] His often sentimental and laudatory comments about the city require a cautious approach. He may have adopted such a narrative strategy to please his fellow Kayserite readers who were his primary audience. He also ceased his travels after 1715, choosing to spend the rest of his life usually around Kayseri. His careful recording of events here may

[270] Sajdi, 35.
[271] Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 19b.
[272] F. İsmail Ayanoğlu, *Tarihi Mezar Taşları: İstanbul-1*, (İBB Miras, 2022), 288.
[273] Murtaza also noted the tombstone of his daughter Fatma (b. 1714). Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 20a
[274] The first folio of the manuscript is torn, and it continues with Kırşehir, Kayseri's neighbour. It is possible to assume that the lost folio deals with Kayseri. The order of the towns Murtaza visited in his verse and prose travelogues usually overlaps. While Kırşehir is in second place in both of these, as Kayseri is in first place in verse, it is highly probable to be in first place in prose. In addition, his mention of a mountain, an important bridge, and the uniqueness of pastrami in the second folio strengthens this view.

imply that he embraced his hometown, despite its problems. Whatever the reason may be, he provides valuable insights into the various dynamics of Kayseri in the eighteenth century.[275] It also offers clues about how a peripheral Ottoman author perceived his homeland in this era.

Murtaza's devotion and admiration for his hometown is evident. Calling Kayseri his "homeland" (*vatanım*), he wished to immediately return there when he was in Baghdad.[276] In Basra, he further expressed his deep distress (*derd-i derûnumuz*) about being away from home when he felt alone in a mansion, saying, "I remembered my hometown (*memleketim*) and my children (*ehl ü iyâlım*), and many worries and thoughts passed through my mind."[277] Eventually, he framed Gesi, his village, as "my land, toil, desire" (*vatanım, zahmetim, arzûm*), thanking God for arriving at his homeland again in 1709 (Map 18 and 19).

His embracing attitude also drove him to portray Kayseri as an exceptional city. In his prose travelogue, he claims that it has the best pastrami, leather (*sahtiyan*), and undercoats (*astar*) in the Ottoman land, particularly highlighting the superiority of pastrami over its varieties in Ankara and Şebinkarahisar.[278] Murtaza also underlines the uniqueness of Mount Erciyes and the Tekgöz Bridge.[279] He reflects a similar approach in his two poems, one praising the city and the other satirizing its traders.[280] In the first poem, Erciyes occupies a central place as "the sultan of the mountains" (*dagların sultanı*) around the Develi Plain.[281]

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[275] As mentioned in the next chapter, he recorded architectural activities after the earthquake of 1717, like the chronogram of a repaired mosque by Grand Vizier Nişancı Mehmed in Erkilet during his tenure (1717-18). Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 26b. For a history of Kayseri in this era, see G. Açıkgöz, "Kayseri During the Ottoman Period," *in Kayseri: City of Caesars* (YKY, 2013).
[276] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 31b.
[277] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 159b. Murtaza repeated his longing in another note from 1707, stating his worry about the separation from his home. See, Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 150a.
[278] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 145a, 173a.
[279] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 145a.
[280] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 36b-38a, 38a-39a.
[281] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 36b-37a.

More significantly, he depicts more than one hundred villages with their socioeconomic and ecological features. (Figure 19).[282] His descriptions offer glimpses around rural life in Kayseri in the absence of archival records and other sources. At first glance, they suggest that many villages were poor in terms of sanitary conditions. He notes the scarcity of water in Sürütme and the high degree of pollution in Vekse and Ağırnas. The abundance of dung and mosquitoes in Karayük and Salur also causes fevers.[283] He also classifies their inhabitants in line with his opinions. While Isbütün, Cırlavık, and Dimidere are full of evil people, the villagers of Muncusun are hospitable.[284] Besides, Murtaza provides information about their topographies. While Talas resembles a big city more than a village, Erkilet is very conveniently located.[285] His favorite village among them is, expectedly, Gesi as a heaven-like place (*cennet misâli*) with its water, air, and villagers.[286]

2.5.3.2 Reflecting socioeconomic circumstances

Having a longstanding trading culture, Kayseri preserved its status as a leading commercial center in the eighteenth century.[287] Agricultural and commercial activities in the villages around the city contributed to this setting. Occupying a prominent position in Kayseri's countryside, Gesi was one of these nearby villages, at a distance of only 20 km from the city center.[288] This proximity enabled him to record the events

[282] For the location of each village, see Batuhan Aksu, "The Villages of Kayseri by Yazıcı Murtaza," *MapHub*, accessed on July 12, 2025. https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/murtaza-kayseri "Vatanım, zahmetim, ârzûm Gesî'ye geldim şükür." *Eş'âr,* fol. 21b.
[283] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 36b-37a.
[284] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 37a.
[285] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 37a, 37b, 38a.
[286] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 38a.
[287] Ottoman bureaucrats in Kayseri commissioned commercial establishments as an indicator of reinvigorated trade in this era. For instance, the Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damat Ibrahim built an extensive inn (*han*) in Kayseri in 1723. Ş. G. Açıkgöz, "Kayseri During the Ottoman Period," in *Kayseri: City of Caesars*, (YKY, 2013), 164, 170, 163-252.
[288] For the history of Gesi around the city center as a nearby village, see Vacit İmamoğlu, *Gesi Evleri* (Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2010). Hüseyin Cömert, *Gesi Vadisi: Gesi, Efkere, Darsiyak, Nize, Balagesi Mancusun*, (Gesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2010).

in his village and Kayseri often interchangeably. Therefore, his records reflect clues about the commercial life of both spaces from a microhistorical angle.

To illustrate, one of his poems illustrates Gesi's merchant community in a satirical manner.[289] He singles out merchants for their vices, such as "the counterfeiter Koca İvaz" and "the misguided Emir İmam."[290] He also testifies to their mobility inside and outside the Ottoman realm. While Helvacı Torun went to Egypt and Zaim to Hamedan, Bürüngüzli Deli Mehmed left the city due to his debt.[291] Murtaza even claims to encounter a Baghdadi merchant in Gesi.[292] Interestingly, he also satirically mentions several female merchants due to their reluctance to give their products.[293] Being fed up with traders, he expresses a desire to go to Sham and Egypt in order to engage in the axe (*tibir*) trade at the end of his satire.[294]

Besides, Murtaza blames his community in Kayseri primarily for its obsession with wealth, like his contemporary Ibn Budayr. Just as Ibn Budayr "identified himself as a poor man—as one of 'the small people'—and viewed his society as one composed of the tyrannical rich and the oppressed poor,"[295] Murtaza represents himself as a poor scribe and complained about society's hatred towards him when he was left penniless.[296] He laments that people at large do not object to the unjust profits of the rich and defend them even if they "sold their vulva (*ferc*)."[297] By contrast, when dealing with the poor, people turn a blind eye and refuse to give them even coins

[289] "Tekerleme-i Bey ü Şirâ Der-Gesî," Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 38a-39a.
[290] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 38a, 38b.
[291] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 38a, 38b.
[292] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 39a.
[293] He even blames a female trader named "daughter-in-law of Eyyüb" (*Eyyüb'ün gelini*) for having a sharp tongue. *Eş'âr*, fol. 38b.
[294] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 39a.
[295] Sajdi, 4.
[296] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 22b, 23b.
[297] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 25a.

(*fülüs*).[298] Therefore, he basically points the finger at the rich as the culprits for the socioeconomic tensions.

2.5.3.3 Revealing cultural life

However, Murtaza does not confine himself to interpreting the socioeconomic life. Working as a hodja and imam in his village, Murtaza also expresses his interest in the cultural landscape. In his Kayseri-centric view, the city is a center of learning (*'ilmin duragı*) and most of its people are students of some scholar (*bir allâmın çerâgı*).[299] Especially, he notes poems about Ali Nisari (1641-98), the leading scholar, as the judge of Kayseri for many years. Although Nisari was known as "the reviver of Kayseri" (*Muhyi-i Kayseri*) on account of his scholarly activities, he was summoned to Istanbul upon the complaints of his opponents shortly before his death.[300]

Despite not commenting about this investigation, Murtaza recorded defensive poems about him. Helvacı Ali, an unknown poet, emphasized that Nisari counseled people for thirty years as "the second Abu Hanifa." However, his rivals complained to the Sublime Porte to discredit his legacy. But their attempt as evil people (*ehl-i şirâr*) would be in vain.[301] Indeed, Mehmed Beliğ's (d. 1708) (Ali Nisari's son) appointment to the same post as the Mufti of Kayseri verified Helvacı's claim.[302] Murtaza also recorded a poem by Sadıki Mustafa (d. 1722), a local poet who also composed elegies for Nisari as one of his followers.[303] Murtaza does not include the views of Nisari's

[298] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 25a.
[299] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 36b.
[300] Atabey Kılıç, "Ali Nisârî," in *Türk Edebiyatı İsimler Sözlüğü*, Ahmet Yesevi Üniversitesi, accessed on May 1, 2025. https://teis.yesevi.edu.tr/madde-detay/ali-nisari
[301] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme,* fol. 38a.
[302] Halit Erkiletlioğlu, *Geniş Kayseri Tarihi*, (Kişisel Yayınlar, 2006), 556.
[303] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahâtnâme,* fol. 29a-b For the life of Sadiki Mustafa, see, E. Çabuk, T. Dilben, S. Alaçam, "Helvacizâde Sâdikî Mustafa Efendi'nin Çeşitli Yazma Eserlerdeki Manzumeleri," in *Eski Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Vol. 1, Issue 1, August 2018), 284-337. Murtaza also records the poet of a scholar named Mollazade Muti, about whom no information is available. "Cevab-ı Mu'tî Efendi-i Kayseriyye Monlâzâde," *Seyahâtnâme*, fol. 27b.

opponents in any way, presumably because he found them to be mistaken and not deserving of representation.

Despite his positive evaluation of individual scholars, Murtaza criticized the ulama in general in clichés. He observes that while they look like ascetics (*zâhid*) with their prayer beads and robes, they actually have only the love of status and posts (*mansıb sevdâsı*) in their heart. They allowed false testimony in court while eating baklava and drinking coffee.[304] Due to the bad example they set, the people's creed (*halkın akâidin*) had become corrupted; people were no longer going to the mosque for the five daily prayers.[305] Consequently, the Muslim community had fractured into multiple sects (*fırka*).[306] For Murtaza, the only remedy for all these ills was to hold on to the Quran, which is the only way for salvation.[307] He also counseled Sufis to be merciful (*insâf*) and pure (*sâfî*) as only these qualities ensure their perfection.[308] Furthermore, Murtaza identifies the lack of basic religious knowledge (*'ilm-i hâl*) among people as a major moral problem:

> "The Turk does not know his *'ilm-i hâl*. Those who know cannot speak.
> They do not come to learned gatherings (*meclis*). They say, "I do not have merit."[309]
>
> "If you ask about *'ilm-i hâl*, one knows, and a thousand don't
> They never mind religion, all they do is to be idle." [310]

These kinds of complaints about people's neglect of basic religious knowledge had then more than a century-long history. Derin Terzioğlu underlines that many *'ilm-i hâl* authors perceived the late sixteenth-early seventeenth-century crisis as a moral

[304] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 22b.
[305] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 22b, 25b.
[306] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 24a-25b.
[307] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 22b.
[308] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 23a.
[309] Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 23b.
[310] Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 14a.

one and "blamed many of the military and political setbacks of the time on the growing worldliness of Ottoman society…and they recommended a regime of religious and moral instruction in response."[311] In the eighteenth century, too, popular preachers, like Fazlızade Ali, made similar religiomoral remarks.[312] In a manner reminiscent of the Kadızadeli preachers in the seventeenth century, Murtaza was critical of society's appreciation of singing (*tegannî*) and singers (*muganni*), which he deemed religiolegally prohibited. As proof of society's depravity, he noted that singers even become grand viziers, possibly implying the rise of "Pakçemüezzin" (Pure Muezzin) Baltacı Mehmed Pasha (d. 1712) from the position of court musician to the grand vizierate.[313]

Considering his comments, we can surmise that he offers a critical and moralizing vision of his community. Different sorts of people, from traders to scholars, indulge in pursuing their desires without organizing their lives around religiomoral principles. Regardless, he exalts his habitat as an intellectual center, possibly because of his peripheral identity as a Kayserite. Recording the voices of Nisari and his followers, he likely conceives them as exemplary figures.

2.6 Conclusion

Investigating Yazıcı Murtaza's descriptions of different lands, towns, and communities, this chapter discusses his mental map of the world around him. First, his perception of space is rooted not only in the *menzilnâme* tradition but also shaped by his peripheral experiences, moralist epistemology, and bureaucratic missions in

[311] Derin Terzioğlu, "Where İlmihal Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization," in *Past and Present*, (Oxford University Press, Num. 220, August 2013), 86.
[312] Marlene Kurz, *Ways to Heaven, Gates to Hell: Fazlizade 'Ali's Struggle with the Diversity of Ottoman Islam*, (EB-Verlag), 2011. Ethan Menchinger, "Review of Marlene Kurz, Ways to Heaven, Gates to Hell: Faẓlīzāde 'Alī's Struggle with the Diversity of Ottoman Islam" (2011), *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2018.
[313] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 25a.

different localities. In this way, his perspective departs from the Istanbul-based narratives that dominate early modern Ottoman historiography. Therefore, his spatial imaginary also offers an alternative peripheral viewpoint, like his contemporary Shami chroniclers. However, they also include blind spots due to his local and religiomoral backgrounds.

Murtaza's distinct yet limited mental map addresses his lived space with moral concerns more than physical boundaries. Hence, the meaning he ascribes to "the lands of Rum" possesses simultaneously expansive and restrictive qualities. Unlike his contemporaries, his incorporation of Islamic holy centers into the Rum indicates his grasp of geography as a religiomoral category. However, his relative silence about non-Muslim groups and his cliches regarding Persia and Western Europe are noteworthy exclusions. In this sense, his omissions cannot be simply viewed as intellectual flaws, but the possible outcomes of his confessional and local identities.

When examined through a comparative lens, we can clarify that his narrative is not exclusive but constitutive of early modern Ottoman moralists, like Ibn Budayr. In particular, he shares similar religiolegal and eschatological concerns with them, from *'ilm-i hâl* knowledge to music. Employing the *menzilnâme* tradition and other textual aspects, he also has similar contours to early modern Ottoman travelers and geographers.

Nonetheless, his voice as a small towner was distinguishable in the absence of archival records. It contributes to our understanding of the eighteenth-century Ottoman world via rare records, like ethnographic insights about different communities, which invite further analysis. Besides, the combination of using diverse narrative techniques both in prose and verse and recording new monuments illustrates his distinctive urban imagery. In writing the world from Gesi, his texts offer how a

Central Anatolian Ottoman Muslim man of middling station viewed his homeland and other realms as far as India. Despite his limitations and prejudices, this chapter displays that Murtaza's case invites us to reconsider Ottoman geographical imagination beyond Istanbul's literary elite.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTIONS OF NATURE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

"We roam the deserts of Karbala. Turn the world like a compass; it is gallantry to me!"[314]

Yazıcı Murtaza

3.1 Introduction

After highlighting Murtaza's communal and sociopolitical perspectives in the previous chapter, this chapter will investigate his descriptions of nature and natural disasters. Murtaza stands out among early modern Ottoman Muslim writers for the close attention he paid to his natural environment. This close attention can be explained partly by his traveling in different ecological zones and partly by the fact that he spent a good part of his life in a semi-rural context and engaged in farming activities himself. But how different or typical were his observations about his natural surroundings compared to other contemporary Ottoman Muslim writers? What kinds of observations did he make about the physical and natural habitat he traveled through? What do these observations reveal about his conceptualization of "nature"? From a more documentary perspective, what kinds of information do his writings provide us regarding the various natural events that he observed during his adult life? These are some of the questions we shall try to answer in this chapter by analyzing his writings about nature and natural disasters in their specific literary, cultural, and natural historical contexts.

