

Travellers in Ottoman Lands II



Travellers in Ottoman Lands II

The Balkans, Anatolia and Beyond

edited by

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ARCHAEPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
13-14 Market Square
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 6AD
United Kingdom

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-859-9
ISBN 978-1-80327-860-5 (e-Pdf)

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In memory of Anastasia Uskova (18 September 1983–30 November 2023)

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Preface

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Aid Smajić

It is common knowledge that all religions have significantly shaped human language as a system of symbols meant to express religious ideas and values, as well as to shape the human experience of reality in consequence. Very often, they not only introduced completely new terminology but also enriched the existing lexicon with fresh, usually spiritual meanings. It is not surprising therefore that the notion of travel has a very profound meaning in Islam, its spirituality, rituals and worldview. The Qurʾān, for instance, urges Muslim believers to practice travelling in numerous verses (e.g. al-Anʿām, 11 or al-Naml, 69). The famous journey (Ar. *Hijrah*) of the Prophet Muḥammad (Peace be upon him) from Makkah to Madinah in AD 622 stands as a cornerstone of early Muslim history and the starting event for the Muslim *Hijrah* calendar. Equally important is the Prophet's miraculous night journey from Makkah to Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem (Ar. *al-Isrāʾ*) and his consequent ascension from there to the heavens (Ar. *Miʿrāj*) prior to the *Hijrah*. Furthermore, in the proper Islamic understanding of the obligatory daily prayers, they should be approached and performed by believing Muslims as an experiential *Miʿrāj* or spiritual journey, bringing to their minds and souls spiritual joy, solace and refreshment. Many other examples witnessing the importance of the notion of travel in Islamic tradition and history can be found.

For centuries, Bosnia-Herzegovina has found itself at the crossroads of different cultures, civilisations and polities. As a result, in various ways, travelling has been part and parcel of Bosnian Muslims' existence and experience, as well as their encounter with Others, throughout their history, including the time of the Ottoman State's domination over the country (1463-1878).

Against this background, representatives of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Sarajevo were delighted and honoured by the invitation to host the 2022 Seminar on 'Travellers in Ottoman Lands: the Balkans, Anatolia and Beyond', as its agenda was deeply intertwined with the history and educational mission of the Faculty. We are equally happy to see that the collection of papers presented by the participants will soon see daylight and be in the hands of prospective readers. For us at the Faculty, this is a reliable indication that the symposium was a successful one, that our efforts will hopefully be appreciated by the wider public, and that we should perhaps join hands with our TIOL Seminar partners for similar projects in the future!

An Introduction to Travellers in Ottoman Lands II: the Balkans, Anatolia and Beyond

Paul and Janet Starkey

This book contains a selection of peer-reviewed papers that were presented at a pioneering international Seminar on ‘Travellers in Ottoman Lands: the Balkans, Anatolia and Beyond’ (TIOL2) held at the Faculty of Islamic Studies of the University of Sarajevo in August 2022. We are particularly indebted to Professor Aid Smajić and his colleagues for their assistance in arranging the Seminar and for all their kindness and hospitality during the event. We are also grateful for the financial and logistical support we received for the Seminar from the Association for the Study of Travel in Egypt and the Near East (ASTENE), and to *Cornucopia* and for the hard work of the TIOL2 committee members, publications subcommittee and peer-reviewers who contributed to organising the Seminar and to the making of this volume.

The event, which followed the successful ‘Travellers in Ottoman Lands: the Botanical Legacy’ TIOL1 seminar in Edinburgh in 2017, combined a fascinating series of presentations and discussions with a visit to Mostar on the final day. It was a truly interdisciplinary gathering, with experts ranging from anthropologists and historians to journalists and literature specialists. From 24 to 26 August 2022, following a delightful plenary lecture by Jason Goodwin, we heard papers on topics as varied as Traders and diplomats through Ottoman lands; Ottoman cities through the eyes of travellers; Spiritual journeys; Christian-Muslim Relations in the late Ottoman Balkans; Botany and Medicine; Women Travellers; Ottoman Orientalism; Fictional journeys and fictional characters; and The Eastern Question: colonialism, imperialism and the nineteenth-century Balkans. Our second plenary speaker, Dr Dženita Karić, spoke on Ottoman Bosnians on the *Hajj*, and we also enjoyed screenings, generously sponsored by *Cornucopia* magazine, of two films by Didem Pekün relevant to recent Bosnian history,