[314] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 21a.

3.2 Depicting nature

Until now, descriptions of nature in literary works written by medieval and early modern Muslims have been little explored. This stands in contrast to the voluminous scholarship that has explored changing conceptualizations of nature in Western Europe from the medieval to the modern eras.[315] Examining conceptualizations of nature in the Ottoman context can offer valuable insights into how, why, and in what ways Ottoman subjects of differing backgrounds attempted to depict, design, and deal with their habitats. In addition, such an inquiry can contribute to broader scholarly debates in global environmental thought.

Murtaza's representations of "nature" were embedded either in the story of his travels or in the depiction of his everyday life in his home village, and in both instances, they reflected the influence of the pre-modern literary traditions. Like other premodern Muslims, Murtaza did not employ a comprehensive and holistic concept like *tabîat* (nature) or *tabiî* (natural) for manifestations that refer to non-human aspects of the physical world, which scholarship on environmental studies calls the natural world.[316] Murtaza rarely utilized the term *tabîat*, and when he did, he used it to refer to the characteristics of a collective group, as in "the temperament of the people of İzmit" (*İzmit âdeminin tabîatı*).[317] Given that the concept of nature gained its current

[315] For recent studies, see *Nature in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Times,* Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (ed.), (De Gruyter, 2024), S. L. Müller, T. K. Pusse, ed. *From Ego to Eco: Mapping Shifts from Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism* (Brill, 2017). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004358324, M. van Beek and M. van den Doel, 'A Great Miracle is Man': *Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism in the Early Modern Netherlands and Italy*, The Royal Netherlands Institute Rome (KNIR) Workshop, 22-23 February 2024. https://www.knir.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Programma-Workshop-22-23.02.2024_DEF.pdf; for a rare study on representations of nature in Islamicate societies, see Amit Sadan, "The Nature of Legitimacy: Representations of the Natural World in Iskandar Beg Munshi's Tārīkh-e ʿĀlam-ārā-ye ʿAbbāsī," in *Iranian Studies*, (Routledge, 2021 Vol. 54, No. 1-2,) 41, 41–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2019.1647095

[316] Amit Sadan, "The Nature of Legitimacy, "42.

[317] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme,* fol. 147a.

meaning after the eighteenth century, his definition of "nature" was compatible with the pre-modern learned traditions.[318]

Therefore, while discussing "nature" and related concepts, the chapter will adhere to Amit Sadan's definition of nature as "a space that does not lend itself to human domination."[319] "Natural disasters," which the second part of this chapter will discuss, constitute one of the sub-categories of what Sadan conceptualizes as "natural manifestations."[320] According to him, such events "were not perceived as 'natural disasters' in the modern sense but rather within a conceptual framework rooted in medieval Islamicate understandings of nature and the cosmos."[321] Following this tradition, Murtaza did not view these events as "natural" but rather either interpreted them as the result of the divine command (*emrullâh, Allâh emriyle*) through a theocentric lens or did not comment on their causes.[322]

3.2.1 Recounting nature for narrating experiences

Given his strategy of using natural elements to narrate his memoirs, Murtaza's approach to his habitat was expectedly anthropocentric.[323] Thus, although Murtaza abundantly portrayed his habitat during and after his travels, he brought human desires, feelings, and viewpoints to the fore. In the first part of his prose travelogue from Kayseri to Istanbul, Murtaza did not recount his experiences but handled the

[318] For the concept of nature with its shifting meanings in different historical contexts, see Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt's New World.* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2015). F Ducarme. D, Couvet. "What does 'nature' mean?" in *Palgrave Commun*, (Palgrave, Vol. 6, Issue 14, 2020). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-0390-y Robert B. Marks, "Ancient Chinese Ideas about Nature and the Environment," in *China: Its Environment and History*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012), 92-99.
[319] Sadan, "The Nature of Legitimacy," 41.
[320] "Natural manifestations -such as forests, rivers, a pack of gazelles, disease, or an earthquake- cannot be simply controlled, explained, predicted, or contained." Sadan, "The Nature of Legitimacy," 42.
[321] Sadan, "The Nature of Legitimacy, "41.
[322] To illustrate, he used these two terms ten times in his prose travelogue in fol. 169a-b, 176b, 187a, 199b, 202b, 203b, 204b.
[323] In Lorraine Daston's definition, "anthropocentrism means privileging human viewpoints and desires above all others." Lorraine Daston, "How Nature Became the Other: Anthropomorphism and Anthropocentrism in Early Modern Natural Philosophy," in *Biology as Society*, Sabine Maasen et al. (ed.), (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 38.

geographical elements of the Anatolian towns he visited.[324] These descriptions are brief, running somewhere between two and eleven sentences, and are formulaic. To illustrate, while describing the town of Ankara in five lines, he describes its topographical features in one and a half lines. He writes: "There is a distant mountain. They call it *Elmadağı*. This city [Ankara/*Engüri*] is at the bottom of it. It is in a deserted place... Its water is a little. All of it comes from *Elmadağı*."[325] The remaining sentences enumerate the socioeconomic activities in the town's vicinity. It might be worth emphasizing that Murtaza follows this scheme not only for towns that were close to his hometown, Kayseri, and with which he was more familiar. He also follows a similar scheme while describing a wide variety of settlements in the eastern Balkans and Iraq.[326] In his five-line entry on Shumen (*Şumnı*) in present-day north Bulgaria, for example, he describes the nearby stream and vineyards in one and a half lines.[327]

Murtaza's descriptions of nature become more elaborate in those parts in which he narrates his experiences. As indicated by the title he originally gave his work, "*bu tevârih-i serencâm*," he prioritized narrating his *serencâm* (a chain of situations or incidents that occurred to him) more than geographical structures per se.[328] To exemplify, he depicts the relatively small town of Gijrokastër (*Ergiri Kasdori*) in southern Albania in longer sentences and phrases in 43 lines, incorporating ecological structures with his experiences. He had to cross the high altitudes of the Nemërçkë mountain range and the gorge surrounding the Polican-Suhë Road to reach Gjirokastër.[329] Murtaza's description, based on his experiences here, is

[324] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 145a-148b.
[325] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 145a.
[326] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 157b-162b, 192a-196a.
[327] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 160b.
[328] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 159b.
[329] About the region's mountainous conditions, see D. Doka and P. Qiriazi, *The Geography of Albania: Problems and Perspectives*, (Springer Cham, 2022), 244.

longer and more detailed than that of Elmadağı. He writes: “You walk uphill to a mountain [Mount Maja e Papingut] that rises from *Pürmet* [Përmet], and you climb with hardship from morning prayer to midday and afternoon. It is forested; it is quite steep…You rest a little and eat bread since one gets hungry."[330]

Careful to keep his descriptions concise when describing only the ecological elements of a town, Murtaza expands them when he advises about the benefits or harms they pose for humans. While he mentions the severe winters and scorching summers in Trabzon in a single line, he describes Basra's even more challenging climate more extensively.[331] While relating his own experiences, he notes that Basra became so scorching after Easter that one “cannot stay outside due to the heat. It is impossible to stay inside due to the flies and fleas. You should sleep in sweat until the morning with a headscarf on your head and a shirt on your back at night.”[332] To give a more positive example, he recommends a hot spring (*ılıca*) outside Niksar, noting that it “is neither cold nor hot. If a person performs full ritual ablution (*gusül*), his body turns pink, and he does not want the soap to wash his clothes; it is so pure that a thousand soaps would not do the same."[333] In all these instances, Murtaza privileges human viewpoints and desires in conceptualizing natural manifestations, which is in line with the wider Islamic learned tradition.[334]

[330] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 170b-171a.
[331] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 181b. Despite describing Trabzon in twelve lines, he noted its natural elements in only about four lines.
[332] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 205b.
[333] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 173a.
[334] Kaveh L. Afrasiabi “Islam and Post-Anthropocentrism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, Volume 1, (Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 872. Z. Abidin Bagir and Najiyah Martiam, “Islam: Norms and practices,” in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, W. Jenkins, M. E. Tucker, and J. Grim (eds.), (Routledge, 2017), 81.

3.2.2 The interventions of natural manifestations

As mentioned in the previous chapter, although Murtaza satirized Kayseri's social life, he often admired its natural features and extolled them in his poems.[335] In terms of his devotion to Kayseri, we can compare Murtaza to al-Makki, a "Hims-centric" court clerk, and to the Shi' agriculturalist and chronicler Haydar Rida al-Rukayni and his son in the Ottoman Sham. Dana Sajdi, who studied both works, maintains that the work of the Rukaynis is "the only chronicle in Arabic-Islamic history known to have been written by farmers."[336] In her view, the Rukaynis felt less familiar with the geography and happenings of other localities as they moved away from their "small world" within the Matawila community.[337] In a similar line, al-Makki was a modest clerk like Murtaza. He felt estranged from other cities and regions as he moved geographically away from his homeland of Hims.[338] Similar to these Shami chroniclers, Murtaza felt topographically alienated as he moved away from Kayseri, which he often missed during his travels. Besides, he faced personal hardships due to climatic and topographic issues in these lands, conveying them from his perspective.

For instance, the long and tiring journey through the mountains of southern Albania left him exhausted and bedridden. As he stated in Gjirokastër, "We stayed in this town for 43 days…but we were in bed for 35 of these 43 days; we were on the verge of death."[339] Likewise, Macedonia's scorching heat left him exhausted and confined to his sickbed. In his view, Ustrumca's "weather is terrible, so hot that you cannot sit in the shade, you would fall into a fever. All of us, alongside our entourage,

[335] He was also familiar with its landscape as he was involved in agricultural activities for decades, as will be mentioned below.
[336] Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 82.
[337] Sajdi, "Peripheral Visions: the Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th-Century Ottoman Levant," 270.
[338] Dana Sajdi, "In Other Worlds? Mapping Out the Spatial Imaginaries of 18th-Century Chroniclers from the Ottoman Levant (Bilād al-Shām)," in *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, (29 Mayıs Üniversitesi, Volume XLIV, 2014), 376-378.
[339] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme,* fol. 170a-170b.

fell ill, waiting in our beds for two or three months."[340] He also recorded that Basra's hot and undrinkable water caused the death of two hundred soldiers and ailed him and others for two years.[341] In the face of these hardships, the only thing he could do was to rest, eat, and wait for the illness to pass.

When Murtaza found himself in unfamiliar landscapes, he felt a greater desire to return to his homeland. This can be seen in his failed and undated trips to the Arabian Peninsula and India. In Basra, he decided to cross *Hindistân Deryâsı* (a term by which he means both the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean) to reach the Red Sea and perform the Hajj. He noted that though the land route was easy, the Marsh Arabs posed a major threat, saying: "If it were directly possible, *Beytullâh* (The House of God) is sixteen stops away from Basra, but it is not possible due to the Arabs.[342] At first, he was able to reach Yemen and continued through the sea route since the land route was "tortuous and far."[343]

Despite his initial success in passing Bab al-Mandab, Murtaza could not proceed further as the extensive southern shelf was increasingly narrow to the north. Murtaza aimed to reach Jeddah via the Red Sea for the pilgrimage, stating that "we went for twenty-six days by sea and wandered these places."[344] Wick states that these southern parts were "subject to wind patterns resulting from the monsoon seasons. Ships from beyond Bab al-Mandab were therefore unlikely to pursue their travels north of Jiddah for fear of missing the return winds."[345] Although Murtaza arrived at Al-Khawkhah on the Tihamah coastal plain in the Arabian mainland, the lack of water caused him to abandon his plans to travel further. He writes: "We were exhausted in

[340] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 165b.
[341] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 205b.
[342] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 210b.
[343] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 210b.
[344] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 210b.
[345] Wick, *The Red Sea*, 27.

the town called Kevkek, and we could not continue because of thirst and the trouble of the sea (*deryâ zahmeti*), and went back to Basra."[346]

The ecological obstacles of the Red Sea prevented Murtaza not only from going on Hajj but also from traveling to Mughal India. As discussed in the previous chapter, Murtaza presented various details about Mughal India, confirming the geographical and commercial connectedness of Basra with India. Despite these ties, however, he got stuck on the eastern shores of the Persian Gulf on his way to India during an undated attempt. M. R. Bhacker remarks that the Gulf waters in Hormuz "are dotted with islands and craft are able to hop from one to another." [347] However, both the tidal influence and the monsoon winds could have deterred him from his path to reach Hormuz. Resorting to the land route, he could cross the Ottoman border and complained about the vastness of the desert.[348] Despite reaching Qatif in Lahsa under the Bani Khalid Emirate, geographical conditions led him to abandon his project once more (Figure 20).[349]

3.2.3 Reflecting social reactions to nature

In various parts of his manuscripts, Yazıcı Murtaza also writes about the struggles of other people with nature. In these parts, he relates both how various groups utilized various natural resources to meet their needs and how natural events threatened their well-being. When people failed to subjugate natural forces, they attributed to them "wondrous" (*acaîb*) qualities.

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[346] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 210b.
[347] M. Redha Bhacker, "The Cultural Unity of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean: A Longue Durée Historical Perspective," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, edited by Lawrence G. Potter (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 168, *163-171.*
[348] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 21a.
[349] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 21a. For the rise of Bani Khalid and other tribes in the Gulf, see Frederick Anscombe, "The Ottoman Role in the Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, edited by Lawrence G. Potter (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 262, 261-276.

Murtaza's account of his conversations with villagers in Çalılı at Kastoria (*Gölikesre*) in Albania allows us to hear the voices of ordinary people about their struggles with nature. When Murtaza saw that the village mosque was strangely located in the middle of a lake, he asked for the reason. In response, the villagers explained that previously, their "village, vineyards, and gardens were all there," and the mosque was on top of a high hill. Then, "in the year of Bec," presumably 1683, the year of the Second Siege of Vienna (Beç in Ottoman Turkish), "by the order of Allah, a well from which we used to draw water for our cattle and ourselves overflowed so much that … in less than ten days the water covered the whole plain."[350] When the people failed to stop the overflow of the well, they moved and rebuilt their village at a higher altitude, but they still got on boats every Friday and rowed to their old mosque, which was now surrounded by water, as they considered its survival a miracle of God.[351]

Murtaza also gives us insight into the perceptions and struggles of Ottoman officers and soldiers against natural events. A particularly rich passage in this regard concerns the sudden relocation of the Euphrates, which disrupted the ecological order in Mesopotamia and shifted the state's approach to its landscape. As Faisal Husain notes, the goal of the Ottoman bureaucracy had been "to exploit the energies of the Tigris and Euphrates to fuel the Ottoman Empire's military operations."[352] The bureaucrats viewed nature as a resource that they could exploit according to their needs, like the villagers in Çalılı. However, the relocation also presented them with new challenges and required them "to come up with new solutions to deal with a new

[350] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 169a..
[351] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 169a.
[352] Faisal H. Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan*: *The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire*, (Oxford: OUP, 2021), 46.

fluvial landscape."[353] Murtaza relates how Halil Pasha, the governor of Basra, attempted to traverse a local river to surmount pastoral rebels around Rumahiyya, but the river was impassable. Hence, he ordered his soldiers "to throw whatever they could find into the water; some threw palm trees, some reeds, some soil, and some animal carcasses, but it was no use."[354] The Ottoman army could only cross the water at the cost of sinking five or six of their ships.[355]

In a similar line, when the Ottoman army stopped in the deserted town of *Urmelat* near the Euphrates, the relocation of the Euphrates hindered the movement of the Ottoman navy.[356] As Murtaza describes it, when the Ottoman ships were stuck in shallow water, the soldiers had to pull the ships by rope, and it took them "two days to traverse a distance that normally took two hours."[357] It is noticeable that the army regarded these obstacles as a prominent threat, leading it to use its workforce to the fullest to remove them.

Along with these strategies, Murtaza's narrative indicates that different communities used nature to defend themselves against the authorities. He often links banditry in Albania and Mesopotamia to natural manifestations. To illustrate, he associated Kastoria's great forests (*azîm orman*) and steep mountain passes (*sarp derbendler*) and Përmet's (*Pürmet*) mountain passes with banditry in Albania.[358] Likewise, when he writes about his experiences in Mesopotamia, he frequently refers to reed swamps called hawr (*havîr*) that Bedouin tribes used as fortifications against the Ottoman army. Another local amenity was the *kelek*, "an ancient raft made of timber and brushwood bundles laid upon inflated goat and sheep skins" which enabled

[353] Faisal H. Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan*, 146.
[354] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 208a.
[355] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 208a-208b.
[356] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 193a.
[357] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 193a.
[358] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 169a. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 169b.

the passage between two rivers in Upper Mesopotamia.[359] He records that the locals "tie waterskins (*tulumlar*) and *kelek*s, they ride on them, they load all their belongings that they will buy and sell, and they take them to Mosul and Baghdad."[360]

Murtaza's narrative also provides insight into how Ottoman subjects perceived nature when they could not overcome its obstacles. In this context, Murtaza resorts to the notion of *'acâib, plural of acib* (wondrous). A prime example comes up in his description of Baba Gurgur to the northeast of Kirkuk. This place, which Murtaza describes as "wondrous," was and is home to one of the largest oil fields in Mesopotamia.[361] Different societies had produced different legends about the oil fields in this place since Antiquity. For instance, Plutarch claims that Alexander the Great had observed its inflammable fire and then utilized it to illuminate the streets.[362] Modern accounts about the official "discovery" of oil in Kirkuk in 1927 also relate that the local people had long been encouraging visitors to visit the place' spectacular fires and that they believed them to be supernatural entities.[363] When Murtaza visited this place in …, he too was struck by the local legends. Apparently, the locals claimed that if a silver object is placed on the flames of Baba Gurgur, it turns into copper, and that if one overcooks the food over these flames, the food turns raw again.[364] Interestingly, Murtaza was sceptical about these claims and even tried to test and disprove them. He writes that he put the ring on his finger in the fire, and it did not turn into copper.[365] Refuting the other local legend about the food, he writes, "I carried

[359] Faisal H. Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan*: *The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire*, (Oxford: OUP, 2021), 28.
[360] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 185b.
[361] It was only used after British experts and the Turkish Petroleum Company started excavations in 1927. Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*, (United States: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 204.
[362] Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*: *Volume II*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 168.
[363] Michael Morton, *In the Heart of the Desert, The Story of an Exploration Geologist and the Search for Oil in the Middle East*. (Aylesford: Green Mountain Press, 2006), 8.
[364] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b.
[365] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b.

the pilaf we cooked for three days, and it did not get raw; I took it to three places."[366] Although disproving legends, Murtaza believed in Baba Gurgur's wondrous features, as its fire impressed him, along with securing his life from severe hunger. He asserted that its fire is inextinguishable in four seasons unless pressed with soil.[367] Moreover, the flames of its various wells reach the heavens if one throws a match into one of them.[368] Its fires also enabled him to cook pilav in his pot, but he noted that while he was performing his prayer, "the water from the pot poured out, and it (the fire) almost broke it."[369]

Eventually, he encapsulated Baba Gurgur under the notion of *acâib* by stressing that it is "in a deserted place within the wilderness (*yabân*)…we even saw this wonder (*'acâib*)."[370] Despite his anthropocentric approach, Murtaza often embraced a theocentric outlook about the existence of natural manifestations, such as Baba Gurgur, in line with the Islamic learned tradition. He claimed that the field entirely owes itself to the omnipotent dominance (*kemâl-i kudreti*) of the eternal God (*lâ-yezâl*) as a mine of fire.[371]

3.2.4 Demarcating a spatial duality

Until now, scholarship has paid little attention to how Ottoman travel writers classified natural landscapes.[372] Luckily, studies on medieval European and Islamic travelogues provide us with some helpful parallels. A basic differentiation found in

[366] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b.
[367] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189a-b. Its two dozen holes can vent alight natural gas. Yergin, *The Prize*, 204.
[368] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b. These wells gained prominence during the British mandate. Yergin, *The Prize*, 204.
[369] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b.
[370] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b.
[371] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 189b.
[372] For pioneering examples, see Güllü Yıldız. "Gardens of Istanbul in Persian Hajj Travelogues," in: *Travellers in Ottoman Lands: The Botanical Legacy*, Ines Asceric-Todd, et al. (ed.), (Astene and Archaeopress Publishing, 2018), 57-68.

many different traditions of travel writing was between inhabited lands and wilderness. Ohthere's ninth-century travelogue, for instance, divided medieval Scandinavia into two: inhabited southern settlements and northern uninhabited wastelands.[373] A similar distinction between cultivated lands and wilderness can also be found in the Persian literary tradition.[374] In Nizami's *Layla and Majnun*, Layla is depicted walking in the gardens and vineyards, while "we see Majnūn's excursion into the desert - amongst the wild beasts - as a reflection of his mental state. The contrast between the two protagonists is tantamount to the perceived contrast between desert and garden—or wild and civilized."[375]

Given his commentary about nature was shared in the wider premodern world., it is not surprising to see that Murtaza also distinguished sharply between inhabited landscapes with an abundance of vineyards and gardens (*bağ bakçe*) and uninhabited or sparsely settled places. Murtaza praises the natural manifestations in and around cities such as Istanbul, Diyarbakir, and Baghdad. He mentions "*bağ bakçe*" (vineyards and gardens) 57 times as one of the most frequent ecological elements in his prose travelogue.[376] He also labels their beauties by using the adjective "*ma'mûr*" (flourishing) 29 times.[377] When Murtaza could not find a proper place to stay in Istanbul, he sought refuge in the greenery surrounding the city, finding the meadows and gardens at Kâğıthane "comforting" (*gamgüsâr*).[378] He writes: "what we call Kağıthane is a grassy, watery place. All the sultans, viziers, and noblemen pasture

[373] Caparrini "Natural Environment in the Old English Orosius," 56.
[374] Sadan, 43.
[375] Sadan, 43.
[376] He constantly used this term from fol. 145a to fol. 213a in *Seyâhatnâme*.
[377] He constantly used *ma'mûr* from fol. 148b to fol. 189a in *Seyâhatnâme*. He did not view any place *ma'mûr* after Kirkok.
[378] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 29b.

their horses here. There are meadows everywhere, but this meadow is beyond description…the pleasure there cannot be found anywhere else."[379]

The garden was a time-honored metaphor in Ottoman poetry, and as Walter Andrews notes, it had "been a notable feature of Near Eastern culture since the dawn of recorded history, from the hanging gardens of Babylon to the tulip gardens of eighteenth-century Istanbul."[380] Under the influence of this tradition, Murtaza praises the gardens of Istanbul (the heart of the Ottoman literary culture) in the eighteenth century. Murtaza also resorts to poetry to praise the vineyards and gardens around the different cities that he visited. In one such poem, he describes Diyârbekir thus:

"On one side the Tigris River flows
On its other three sides are mountains and roads, tread upon by the caravans
On the mountain skirts are gardens with plentiful fruit trees
This abundance of greenery puts me in a different state.
Thank God, these eyes have seen Diyârbekir!"[381]

He also observes how in springtime the locals "go to the gardens and orchards along the Tigris River and do not come back for two or three days; some stay there all summer long and make merry."[382]

Walter Andrews highlights that Ottoman poets often evoked gardens as a metaphor of security and stability.[383] Recounting the gardens of Baghdad, Murtaza claimed that "Paradisal Baghdad" (*Bagdâd-ı behişt*) has no equivalent in the Ottoman lands" with its cypress trees.[384] He even claimed that he was living a heavenly life,

[379] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol 157a.
[380] Walter Andrews, "Ecology of the Song," in *Poetry's Voice, Society's Song*, (Washington University Press, 1985), 151.
[381] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 19a.
[382] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 185a-185b
[383] Walter Andrews, "Ecology of the Song," 157.
[384] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 19b.

comparing himself to a nightingale singing in a rose garden.[385] He also describes the festivities (*şenlik*) in the gardens flanking the Tigris River as being equivalent to those in Istanbul.[386]

Debbie Lee underscores that "despite the proliferation of academic work on travel writing, on the concept of wilderness, and on nature writing notwithstanding, few scholars have looked at wilderness and travel writing in a sustained way."[387] Studies addressing the concept of wilderness in pre-modern Islamic travel literature are also limited.[388] Hence, probing the representation of wilderness in Murtaza's travelogue can contribute to the understanding of wilderness in Islamic literary culture and travel writing. Murtaza usually characterizes uninhabited or sparsely settled areas as "desolate" (*ıssız*, mentioned 28 times) and "wild" (*yabân*, mentioned once).[389] His descriptions of such places are brief and formulaic compared to his description of urban vineyards and gardens. For instance, he characterizes the wastelands between Diyârbekir and Musul as "quite deserted and dangerous (*muhâtara*)."[390] He notes that from Nusaybin until Mosul a distance of five or six resting places is completely barren and desolate. No grain, wood, or water can be found. Supplies must be found here."[391] He also describes the riverside settlements between Baghdad and Basra as "desolate," noting that there was nothing except wood and water inside them.[392]

Murtaza's anthropocentric approach is quite evident in his description of uninhabited places. For instance, he evaluates the Albanian wilderness in terms of

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[385] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr,* fol. 19b
[386] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme,* fol. 191a
[387] Debbie Lee, "Travelling in Wilderness," in *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing,* N. Das and T. Youngs (ed.), (CUP, 2019), 376.
[388] Thomas Hoffmann, "Notes on Qur'a¯nic Wilderness – and its absence," in *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion,* G. Benavides, K. von Stuckrad and W. F. Sullivan (ed), (De Gruyter, 2012), 157, 157-182.
[389] He constantly used *ıssız* from fol. 166a to fol. 203a in *Seyâhatnâme*. He did not view any town *ıssız* before Dolyan in Albania.
[390] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme,* fol. 188a.
[391] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme,* fol. 186a.
[392] Murtaza constantly described several settlements as "wood and water are abundant, nothing else is available." (*Odun ve su boldur, gayrı bulunnaz*), including Urmelât, Ümmü't-Tümen, Kisâybe, Hıyariyye, Lişeylat, Mezrâ'a.

how it met human needs and activities. Doyran, he writes, "is in a deserted place... and in a deserted place close to it, in the wilderness (*sahrâ*), there is also a lake. They call it Mercân Lake. This great lake is useless (*yaramaz*)."[393]

3.3 Natural disasters

Natural disasters occupy a prominent place in Murtaza's portrayals of nature.[394] Compared to other natural manifestations, he does not extensively address the reasons for these disasters, but rather narrates the stages of their unfolding. His reports about these natural disasters have significant documentary value for writing the history of natural disasters in the early modern Ottoman world.

3.3.1 After the relocation of the Euphrates (1705-1709)

The relocation of the Euphrates (1687-1702) was the first natural disaster Murtaza faced in his adult life. Although he did not witness the relocation, his journey and stay in Basra (1705-09) allowed him to witness its devastating consequences. Faisal Husain explains that prior to this disaster, the natural configuration of the Mesopotamian basin constituted a formative role in facilitating Ottoman rule and enabled the cohabitation of diverse socioeconomic groups.[395] Besides, the cycles of floods and tides regularized the functioning of the basin. The marshlands reduced their severity, checking the prospect of pollution and drought. Husain clarifies that "if an artist were to draw the Tigris-Euphrates system in human form, the Iraqi marshes would constitute the body's kidneys."[396] In this layout, the authorities encouraged the

[393] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 166a, 165a.
[394] Pre-modern literary traditions, to which Murtaza belonged, often viewed such occurrences with a theocentric attitude as God's command rather than viewing them as disasters caused by "nature." See, Sadan, 56.
[395] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 3-5, 111.
[396] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 97.

extensive cultivation of winter crops. The twin systems of traditional crop cultivation maximized state revenues, safeguarding the habitat without drastic measures.[397] Ultimately, the navigability of the river system ensured the state's supremacy against tribal communities.[398]

However, the abrupt relocation of the Euphrates and the consequent avulsion to the southwest of Baghdad turned everything upside down. It disrupted seasonal cycles, caused floods and droughts in the surrounding settlements and "played havoc with the agrarian and commercial sectors of the economy important to the Ottomans while empowering rural outcasts and rebels."[399] Ottoman wars against the Holy League (1683-99) prevented the Ottoman regime from intervening, and the temporary attempts to cope with the relocation made the situation worse.[400] This hydraulic reconfiguration favored wetland formation around marshlands, encouraging tribal uprisings against the urban centers and state authority.[401]

As Husain underscores, eyewitness accounts of the relocation provide a unique vista for "the living experience of anxious urban scribes, weary construction workers, and valiant tribal sheiks situated in the middle of the changing alluvial environment."[402] In this context, Yazıcı Murtaza's account complements the chronicle of Nazmizâde Murtaza, one of the leading historians of the region.[403] First, Murtaza draws attention to the difficulties he faced after the relocation. For instance, the army had to spend two days to pass a deserted town (*Ümmü't-Tümen*) since the relocation made the landscape impassable.[404] The relocation also caused droughts, increasing the

[397] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 103.
[398] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 58.
[399] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 120.
[400] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 127-128.
[401] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 129-132.
[402] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 113.
[403] Nazmizâde Murtaza, *Gülşen-i Hulefâ: Bağdat Tarihi (762-1717)*, (TTK, 2014), 367-368. For the list of archival sources, see Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 221-224.
[404] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 193b.

number of flies in the marshlands. Murtaza records that flies killed eight mules and thirty-three horses of the soldiers.[405] At last, the relocation increased the number of *havîrs*, tribal defensive structures on the islands around the swamps. Murtaza relates that the small islands surrounded by swamps and reeds served as a kind of fortress for the Beduins (*Arab tâifesinin kal'ası*).[406]

Murtaza also writes about the irregular rainfall that resulted from the relocation of the Euphrates. He reports that throughout the fall there was not a drop of rain for three months, but then they witnessed unceasing rain for five days and nights.[407] The pouring rain decimated the provisions of the Ottoman soldiers, who later had to eat only wheat for seven or eight days.[408] Murtaza testifies that they could not even make fire, "a disaster that cannot be described, and our grain was depleted. And horses and mules die five or ten a day, disaster upon disaster."[409] Consequently, the soldiers rebelled for wages and provisions, and Murtaza claimed that even eight Arab cavalrymen would have sufficed to defeat them in this turmoil.[410]

Murtaza also writes about the price increases that were caused by food shortages due to the heavy rains. Though he aimed to make money in this campaign, rising prices dashed his goal. He noted that even the cost of bread is ten *akçe*. He began bartering as nothing was cheap except dates in Qurnah, saying, "I gave them (sellers) five *vukiyyes* of wheat; they gave me fifteen *vukiyyes* of dates."[411] Besides, one *guruş* could only buy three *vukiyyes* of barley on his return journey to Kayseri.[412]

[405] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 193b.
[406] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 193b.
[407] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 196a.
[408] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 196a.
[409] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 196a.
[410] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 196a-196b.
[411] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 196a.
[412] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 212a. For the list of prices in Basra, see Appendix.

The chain of disasters continued during the Ottoman siege of Basra since irregular tidal movements due to the relocation almost demolished the Ottoman fleet by dragging frigates into the land and the mud.[413] Nonetheless, in the end Murtaza was able to see Basra conquered despite all the difficulties.[414] In his narration of the events, he gives a prominent place to the phases and features of the tide (*med*).[415] He was astounded by its daily and monthly oscillations but could not grasp how it could easily penetrate the Euphrates. In a theocentric framework, he simply noted that the tide moves according to an incomprehensible divine wisdom (*Hikmet-i Bâri*) without mentioning the role of the moon.[416]

After the victory, the Ottoman army aimed to abolish the wetlands that had emerged after the relocation and which provided a natural fortification for the Marsh Arabs. Yazıcı participated in a siege against them in the wetlands in 1709. As a result of the relocation, he claimed that the desert became like a sea after frequent overflows.[417] He lamented that they could pass a current that was named *Cehennemiye* only with hardship.[418] In this expedition, he also identified the remnants of a failed measure by the Ottoman regime in 1701 against the relocation. Husain points out that Mustafa II appointed Daltaban Mustafa Pasha "to dam the Dhiyab Canal and restore the Euphrates to its former channel."[419] Despite initial hopeful efforts, workers revoked this project due to worrying water levels, timber shortage, and the campsite's conditions. Thus, Husain denotes that "the new Euphrates emerged from the

[413] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 199b.
[414] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 200a-200b. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 20a.
[415] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 204a.
[416] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 204a.
[417] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 208a.
[418] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 211b.
[419] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 119.

engineering expedition intact, dealing a death blow to the Ottoman fort of Rumahiyya."[420]

In Murtaza's view, Daltaban "tried for a month or two to make Murad flow to his former place again with so many soldiers, but he could not do it with great trees and by piercing the ships and sinking them in the water."[421] While Nazmizâde Murtaza recounts the development of this attempt in detail, Yazıcı Murtaza complement it by describing its results.[422] He observed that the trees Daltaban planted around the River Murad still stand, but Rumahiya was in ruins.[423] Ultimately, Murtaza encountered the effects of the relocation on his return journey. His most significant advantage was to return by ship. He asserted that half of the army died from hunger, and some soldiers perished in the swamp due to tracing the land route.[424] As soldiers approached Baghdad, he noticed that they were at the doorstep of death. In his view, "so many animals and horses perished in the swamps, trampling each other in the mud, that describing it is impossible."[425]

Yazıcı accused Hasan Pasha, the governor of Baghdad, of these cataclysms, while Nazmizâde constantly praised him in his chronicle.[426] Deposing Halil Pasha, his patron and the governor of Basra, Hasan did not allow Halil's soldiers to visit Baghdad, providing provisions just for twelve days.[427] However, many soldiers could not afford to purchase them and scattered in the wilderness. Murtaza labeled these events as a disgrace, leaving the army earlier in Mosul.[428] Despite supporting chronicles such as Nazmizâde and other archival records, he differs from them by

[420] Husain, *The Rivers of the Sultan*, 123.
[421] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 211b.
[422] Nazmizâde Murtaza, *Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 367-368.
[423] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 211b.
[424] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 212a.
[425] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 212a-212b.
[426] Nazmizâde Murtaza, *Gülşen-i Hulefâ*, 394.
[427] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 212b.
[428] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme,* fol. 212b.

narrating events that they do not mention. Thus, his documents offer an original viewpoint and have documentary credential.

3.3.2 A ruinous wave of Rinderpest (1709-14)

After his travels, Murtaza also faced natural disasters in his hometown. The first natural disaster he encountered was the rinderpest upon his return to Kayseri. Rinderpest (cattle plague) is a severely contagious epidemic that decimates cloven-hoofed animals through direct contact with their infected peers.[429] C. Alfred Spinage denotes that "rinderpest is acute, fever-producing, and usually fatal, ranking second only to FMD in contagiousness."[430] Its swift transmission decimated livestock populations, inciting famines and economic casualties.[431] Eventually, a global vaccination campaign entirely eradicated rinderpest in 2011.[432] Nonetheless, it played an undeniable role in Eurasian ecological history, such as the rinderpest outbreak of 1709. It vanquished millions of livestock populations, prompting shortages of animal products. Spinage claims that it originated in the Don and Volga basins due to supply trains with infected cattle. It rapidly spread to Venice in 1711 and London in 1714.[433] Political authorities responded to it via quarantines, spurring pioneering attempts at devising early veterinary institutions.[434]

In spite of its prominence, mainstream historiography has examined it from a Eurocentric perspective, disregarding its impact on the Ottoman world. Though

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[429] Clive A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*. (New York: Springer. 2003), 3. For its repercussions in Europe, see Adam Sundberg, "Disasters in the Year of Peace": The First Cattle Plague, 1713–1720" in *Natural Disaster at the Closing of the Dutch Golden Age*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2022), 51–88.
[430] Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, 3.
[431] Donald Gerald McNeil Jr., "Rinderpest, Scourge of Cattle, Is Vanquished," in *The New York Times.* June 27, 2011, accessed on January 25, 2025. https://web.archive.org/web/20211130171659/https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/28/health/28rinderpest.html
[432] McNeill Jr., "Rinderpest, Scourge of Cattle, Is Vanquished," in *The New York Times.*
[433] Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, 103-105. John Broad, "Cattle Plague in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Agricultural History Review*, British Agricultural History Society, Volume 31, Issue 2, (1983), 104-115.
[434] Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, 107-111.

contemporary Western European medical authorities asserted that it arrived from the Ottoman lands via Hungarian livestock, Sam White is sceptical about these claims. He contends that European authorities tended to ascribe outbreaks of contagious diseases to the Ottoman lands for sociopolitical purposes. “Oriental plague” became a common trope that could disguise the origins of any epidemic in this way. [435] He also claims that the rinderpest outbreaks in the first half of the eighteenth century did not particularly harm the Ottoman Balkans and Hungary.[436]

Murtaza’s observations about the rinderpest outbreaks of 1709-1713 offer an important corrective to White’s claims. In March-April 1709 Murtaza wrote that "the cattle plague (*kara sığır kıranı*) came to Erzurum from the direction of Iran (*Acem tarafından*).”[437] As in his other records, he does not provide information about how he received this news. Since it was common for early modern observers to attribute outbreaks of contagious diseases to remote places,[438] it is possible that Murtaza also conveniently blamed the rinderpest on Persia that many Ottomans viewed in a hostile light. However, it is also possible that the disease had either originated or passed through there.

As for the route of rinderpest, it soon passed through Erzurum and quickly approached Kayseri while he was just returning his hometown (Figure 21). It came to Gemerek (in Sivas) and Sarıoğlan (in Kayseri) in July and August 1709.[439] In the following two months, it devastated animal husbandry in Kayseri. Murtaza laments that “so many [animals] died that .. they had to put donkeys to plow, as there were no oxen left.”[440] He relates that the rinderpest later spread “from Adana to Ankara, and

[435] Sam White, “A Model Disaster,” 105.
[436] Sam White, “A Model Disaster,” 103.
[437] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 6a.
[438] Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, 55.
[439] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 6a.
[440] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 6a.

was soon all over the lands. The streets became impassable with carcasses of cattle."[441]

Murtaza's writings also give important information about price fluctuations during the time of the rinderpest. After noting the increasing prices of wheat, barley, and cheese, he recorded the fluctuations in the prices of raisins and figs between January and March 1710. While a *vukiyye* [okka] of the raisin was three *akçe*, a *vukiyye* of the fig was four *akçe* in January, two kilos of figs increased to five *akçe* or 400 dirhams in March.[442] He also underlined the changing prices of animal skins (like cow and ox-hide) based on their quality.[443] Despite the outbreak, he could purchase meat, like a *batman* [nearly 7.5 kilos] of pastrami, paying one *sülüs*.

Panzootic outbreaks resumed at several intervals until 1713. In the first wave in 1710, Murtaza lamented that many people remained helpless when the rinderpest exterminated innumerable sheep and goats.[444] While this wave spread through all lands, there were also localized cases restricted to several villages, like in May 1713.[445] In this respect, he recounted how such cases impaired agricultural life via the rising costs. While 10 *ölçek* of wheat or 14 *ölçek* of barley was worth one *guruş* in January 1713, a *kile* (four *ölçek*) of grain or one and a half *kile* (six *ölçek*) of barley increased to two *guruş* in October.[446] That is, the price of 40 *ölçek* of wheat rose from 4 to 20 *guruş* with a fivefold increase. Likewise, the cost of 84 *ölçek* of barley increased from 6 to 28 *guruş* with an almost fivefold rise. Thus, the figures Murtaza

[441] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 146a.
[442] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 146a.
[443]Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 146a.
[444] Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 145a-b.
[445] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 145b. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 146a.
[446] One *ölçek* in Kayseri was equal to five okkas and a quarter of *kile*, see Ünal Taşkın, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Kullanılan Ölçü ve Tartı Birimleri," (Master's Thesis), Fırat University, 2005, 98. M. Z. Pakalın, "Ölçek," in *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü III*, (MEB Yayınları, 1983), 745. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, 146a.

presented are of rare documentary significance by expressing the economic impacts of rinderpest in Anatolia.

Eventually, he briefly recorded other plague outbreaks, though never on the scale of rinderpest. Interestingly, the first case he recorded as a major plague (*ekber tâ'ûn*) happened in 971 (1563-64).[447] Afterward, he noted three significant cases in Anatolia from his lifetime in 1102 (1690-91), 1119 (1707-08), and 1132 (1719-20). In the first two cases, he stated that a major plague slaughtered many people in Kayseri.[448] The final outbreak emerged in Gemerek and Bozok when he was a vigneron, but he could complete the vintage despite the plague.[449] However, the death of his son, Muhammed, due to the outbreak left an indelible mark on Murtaza. Accordingly, he penned two long elegies (*mersiye*) to mourn his son after the plague (*ta'ûn marîzi*) in 1720.[450]

3.3.3 The earthquake of Kayseri (1717)

There are many studies concerning the role of earthquakes in the early modern Ottoman world, but they are primarily based on archival records or official chronicles.[451] Other observer notes often belong to foreign travelers who temporarily stayed in earthquake-stricken areas. Murtaza's records about the earthquake that took place in Kayseri in 1717 are quite significant as an eyewitness account at the epicenter of the earthquake.

[447] Nükhet Varlık situates it in the third wave (1552-1568) of the second phase (1517-1570) in early modern Ottoman plagues as one of the best-documented outbreaks. Nükhet Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600,* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015) 179, 181. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 146b.
[448] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 145b.
[449] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[450] "Şiir-i Vefât-ı Muhammed," in *Eş'âr*, fol. 1b-5b. "Diger Şiir-i Vefât-ı Muhammed," in *Eş'âr*, fol. 5b-8b.
[451] Yaron Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, and Other Misfortunes*. (CUP, 2014).

First, to provide some context, Kayseri is situated at the core of the Erciyes pull-apart basin between the northeastern and southwestern segments of the Central Anatolian Fault Zone.[452] The Erciyes Stratovolcano Complex divides this basin with its center, Mount Erciyes, as a sub-segment of the Cappadocian Volcanic Plateau. [453] Despite volcanic inactivity, the pull-apart basin remains active, surrounding the city with its fault-bounded movements. Ali Koçyiğit and Oğuz Erol state that the dynamic interplay of these tectonic and volcanic structures has resulted in significant seismic activities, like the 1717 earthquake.[454] In their view, its epicenter was located south of Kayseri as a moderate-sized earthquake.[455] Despite its size, archival records imply its destructive impact on Kayseri's urban fabric due to its long duration and aftershocks for fifteen days.[456] These factors increased the number of demolished buildings and human casualties.

In his testimony, Murtaza first wrote on May 9, 1717, that "a great groan occurred, and an earthquake (*zelzele*) occurred that almost turned the world upside down."[457] He adds that even though he had witnessed earthquakes before, neither he and his community had experienced an earthquake of this magnitude.[458] Moreover, he hinted that drought was widespread in Kayseri in the spring since villagers, including himself, were praying for rain to avoid aridness for three days. After they performed the morning prayer, they went to pray for rain. Until its completion, the earthquake happened with five or six aftershocks, the first one being the most horrible.[459]

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[452] Ali Koçyiğit, Oğuz Erol, "A tectonic escape structure: Erciyes pull-apart basin, Kayseri, central Anatolia, Turkey," in
Geodinamica Acta, Taylor & Francis Group, Volume 14, Issues 1–3, (2001), 133. The basin has been an active center of tectonic and seismic activities since its formation during the Pliocene Period.
[453] Global Volcanism Program, "Erciyes Volcanic Complex," in *Smithsonian Institution Natural History Museum*, compiled by E. Venzke, 2024, accessed on February 8, 2025. https://volcano.si.edu/volcano.cfm?vn=213010.
[454] Koçyiğit & Erol, "A tectonic escape structure," 142.
[455] Koçyiğit & Erol, "A tectonic escape structure," 142.
[456] Koçyiğit & Erol, "A tectonic escape structure," 142.
[457] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 165b.
[458] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 165b.
[459] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 165b.

Additionally, Murtaza clarified subsequent incidents and casualties. Two weeks later, he observed another earthquake with subsequent shockwaves between ten and fifteen days. In his opinion, Erkilet, Muncusun, Molu, and the city center were devastated (*harâb*) as 170 men from Molu, 2.871 men from Erkilet, 5.300 men from the city center, and nine men from Muncusun died.[460] His figures largely overlap with other primary sources.[461] Koçyiğit and Erol clarify that "the number of casualties caused by the 1717 event was 9 in Güneşli (Muncusun), 5300-9000 in Kayseri, 1861 in Erkilet and 170 in Molu."[462] Murtaza's account of the earthquake is purely descriptive and does not offer any speculation about what prompted it. Nor does he scapegoat any sociopolitical group on account of the earthquake. Nonetheless, it confirms other scarce sources regarding the disaster. To exemplify, Bekâyi, a poet from Kayseri, confirmed the drought before the quake but linked it to social issues, like immorality among scholars and society.[463] However, both figures did not comment on the damages to his properties or socioeconomic activities in Kayseri.

The earthquake prompted the central authority to embark upon an urgent restoration as it ruined the urban fabric with an intensity of VIII or a magnitude of 6.0 to 6.9.[464] In this regard, Yaron Ayalon claims that the state's immediate response to an earthquake could be the reduction of taxes in the eighteenth century.[465] He illustrates that the residents of Denizli petitioned the reduction of taxes to the state after an earthquake in 1717.[466] Ayalon underscores that he "could not find when and whether the matter was eventually resolved in favor of the victims" in Denizli. Nevertheless,

[460] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhatnâme*, fol. 165b.
[461] A local poet, Bekâyi, avoided mentioning the death toll in all places, but claimed that more than nine thousand people died in the urban heartland of Kayseri. Erkiletlioğlu, 430.
[462] Koçyiğit & Erol, "A tectonic escape structure," 142.
[463] Erkiletlioğlu, *Geniş Kayseri Tarihi*, 430.
[464] Koçyiğit & Erol, "A tectonic escape structure," 142.
[465] Yaron Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, and Other Misfortunes*. (CUP, 2014), 3, 94.
[466] Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire*, 94.

the state had reduced the number of *avârız* and *nüzul* houses by nine for taxation due to the earthquake in Erkilet in the same year.[467] Though he was a tax collector as his first official duty, Murtaza did not mention this measure. However, he participated in the state-sponsored urban remaking. To illustrate, he compiled chronograms for new or restored fountains and noted their inscriptions in his manuscript. The disaster engulfed many monuments and necessitated immediate restoration. In particular, the Great Mosque (*Ulu Câmii*), the renowned symbol of Kayseri, was in ruins.[468] Ayalon highlights that the state utilized architecture "as a primary means for asserting its presence and authority in a place. Architectural monuments and foundations…assured the visibility of Ottoman rule."[469] Hence, the state was involved in reasserting its authority and restoring pre-disaster circumstances in Kayseri.

In this framework, Murtaza first drew attention to the reconstruction activities of the Chief Architect, Mehmed Agha of Kayseri (d. 1742), one of the most prominent figures of the Tulip Era. Although Mehmed Agha is better known for his architectural activities in Istanbul and Sadabad, he carried out noteworthy activities in other centers, including Kayseri.[470] He repaired the monuments planned by Sinan the famous sixteenth-century Ottoman chief court architect in Ağırnas, and supervised new structures, specifically in his birthplace, Nize, after the earthquake.[471] Murtaza prayed for and praised him after he repaired the Garib Masjid in 1721. Despite its unknown location today, Mustafa Demir contends that this masjid could be the same mosque that Mehmed Agha repaired in Nize.[472] In his chronogram, Murtaza praises

[467] AE. SAMD. III. 79–7957. Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire*, 94.
[468] Halit Erkiletlioğlu, *Dânişmendli Payitahtı ve Cami-î Kebir*, (Cami-i Kebir Yaşatma ve Güzelleştirme Derneği, 2022), 77, 78, 82.Koçyiğit, "A tectonic escape structure," 142.
[469] Ayalon, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire*, 3, 88.
[470] Semavi Eyice, "Mehmed Ağa, Kayserili," in *TDV Encyclopedia of Islam*, Volume 28, (2003), 430, accessed on February 5, 2025. https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mehmed-aga-kayserili Abdullah Satoğlu, "Mimar Mehmed Ağa (Kayserili)," in *Kayseri Ansiklopedisi*, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 317-318.
[471] S. Murat Topçu, "Kayserili Mimar El-Hac Mehmet Ağa'nin Kayseri'deki Hayratı," in *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi*, Volume 13, (2012), 47-62.
[472] Mustafa Demir, "Sergüzeşt-i Âşık Yazıcı Murtazâ," Master's Thesis. Hitit University, (2020), 31.

"the eminent" Mehmed Agha and the restoration he undertook "to please God" (*Hakkın rızâsı*). He also compliments Mehmed Agha's handling of 40.000 workers (*kols*) as the chief architect.[473] Regardless, he does not mention any meeting with him for patronage or any other reason.

Apart from the Garib Masjid, Murtaza composed a celebratory chronogram (*târih*) for the second repair of the Balcıbaşı Pavilion in 1722. He had also written a poem celebrating its first repair in 1710, but evidently the building had required a second restoration and chronogram. Its location, like the Garib Mescid, is unknown today. Its owner and restorer, Balcıbaşı El-Hâc Ali served as the chief honey dealer (*balcıbaşı*, *aseldâr-ı şehriyâri sâbık*) in the Imperial Kitchen (*matbâh-ı âmire*) between at least 1703 and 1705.[474] Murtaza extolled the pavilion as a heartwarming place, arguing that any structure cannot reach its position under its benefactor, el-Hâc Ali.[475] Despite likening him to metaphors like rose, pearl, and April cloud, Murtaza accused other statesmen (*devlet ehlî*) of not providing support for reconstruction activities.[476] This attitude is consistent with his disdain for bureaucrats, except for his would-be patrons, like el-Hâc Ali. However, he did not hint at details regarding his affinity with him other than these chronograms.

Apart from poems, Murtaza took notes on the inscriptions in the restored structures in Kayseri. For instance, he recorded the restoration inscriptions of the Grand Mosque of Kayseri. These inscriptions praise Hacı Halil Efendi, the chief master of the Imperial Kitchen and the Imperial Festival of 1720 (*matbah ve sûr emîni*).[477] Halil Efendi returned to his hometown, Kayseri, immediately after the

[473] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 35a.
[474] Balcıbaşı Ali was known to combat Constantin Brâncoveanu, the Voivode of Wallachia, for honey trade during his tenure, see AE. SMST. II. 7 – 640, and MAD.d..10299, AE.SSLM.III-332-19249.
[475] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 35b.
[476] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Eş'âr*, fol. 35b.
[477] Abdullah Satoğlu, *Kayseri Ansiklopedisi*, 142.

Imperial Festival to take part in the repair projects. He constructed various fountains and a library and restored the Grand Mosque in 1723.[478] Murtaza recorded the four-line inscription on the north side of the Grand Mosque under the title of "the Chronogram of the Grand Mosque in Kayseri" (*Ulu Câmi' Târihi Vâki'-i Kayseriyye*).[479] It proclaimed that "this mosque was repaired by the distinguished person, Halil Efendi, the chief official of the Imperial Kitchen, who raised himself with his charity."[480] Its poet, Niyâzi, prayed that his distinguished work would find value in the divine sight.[481]

The second and more detailed inscription that Murtaza noted celebrates Halil's sociopolitical position and his renovation projects (Figure 22 and 23). Located on the north side of the Grand Mosque, the twelve-line inscription glorifies Halil as "both the chief master of the sultan's festival and the steward of the imperial kitchen."[482] Its unknown poet framed Halil as a charitable and pure person, exalting his work by asserting that "the Great Mosque of Halil became like the Kaaba."[483] He also underlined that the mosque was rebuilt in the ancient manner (*resm-i kadîm üzere*), verifying Ayalon's argument that the state primarily aimed to return to the ancient order in the earthquake-stricken places.[484] Thus, Murtaza went beyond describing an earthquake and registered its sociopolitical outcomes by documenting repair inscriptions and composing poems (Figure 24).

Besides this disaster, Murtaza noted several other earthquakes. In December 1704 he recorded that "two great earthquakes (*azîm zelzele*) occurred at seven o'clock

[478] Halit Erkiletlioğlu, *Dânişmendli Payitahtı ve Cami-î Kebir*, 77-82.
[479] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 40b.
[480] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 40b.
[481] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 40b.
[482] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 40b.
[483] Erkiletlioğlu, *Dânişmendli Payitahtı ve Cami-î Kebir*, 80. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 40b-41a.
[484] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 41a.

on Monday in Gönen."[485] He also wrote of an earthquake in Mosul. It seems, however, that he did not personally witness this earthquake, but rather assumed it had occurred after finding the Great Mosque of al-Nuri run-down and in a leaning position.[486] However, he could have been mistaken about it since this minaret, al-Hadba, had leaned since the medieval times.[487] In the absence of archival evidence about an earthquake in Mosul in this period, these ruins might spell an earlier disaster.

3.4 Agricultural and viticultural activities

In addition to recording various natural disasters at the intersection of ecological and sociopolitical interventions, Murtaza also documented agricultural and viticultural activities in his manuscripts. Initially, he took brief notes while depicting his viticultural activities, similar to his descriptions of natural disasters. However, these notes are documentarily significant as stating agricultural activities based on climactic calamities and seasonal cycles. In particular, they can contribute to the rare records of other farmers in the eighteenth-century Ottoman world. For example, we can compare his notes with the chronicle of Haydar Rida al-Rukayni and his son (the Shi'i agriculturalists in the Ottoman Levant) in temporal and professional aspects. The Rukaynis were contemporaries of Murtaza and witnessed similar sociopolitical transformations in their home base. More significantly, as Dana Sajdi underlines, these chroniclers had an "overriding concern with crops and weather" in their works.[488] The main reason for this was their involvement in agricultural activities[489] In

[485] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 165b.
[486] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 187b.
[487] The Project of Revive the Spirit of Musul, "Al-Hadba minaret" in *UNESCO*, https://www.unesco.org/en/revive-mosul/al-hadba-minaret, accessed on March 5, 2025.
[488] Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 142.
[489] Sajdi, "Peripheral Visions: the Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th-Century Ottoman Levant," 130.

a similar way, Murtaza gave great importance to the relationship between weather and crops as he was engaged in farming and viticulture.

Murtaza, like other subjects pertaining to his youth, has left no clue about how he learned about agriculture and viticulture. However, it is clear from his writing that he was familiar with both even before he became a winegrower in Gesi. He observed how the freezing winter destroyed the vineyards and orchards in Erzurum.[490] In contrast, he recorded that he did not observe cold weather or rains until Zemheri (the first month of the Rumî calendar) in Basra.[491] These rains facilitated farming activities, but after Gücük (the second month), "there is neither a cloud in the sky nor a drop of rain on the ground for eight months."[492]

He also sketched the blossoming of agricultural activities around Easter (*kızıl yumurta*). While riding a horse twenty-five days after Easter, he observed the ripening of *ferik*, a small-sized fruit, also known as *nabq,* as a crucial crop in Basra's daily life.[493] In addition, he registered details about harvest and the ripening of crops, like dates, chickpeas, apricots, and cucumbers.[494] He wrote in 1707 that "forty days after Easter, melons and watermelons emerged in Basra, and figs and grapes appeared." [495] A local man from Mahaz informed that the melons, watermelons, and figs withered in his locality.[496] These notes illustrate the documentary value of his records as providing firsthand information on agricultural activities in different localities.

In the wake of his return, Murtaza engaged in viticultural activities in Gesi and Nize that shaped his life between at least 1715 and 1720. Viticulture was a crucial

[490] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 166a.
[491] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 205b.
[492] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 205b.
[493] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 205b. For more information nabq, see "Prized for unique flavor, size, and shape: Basra's nabq fruit draws traders as production booms and exports increase" in *+964 News*, February 19, 2024. Accessed on March 1, 2025. https://en.964media.com/13326/
[494] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 175a. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 205b.
[495] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 175a.
[496] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 175a.

source of income and subsistence. The vineyards of Gesi were one of the most renowned centers for viticulture in Anatolia and immortalized in folk songs like *Gesi Bağları*.[497] He adhered to the local folk calendar in Kayseri while keeping his records. Kayserites utilized it in their agricultural life through long-term observations of natural manifestations.[498] It is thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar, like the Rumî calendar.[499] Murtaza's entries primarily concern weather anomalies and his annual activities in the vineyards based on this calendar.

3.4.1 Recording weather anomalies

Murtaza documented how weather anomalies complicated viticultural activities. In particular, he wrote of significant anomalies in 1716 between the rinderpest and the earthquake. A warm winter and freezing spring, mainly due to local climatic conditions, impaired Murtaza's viticultural tasks, forcing him to complete them later than the annual cycle.

Initially, he recorded that winter months (Zemheri and Gücük) passed like spring, but severe winter conditions appearedbetween March 18 and April 16, 1716.[500] The weather is quite cold during this period as locals believed that there would be heavy snowstorms on several days called *Dokuzun Dokuzu* (meaning March 18), *Martın Otuzu* (March 30), and *Aprilin Beşi* (April 5) in their local calendar.[501] The Camızkıran Storm on April 5 typically marked the end of snowfall, but Murtaza noticed an uninterrupted snowstorm for 28 or 29 days without a break.[502] He also

[497] Satoğlu, "Gesi," in *Kayseri Ansiklopedisi*, 125.
[498] For the Anatolian local folk calendar, see Ergün Veren, *Anadolu Halk Takvimi*, Doğan Kitap, 2019. Yasemin Ayyıldız, "Kayseri'de Yerel Coğrafi Bilgi Bağlamında Halk Takvimi ve Halk Meteorolojisinin Değerlendirilmesi," Master's Thesis, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, 2022, VI.
[499] Yasemin Ayyıldız, "Kayseri'de Yerel Coğrafi Bilgi Bağlaminda Halk Takvimi," 85.
[500] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a. Yaman, *Kayseri Takvimi*, 30.
[501] Yaman, *Kayseri Takvimi*, 30. Ayyıldız, "Kayseri'de Yerel Coğrafi Bilgi Bağlamında Halk Takvimi," 59.
[502] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a. Ayyıldız, "Kayseri'de Yerel Coğrafi Bilgi Bağlamında Halk Takvimi," 93.

noted its continuation between April 20 and 30, 1716, lamenting that “snow fell and the animals closed and much ice froze on the ground, which cannot be described.”[503] Hence, spring conditions began emerging at least a month later than anticipated.

He illustrated the beginning of summer with the celebration of *Hıdrellez*, a seasonal folk festival in Anatolia and the Balkans.[504] In his view, “the infidels went out to *Ayoz* (*ayoza çıkdılar*) that is, Khidr, since it is the Day of Khidr (*Rûz-ı Hızır*). And on this day, we just heard the nightingale began wailing.”[505] At last, he noted the beginning of delayed viticultural activities two days later, saying, "We began to work and prune the vineyards. However, the grapevine had not yet moved, and some of the apricot flowers just blossomed.”[506] While the end of April was quite late for beginning viticulture, he performed the night prayer on the school roof with thankfulness that he could see the arrival of spring on May 7, 1716.[507] These notes display how the local weather anomalies disrupted agricultural life in Central Anatolia. However, Murtaza's entries also elucidate the regular course of farming activities.

3.4.2 The annual cycle of agricultural life

Murtaza’s account is also a significant source in providing the order of agricultural and viticultural practices in an annual scheme in eighteenth-century Central Anatolia. He had to take care of his vineyard throughout the year. In this respect, his activities were similar to the Rukaynis who were engaged in barley and olive cultivation in both the summer and winter.[508]

[503] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a. Yaman, Kayseri Takvimi, 33.
[504] Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Hıdrellez”, in *TDV Encyclopedia of Islam,* Volume 17, (1998), 313-315.
[505] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a.
[506] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a.
[507] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a.
[508] Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions: the Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th-Century Ottoman Levant,” 132.

Furthermore, Murtaza's entries are informative pertaining to broader climatic conditions. E. L. R. Ladurie highlights that "the zigzag of the harvest date from one year to the next is a valuable climate indicator."[509] While delayed harvest dates implied freezing weather conditions in 1716, regular harvest days emerged in the following years. They also inform Murtaza's economic recovery, like his purchase of a vineyard at Arslandamı in 1717.[510] In this respect, Murtaza provided information regarding his annual activities in extended entries in 1719.

He first recorded winter conditions on January 23, 1719, saying that "it never snowed till the middle of Zemheri, the plots were plowed. It began snowing on Sunday night in the middle (of Zemheri). The great winter happened."[511] This portrayal is consistent with the climatic conditions in the region. Villagers tried to make the fields arable in Zemheri. Additionally, these days, known as *Yanarın Yamacı*, were the coldest in Kayseri between January 19 and 26.[512] Afterward, he documented that the plots were plowed with the arrival of spring on February 16, 1720.[513] However, he later experienced freezing weather again for seven or eight days between Gücük and Mart.[514] In this record, Murtaza implied *Kocakarı Soğukları* (cold days on the verge of spring) in the local calendar between February 26 and March 4 in the Rumî calendar.[515]

The arrival of spring is of vital prominence in the seasonal cycle of viticulture. While grapevines are in dormancy during the winter, they gain energy in their roots.

[509] Ladurie, "31. Is the harvest date a climate indicator?" 89-90. For his comments about the relationship between Great Frost of 1709 and the vintage in Western Europe, see 38-39, 45 in *Abrégé d'histoire du climat du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, (Fayard. 2007).
[510] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 154a.
[511] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[512] Yaman, *Kayseri Takvimi*, 65, 69. Besides, he noted on the same day that the unknown daughter of Seyyid Bektaş Halil went to Kayseri. It may suggest that communication between the countryside and Kayseri lasted during this time. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[513] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[514] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[515] Ayyıldız, "Kayseri'de Yerel Coğrafi Bilgi Bağlamında Halk Takvimi," 59.

As temperatures rise after Nowruz, their sap begins to flow with new buds. He celebrated spring, commenting that "and spring came again, and on the days of Nowruz, the vineyards were cultivated, pruned…and the apricots were eager to open, and on April 12, the nightingale began to wail."[516] At this stage, pruning emerges as an essential viticultural practice. It impacts the growth of grapevines by containing diseases, enhancing fruit quality, and ripening. Finally, we can identify how Murtaza and his community were involved in threshing. He wrote on July 1 that he abundantly brought apricots from the vineyard, and İsa Beşe from his community collected vetch from the threshing.[517]

In another record taken on November 28, 1719, Murtaza described viticulture activities starting with heavy snowfall. At first, "it started to snow after the night prayer, and it did not stop for two days and two nights, and it snowed at the height of one arshin till Tuesday evening."[518] There is a crucial relationship between abundant snowfall and viticulture. Snowfall contributes to the vineyard by nourishing the soil and preventing drought. Hence, he related snowfall to vintage by noting that “when vintage was happening, it snowed a little…in short, there was no vineyard left without vintage in this place, under this snow, in the city.”[519] Though he faced the spread of an outbreak, he insisted on working in the vineyard until Nowruz.[520] He recorded the emergence of the common blackbird and the spread of frogs from hibernation as harbingers of summer.[521]

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[516] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[517] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[518] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b
[519] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[520] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b.
[521] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 153b. For these signs of summer, see Harriet Hickin, “Lifecycle of a Frog,” *The Wildlife Trusts*, accessed on February 11, 2025. https://www.lrwt.org.uk/blog/lifecycle-frog#:~:text=In%20winter%2C%20they%20hibernate%20in,from%20frogspawn%20to%20adult%20frogs. “Common Blackbird,” *Vogelwarte*, accessed on February 11, 2025, https://www.vogelwarte.ch/en/birds-of-switzerland/common-blackbird/.

Murtaza also observed the celestial movements as indicators of the farming calendar without attributing any omens to them. To exemplify, he noted the movements of the sun to mark the beginning of vintage in September, implying his adaptation to viticultural cycles around astronomical events.[522] He also registered astronomical events beyond farming practices, like identifying that "a bright star" appeared at Akhüyük in May 1714 for two or three months.[523] Once again, he noticed the same star in the same area for three months in 1715.[524] Thus, he could have observed Jupiter in two consecutive years.

Overall, these recordings represent valuable documentary insights into eighteenth-century Ottoman agricultural history. We can claim that they complement existing accounts about the firsthand accounts of farmers in the eighteenth-century Ottoman world, like the Rukaynis. Illustrating various agricultural practices from harvest to threshing, he incorporated weather anomalies and viticultural activities in an anthropocentric outlook. Hence, they can offer different interpretation possibilities about the early modern Ottoman agricultural life history from the eyes of an Anatolian farmer and vigneron.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined Yazıcı Murtaza's depictions of nature and natural disasters in different geographical settings. Compared to his Ottoman contemporaries, we have

[522] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 144b. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, fol. 144b. October 01, 1723
[523] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, Cover.
[524] Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyâhâtnâme*, Cover. Interestingly, the astronomers of the Royal Society in London, like James Pound and Edmond Halley, also verified the brightness of Jupiter as "very bright and clear" in July 1714. James Pound, "An observation of the satellites of Jupiter communicated by Pound by Edmond Halley," in *The Royal Society Archives*, July 09, 1714, accessed on February 08, 2025. https://makingscience.royalsociety.org/items/clp_8i_65/paper-an-observation-of-the-satellites-of-jupiter-communicated-by-james-pound-by-edmond-halley James Pound, "Letter to Edmond Halley," in *The Royal Society Archives*, July 09, 1714, accessed on February 08, 2025, https://makingscience.royalsociety.org/items/el_p1_112/letter-from-reverend-james-pound-to-edmond-halley-dated-at-wanstead

seen that his depictions of nature were expectedly anthropocentric. He was also in good company in explaining natural happenings from a theocentric perspective. His division of the natural manifestations (one of the overlooked themes in the Ottoman environmental studies) reveals a duality of urban gardens and desolate wilderness based on borrowing terms from the Islamic tradition.

On the other hand, Murtaza's rural experiences as a farmer and traveler appear to have influenced his environmental descriptions. In contrast to the elite and Istanbulite Ottoman writers, he documents his habitat with a peripheral perspective in different localities. Thus, his experiences of ecological disruption and dependence on agricultural cycles stand out in his writings. Similar to Shami farmer-chroniclers, his records reflect a wealth of ecological knowledge derived from firsthand interaction with the soil. His ability to register the social reactions to natural challenges also renders his account a valuable source.

Besides, Murtaza's records concerning natural disasters are crucial for their documentary value. Ranging from the relocation of the Euphrates to the Kayseri earthquake and rinderpest outbreaks complement primary sources. His registers on viticultural activities can also contribute to Ottoman social and agricultural history as rare records of early modern Anatolian agrarian life. Eventually, we can suggest that his manuscripts open alternative vistas concerning the creation and circulation of environmental knowledge in the early modern Ottoman world via personal experiences and daily activities in an Anatolian village setting and other localities.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Yazıcı Murtaza, a figure of modest means from early eighteenth-century Ottoman Anatolia, and his universe from different angles. Murtaza's manuscripts offer a quite alternative voice in grasping the early eighteenth-century Ottoman world compared to the views of the Istanbulite authors at the Ottoman center. This thesis has revealed that while Murtaza's perspective has similar aspects with these elites and also contemporary Shami writers, he significantly departs from them regarding many other topics as a provincial person.

Having a similar religious identity to the Istanbulite elites and Ibn Budayr, Murtaza particularly shares similarities in his moralist reactions. His negative attitude towards the Southern Albanian communities or the lack of '*ilm-i hâl* knowledge illustrates these common concerns. We can also take into account that he learned or observed some of these assumptions during his Istanbul years. His depictions of nature and urban portraits were broadly shared in the premodern world. Thus, his depictions of wilderness or sultanic monuments follow a similar trajectory to the premodern authors across different cultures.

Unlike them, however, Murtaza has a rich repertoire of local knowledge and significant limitations stemming from his Central Anatolian setting. As opposed to the silence of the Istanbulite chroniclers, this study has argued that Murtaza's commenting on the sociocultural life, agricultural activities, or natural disasters in Gesi and Kayseri are of remarkable value. Considering the scarcity of the archival sources, his records suggest precious data on the daily life in early eighteenth-century Central Anatolia. More importantly, they reflect the perceptions of a self-claimed poor villager,

involved in agriculture and experienced hardships in his community. Taken as a whole, they help question the Istanbul-centered historiography of this period, offering a fresh outlook from the Ottoman peripheries alongside Shami contemporaries.

On the other hand, this thesis has found that the very same Kayseri-centric approach restricts Murtaza's point of view in many cases. The further he moved from Gesi, the more negatively he viewed different communities inside the Ottoman domain. Despite conveying crucial sociopolitical and confessional insights about the Marsh Arabs and Southern Albanians, he rejected many of their customs as they were foreign to his rural lifestyle. Thus, he differs from a renowned Istanbulite traveler, Evliya Çelebi, who had a relatively tolerant view of them. Likewise, he provides more details about non-Muslims in his hometown, but merely notes their existence in many other cities. Contrary to the Istanbulite ambassadors, his local perspective also limits his opinions concerning other lands from Persia to Western Europe with full of cliches.

Furthermore, this study has identified that ambivalences occupy an essential place in Murtaza's narrative. Chief among these is his attitude toward the Ottoman center. He praises the imperial regime by essentially representing Istanbul as the center of sultanic monuments. However, he also vehemently goes so far as to accuse the Ottoman rule of cruelty in Basra. He adopts a similarly ambivalent attitude towards the Marsh Arabs and even his village community. His attitude first points to that we should approach his assumptions with precaution. It is worth remembering that he returned to his hometown after he failed to rise in the central bureaucracy. He also experienced various social issues and natural disasters in Gesi, driving him to satirize its village community. Hence, his satires often reflect his disappointments,

requiring caution in investigating Murtaza and his universe between the Ottoman center and its peripheries.

Despite all these issues, Murtaza has a prominent advantage that distinguishes him from contemporary Istanbulite and Shami authors: compiling a travelogue after observing different parts of the empire. His travels diversified and enriched his observations of nature and urban life. This thesis has clarified that they are also a noteworthy mirror into the worldview of a mid-level provincial scribe. It is worth arguing that his depictions of nature and urban life are primarily based on a religiomoral vista. In spite of their varying localities, he interprets the relocation of the Euphrates, the flooding of an Albanian village, or the abundance of bazaars in Istanbul through this prism. Similarly, his shifting definitions for the lands of Rum verify the central role of his religiomoral identity in describing the Ottoman world.

Eventually, some of his interests differentiate him from many of his contemporaries, with major limitations. As a Kayserite observer, his curiosity about noting the recent inscriptions in Istanbul or his unfulfilled desire to visit India are worth mentioning. Unfortunately, he does not explain why he recorded these works. His ability to compile his travels in verse and prose also makes him distinctive in line with contemporary Istanbulite and Shami authors. However, overlapping pieces and expressions between his prose and verse limit a broader understanding of Murtaza's viewpoints. On the whole, Murtaza's manuscripts provide highly significant clues about the early eighteenth-century Ottoman world beyond being a personal account. Hence, these clues can allow future studies to ask new questions and topics around Yazıcı Murtaza and his universe.

APPENDIX

VISUALS ABOUT MURTAZA AND HIS MANUSCRIPTS

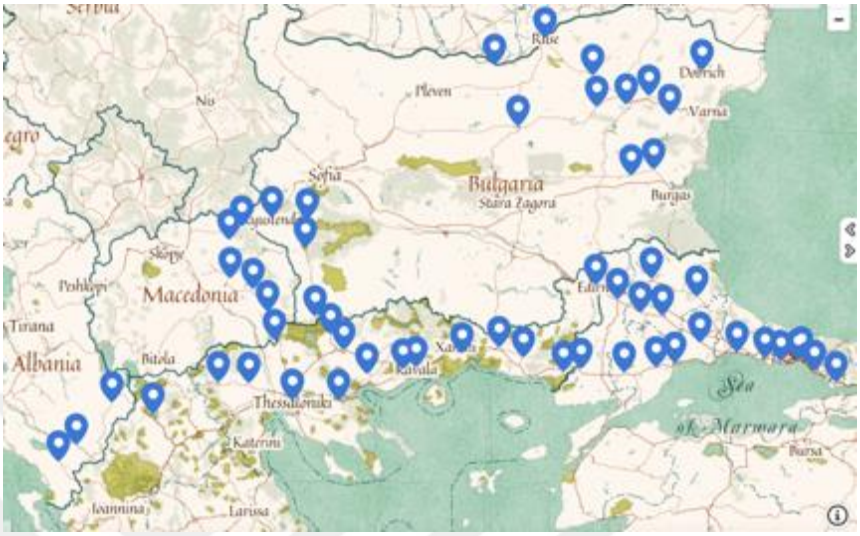




Figure 1. Cities and towns Murtaza visited in the Balkans.[525]

Figure 2. Cities and towns Murtaza visited in Anatolia and Mesopotamia. The spots marked with an X in Central Anatolia are towns where he only mentioned that he had been to them without further descriptions.

[525] Murtaza also remarked that he visited as far as Gonio, Batum in modern-day Georgia, despite not mentioning it in a separate chapter. Yazıcı Murtaza, *Seyahatnâme*, fol. Batuhan Aksu, "Yazıcı Murtaza's Travels", in *MapHub*, accessed June 14, 2025, https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/Yazici-Murtazas-Travels.



Figure 3. Tombstone attributed to Murtaza in Gesi. “Murtaza Hoca bin Merhum Mahmud, 1187” (1773-74) (left) (Batuhan Aksu).



Figure 4 and 5. The closed primary school (*sıbyân mektebi*) of Gesi (left) near the village mosque from the thirteenth century (right). (Batuhan Aksu).

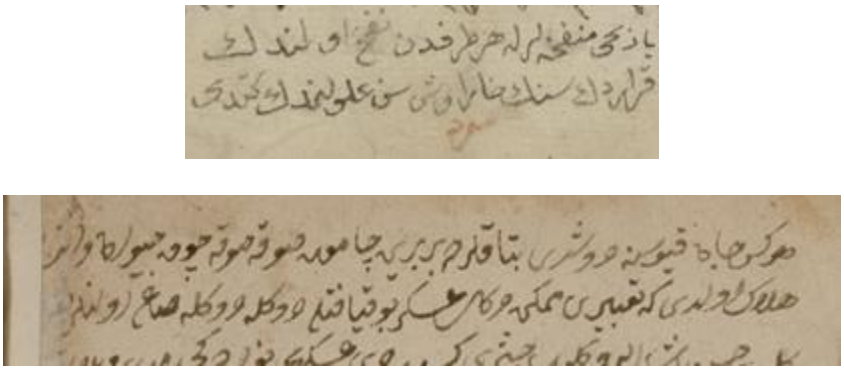


Figure 6. Murtaza's handwriting in *Eş'âr* (fol. 12b) and *Seyâhâtnâme* (fol. 212b).

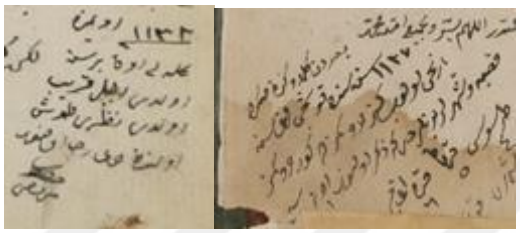


Figure 7. Murtaza's signature and his note in *Seyâhatnâme*. fol. 159b (left) and 214a (right).



Figure 8. The binding cover and the first folio of *Eş'âr*.



Figure 9. The binding cover and the front doublure of *Seyâhatnâme*.



Figure 10. Changes in handwriting in *Seyâhatnâme*: fol. 154a (left) and 212b (right).

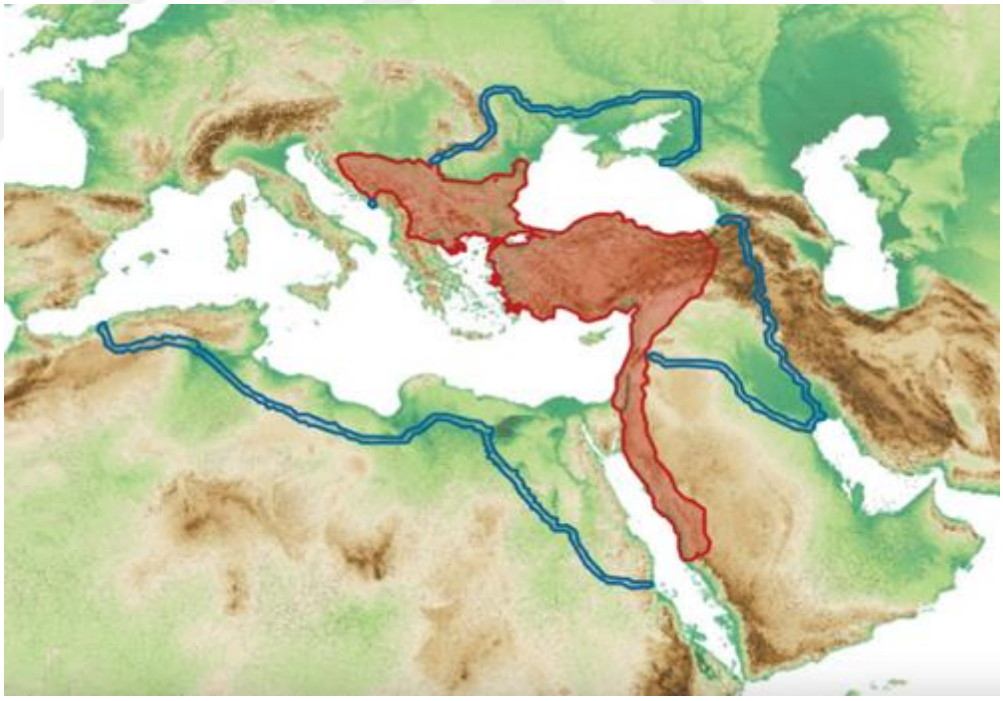


Figure 11. The Land of Rum in the Ottoman World in Murtaza's *Seyahatnâme* (red).

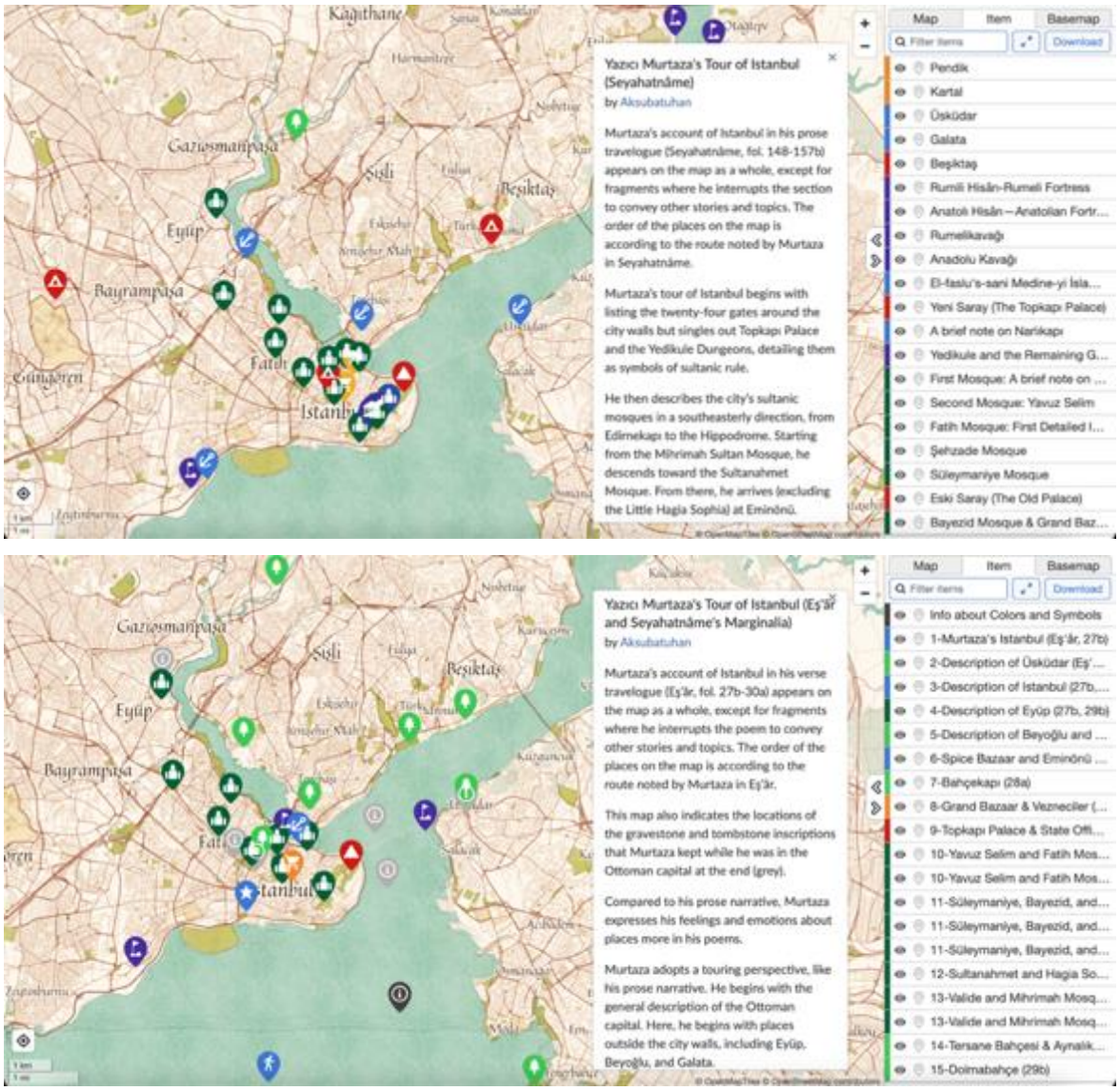


Figure 12 and 13. Murtaza's Tour of Istanbul in *Seyahatnâme* (above), Eş'âr, and *Seyahatnâme*'s marginalia (below).[526]



Figure 14. The Fountain Inscription of Gülnuş Emetullah Valide Sultan (above) (Batuhan Aksu) "*Vâlide Sultân o sıddıka şemâîl kim Hudâ/Nice hayrât-ı 'azîme ana mazhâr eyledi*."

[526] Batuhan Aksu, "Yazıcı Murtaza's Tour of Istanbul (Seyahatnâme)" and "Yazıcı Murtaza's Tour of Istanbul (Eş'âr and Seyahatnâme's Marginalia)," MapHub, accessed on August 15, 2025. https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/yazici-murtazas-tour-of-istanbul and https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/murtaza-s-istanbul-verse



Figure 15. Murtaza’s recording of the inscription of Valide Sultan (right) (fol.19b).

Figure 16. The Tombstone Inscription of Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha (left) (DİA).

Figure 17. Murtaza’s recording of the tombstone on the marginalia (center) (fol.19b).

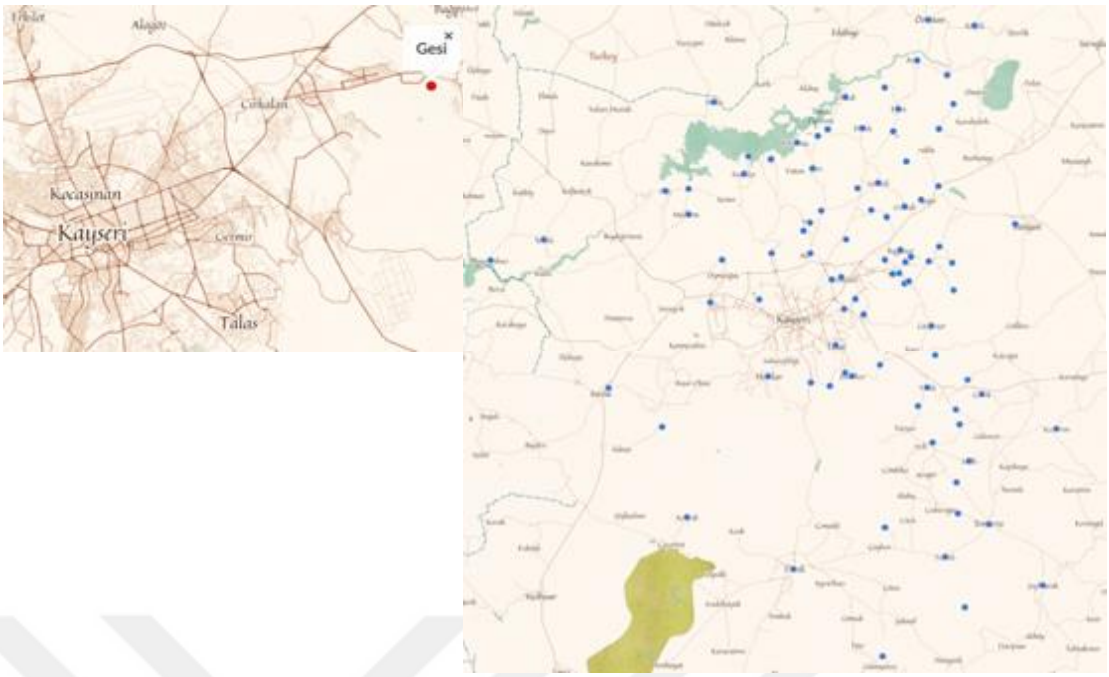


Figure 18 and 19. The map of Kayseri and Gesi (red), Kayseri's villages in *Eş'âr* (blue).[527]

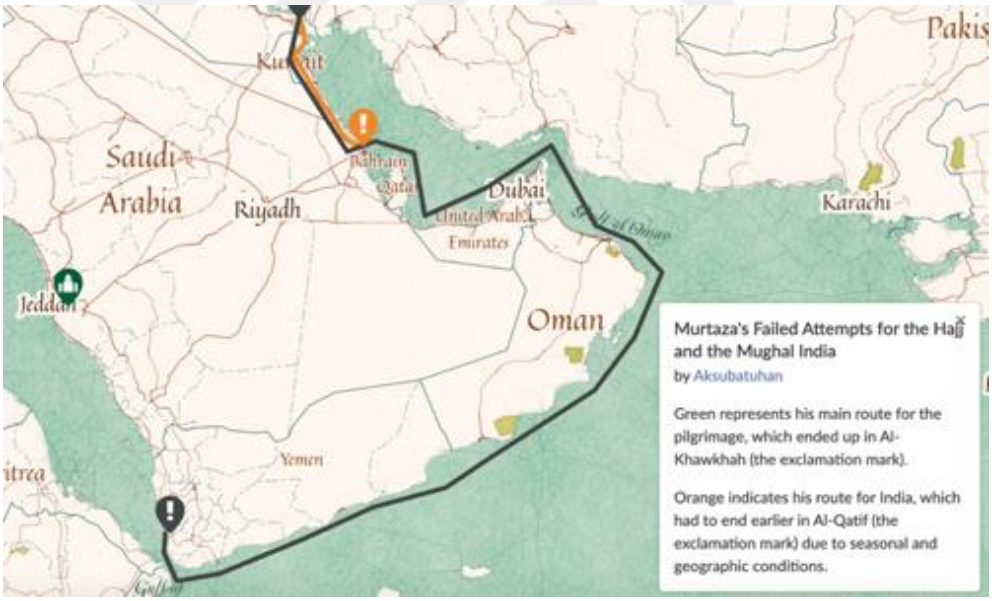


Figure 20. Murtaza's failed travels for the Hajj and the Mughal India.[528]

[527] Batuhan Aksu, "The Villages of Kayseri by Yazıcı Murtaza," *MapHub*, accessed on July 12, 2025. https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/murtaza-kayseri
[528] Batuhan Aksu, "Murtaza's Failed Attempts for the Hajj and the Mughal India," *MapHub*, accessed on July 24, 2025. https://maphub.net/Aksubatuhan/murtazas-attempts-for-the-hajj-and-the-mughal-india



Figure 21. The Major Routes of Rinderpest in 1709, according to Murtaza.



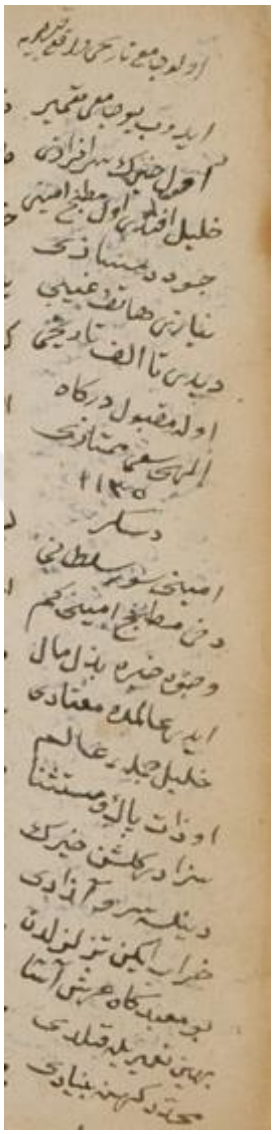


Figure 22 and 23. The restoration inscription of the Grand Mosque (left) "Târih-i Zelzele, sene 1135." "The Date of the Earthquake, the year 1135." (below) (Batuhan Aksu)



Figure 24. Murtaza's recording of the inscription on the marginalia (right) (*Seyahatnâme*, fol.40b).



Figure 25. The court record about the appointment of Murtaza Halife to the village mosque and primary school (*sıbyân mektebi*) in Gesi as imam and hodja based on his experiences in July 1742.[529]

[529] Sevda Yıldırım, "133/3 Numaralı Kayseri Şer'iyye Sicili (H. 1155-M. 1742): Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirilmesi," Master's Thesis, Erciyes University, 2011, 230-231. COA, KŞS, 133/300, No. 647.

Medine-i Kayseriyye'ye tâbi Gesi nâm karyede karşı mahallede vâki Muhsin Bey binâ eylediği câmi-i şerifde vazife-i muâyene ile imâm ve hatib ve kurbunda vaki Hasan Ağa'nın bina eylediği muallimhâne muâllim-i sıbyân olan Ahmed nâm kimesne tarik-i hizmet ve tenfir-i cemaat olduğunu meclis-i şerde haber vermeleriyle ref' olunub yerine erbâb-ı istihkakdan ve muhtar-ı cemaati olan iş bu rafî-i tevkî-i refiu's-sânî hakânı Mevlânâ Murtaza Halife her vecihle lâyık ve mahâl ve müstehâk olmağla mezbûrun refden tevcih olunub yedine berât-ı şerif virilmek bâbında akza kuzâtü'l-müslimin kadısı Mevlânâ el-Hâc Ahmed zide fazluhu arz itmeğin imâmet ve hitâbet ve mekteb hocaya mutasarrıf olan Molla Ahmed hizmet-i mezkûrenin uhdesinden gelmeyüb ve vakfın dahi malını ve izaat ve ahali ifk-i iftira ile rencide itmekle mezbûr Molla Ahmed ref' olunup mezbûr Murtaza Halife'ye tevcih olunmak ricâsına alimü'l-ülem-i mütebahhirin bi'l-fiil Anadolu kazaskeri olan Mevlânâ Mehmed Emin edemallâhu teâlâ fezailehu ilâm itmeleriyle Mevlânâ-yı müşarunileyhin ilâmı ve bin yüz elli beş senesinin Cemaziye'l-evvelin sekizinci günü tarihiyle müverrah sadır olan fermân-ı âlîşânım mûcebince sadaka edüb bu berât-ı hümâyûn saadet-makrunıyla virdüm ve buyurdum ki bade'l-yevm merkum varub zikir olunan câmi-i şerifde rafi olunan mezbûrun yedine imâm ve hatib ve muâllim-i sıbyan olup hizmet-i lâzimeleriyle müdde-i ve müeddi kılındıktan sonra vazife-i muayyenesiyle mutasarrıf olub vâkıfın ruhu ve devam-ı ömrü devleti üçün duaya müdavemet göstere ol babta ref' olunan mezbûr Ahmed ve taraf-ı aherden ferd mani' ve müzahim olmayub şöyle bileler. Alâmet-i şerife itimâd kılalar. Tahriren fi evail-i Cemâziye'l-evvelin li-sene hamse ve hamsîn ve mie ve elf.[530]

[530] Sevda Yıldırım, "133/3 Numaralı Kayseri Şer'iyye Sicili (H. 1155-M. 1742): Transkripsiyon ve Değerlendirilmesi," Master's Thesis, Erciyes University, 2011, 230-231. COA, KŞS, 133/300, No. 647.



Figure 26 and 27. The second and third folios of Murtaza's prose travelogue with their transcriptions (*Seyahatnâme*, fol. 145b-146a).

Budin'i kâfir aldı, sene 1097.
El-Hâc Sinân Ağa oğlu evlendi, fî Gurre-i Receb sene 1110.
Tekyenişîn oğlu Kâsım evlendi, fî 28 Zilkâde sene 1121.
Islah buğdayın dört kîlesi ıslah arpanın altı kîlesi bir guruşa olub alur kimesne kalmadı, fî Gurre-i Muharrem sene 1123.

Etrâf u eknâfdan gelür güzel alışveriş olur ve suları ve odunları çokdur.

5-Kasaba-yı Beğpazarı

Bu kasaba büyükdür, bayağı şehirlenür. Hanları ve câmiileri ve çarşusı güzeldir ve her şey
Bulunur, suları vâfir. Bu şehirde acâib kavın olur ve iğde boldur. Ammâ âdemi
Biraz yanazdır. Zâbıtlarına muti değillerdir. Köyleri ekser Yörükdür. Evleri binâsı ekser tahtadır.
Ve bunu dahı haftada bir gün pazârı durur. Bir bayırın yüzündedir, bağları vardır.

6-Kasaba-yı Torbalı

Bir derin derenin içinde, bir mazbûd, güzel kasabadır. Beğpazarı ile bunun ara yerinde
Sarılar Suyu ta'bir iderler bir su vardır. Çok kere üzerine köpri binâ olunmuşdur.
Bahârın 'azim seyl gelür, köpri dutmaz, koparır götürür ve yine bu aralıkda iki han
Vardır bayağı kasabalanur. Bazı levâzım, yiyecek ve arpa ve nalbend bulunur şenliği
Otuzar, kırkar ev vardır ve bu hanlar 'azim-i kebir hânlardır. Birine Nallıhân ve birine
Köstebek Hânı ta'bir iderler. Her biri beş yüz atlı alur ve bu Torbalı dediğimiz kasabada bağ
Vâfirdir ve odun, saman, arpa ve her şey bulunur. Bayağı çarşusı vardır. Güzel han
Ve câmiiler ve evler ve sarâylar vardır ve orta yerinden bir büyük su akar. Her eve su götürmüşler.

Âl-i Osmân'ın ibtidâ zuhûr edüb geleni Osmâncık ibn Tuğrul'dur. Sultân Alâeddîn'e tâbi' iken zuhûr eyledi, sene 684. Kendü nâmına hutbe okutdu sene 699.

İslâmbol fethinin târihi, sene 857

Bağdâd'ın fethi târihi, fî 18 Şabân sene 1048.

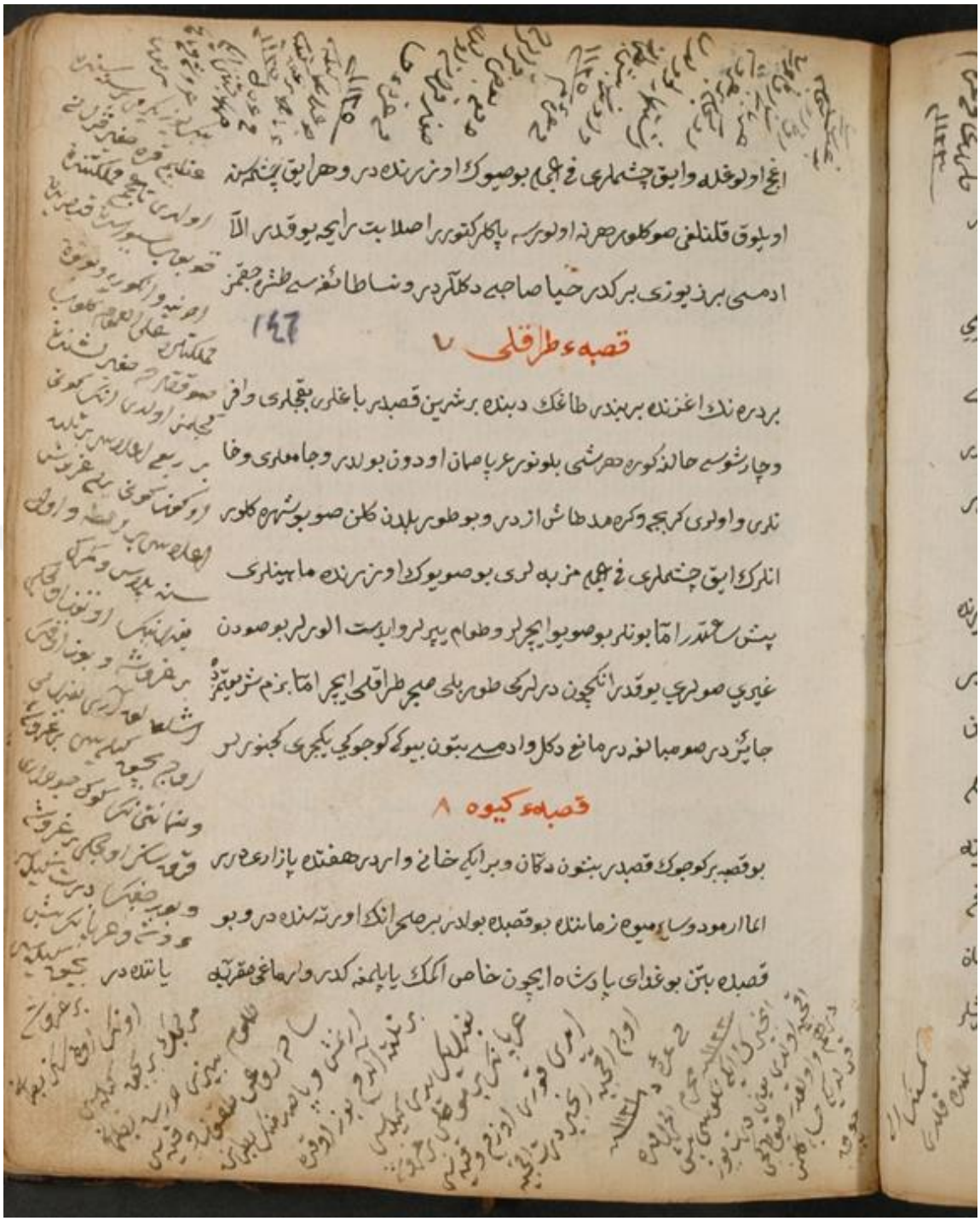
Celâlî Hasan Paşa fethi, fî sene 1068

Çehrin fethinin târihi, sene 1089.

Velâdetimiz târihi, fî 20 Zilhicce sene 1082.

Defa tâûn oldu. Lakin iri adam da kırıldı. Ammâ ufak (…) kırıldı, fî sene 1119.

Evlendüğümüz târih, fî Cemâziyelahir sene 1103.
Sığır kıranı oldu umûmen diyârlarda, fî sene 1121.
Davar kıranı oldu umûmen diyârlarda, fî sene 1122.
Azîm tâûn oldu Kayseriyye'de ve kurâlarında, fî sene 1102.



اغج اولوغله وایق چشملری فی الجمله بو صویوک اوزرنده در وهر ایق چشمه سنه
اویلوق قلنلغی صو کلور هر نه اولورسه پاکلر کتورر اصلا بت رایحه یوقدر الا
ادمسی برز یوزی برکدر حیا صاحبی دکللردر ونسا طائفه سی طشره چقمز

147

قصبهء طراقلی ۷

بر دره نک اغزنده بر بندر طاغک دبنده بر شرین قصبدر باغلری بقچلری وافر
وچارشوسی حالنه کوره هر شی بلونور عرپا صمان اودون بولدر وجامعلری وخا
نلری واولری کربجه وکره مد طاش ازدر وبو طور بلدن کلن صو بو شهره کلور
انلرک ایق چشملری فی الجمله مزبه لری بو صویوک اوزرنده ماهینلری
پیش ساعتدر اما بونلر بو صویو ایچرلر وطعام یپرلر وابدست الورلر بو صودن
غیری صولری یوقدر انکچون درلرکی طور بلی صحیح طراقلی ایچر اما بزم شریعتمزده
جایزدر صو مبالغه در مانع دکل وادمسی بتون بیوک کوجوکی یکیجری کجنورلر

قصبهء کیوه ۸

بو قصبه بر کوجوک قصبدر بتون دکان وبر ایکی خانی واردر هفتده پازاری در
اما ارمود وسایر میوه زماننده بو قصبه بولدر بر صحرانک اورته سنده در وبو
قصبه بتن بو غدای پادشاه ایچون خاص اکمک یاپلمغه کدر وارماغی مقربه

Buğdayın on ölçeği arpanın on dört ölçeği bir guruşa iştihâr oldu ve unun beş batmanı, fî Gurre-i Muharrem sene 1125.
Defa bazı kurâlarda sığır kıranı oldu, fî Gurre-i Cemâziyelevvel sene 1125.
Buğdayın kîlesi arpanın bir buçuk kîlesi, fî Gurre-i Şevvâl sene 1125.
Samanın kıymeti iki guruşa târih-i mezbûr.

1121 senesinde azîm kara sığır kıranı oldu. Ta Acem memleketinden kobub Sivas'dan Kayseriyye'den Adana ve Angori'ye ve bütün memleketlere alelumûm gelüb sokaklarda sığır leşinden geçilmez oldu. Anın gönü bir rub' alâsı bir sülüs öküz gönü yarım guruş alâsı bir rabta ve ol sene Pelas ve Gemerek buğdayının otuz ölçeği bir guruşa ve Bozok'un aşlık iri buğdayı üç buçuk kîlesi bir guruşa ve Zamantı'nın gök çavdarı kırk sekiz ölçeği bir guruşa ve burçağın dört kîlesi bir guruşa ve arpanın beş buçuk kîlesi bir guruşa

Ağaç oluğla ve ayak çeşmeleri fi'l-cümle bu suyun üzerindedir. Ve her ayak çeşmesine
Uyluk kalınlığı su gelür. Her ne olursa paklar götürür. Aslâ bed-râyiha yokdur. İllâ
Âdemi biraz yüzi berkdir. Hâya sâhibi değillerdir ve nisâ tâifesi taşra çıkmaz.

146 7-Kasaba-yı Taraklı

Bir derenin ağzında bender tağın dibinde bir şirin kaşabadır. Bağları, bakçeleri vâfir.
Ve çarşusı hâline göre. Her şey bulunur. Arpa, saman, odun boldur ve câmiileri ve hânları
Ve evleri kerpiç ve kiremid taş üzeredir. Ve bu Torbalıdan gelen su, bu şehre gelür.
Anları ayak çeşmeleri fi'l-cümle mezbeleleri bu suyun üzerinde mâbeynleri
Beş sâatdir. Ammâ bunlar bu suyu içerler ve taâm yaparlar ve âbdest alurlar. Bu sudan
Gayrı şuları yokdur. Anıniçün derler ki Torbalı sıçar, Taraklı içer. Ammâ bizim şeriatımızda
Câizdir. Su mübâlağadır, mâni degil ve âdemi bütün büyüği küçüği yeniçeri geçinürler.

8-Kasaba-yı Geyve

Bu kasaba bir küçük kasabadır. Beş on dükkân ve bir iki hânı vardır. Haftada pazarı durur.
Elma, armud ve sâ'ire meyve zamânında bu kasabada boldur. Bir sahrânın ortasındadır ve bu
Kasabada bütün buğday pâdişâh içün has ekmek yapılmağa gider ve ırmağı Sakarya yanındadır.

unun on sekiz batmanı mercimek bir buçuk kîlesi tulum peyniri dört batmanı sâde revgan dokuz vukiyyesi artmış ve pasdırmanın batmanı bir sülüse aldım. Bozok'da buğdayın yedi kîlesi arpanın bir musılı bir guruşa idi. Kuru üzüm vukiyyesi üç akçeye incir dört akçeye, fî Gurre-i Zilkâde sene 1121. Sene 1122 Muharremü'l-Harâm'da incirin iki kilosu beş akçe oldu. Yani dört yüz dirhem ve ol kadar koyun keçi kırıldı ki hesâba gelmez. Çok kimesnenin eli belinde kaldı.

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