Like the Seminar itself, the resulting book discusses travel and travellers from, to and across the Balkans and beyond from a wide variety of viewpoints and theoretical perspectives. As Ines Aščerić-Todd wrote in the Seminar booklet: ‘This is the region through which the Ottoman Empire first expanded into Europe, and which heralded its eventual downfall; it is a region through which Western travellers often passed on their way further East and the location in which they often first encountered the Oriental ‘other’. Moreover, the region remains crucial to building a better understanding between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’, between former Ottoman lands and their Western European neighbours, and between Islam and Christianity.’

Travellers in the Balkans

For much of its turbulent history, the Balkans have been stereotyped as a region affected by frequent warfare, waves of migration and regional disorder. Many have seen it as a contentious, perpetually divided region, with a past weighed down by antagonism, ongoing ethnic conflict and criminal activity. Despite this, a small number of travellers of different kinds — pilgrims and missionaries, soldiers, spies, merchants, traders, geographers, scientists and diplomats

— have from early times travelled through the region. From the late Middle Ages, pilgrimage to the Holy Land was a popular activity, and although by the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, interest in travelling for religious reasons had declined, people have continued to travel across the region with a wide variety of motives and purposes: from straightforward curiosity about the ways of life and traditions of the people of the region; to raise awareness of a little-known region of Europe; to discover the aspirations of oppressed Balkan peoples; or to further colonial or imperialistic ambitions. By the nineteenth century, there were several popular descriptions of Ottoman Lands by Europeans in which a wide range of subjects were discussed, from nature to history, culture and customs. By the late nineteenth century, many (but not all) of the Western European travel accounts provided a mixture of romanticised depictions and an Orientalist sense of superiority and condescension.

The Book

The chapters of this book are arranged in five Parts, representing a wide range of approaches to the study of travel in the Balkans and Ottoman lands beyond. They range from straightforward accounts of journeys and observations by travellers to detailed analyses of specific themes, some involving innovative research methodologies and analyses, with many useful maps. Within each section the intention has been to arrange the chapters in approximately chronological order.

Part 1. Landscapes

The five chapters in Part I highlight a range of geographical, ecological and ethnographic perspectives to be found in the descriptions by travel writers. First, in his chapter, Vincent Thérouin links published and unpublished European travel accounts, Ottoman *tahrir defters* and Austro-Hungarian cadastral maps, to identify the roads and their infrastructures used by travellers as a continuum that evolved over time. Sabaheta Gačanin discusses the observations of nature and environment in the Balkans by the renowned sixteenth-century historiographer Idrīs Bidlisī, with particular attention to the intersections between the eco-critical and cosmological narratives in his work. Nedim Rabić and Amer Maslo focus on the late Ottoman period and the rise of Orientalist travelogues on Bosnia, highlighting the representation of rivers in a wide range of travel literature in the German language, while Burak Beşir Fındıklı analyses the fourth chapter of Auguste Viquesnel's *Voyage dans la Turquie d'Europe* (1868), using it as a quantitative source for a discussion of aspects of the population of contemporary Constantinople. Finally, İbrahim Canbulat draws on a wide range of travellers' narratives to discover more about the history and architecture of the Ottoman house, and about the importance of wooden structures in an area subject to earthquakes.

Part 2. Religion and travel

The four chapters in this Part discuss aspects of religion and travel in a region where religious identities interact with ethnic differences in sometimes complex ways. The first chapter, by İbrahim Al-Khaffaf, explores the mystical elements in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels and their relationship to the writings of Ibn 'Arabī, discussing Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's journey as a response to the anonymous Sufi saying about the spiritual benefits of travelling. Velida Mataradžija uses a scholarly autobiography written in the eighteenth century by Ḍiyā' al-dīn 'Abdullah

b. Muḥammad al-Akhishkḥāwī who worked as a *müderris* in twenty-five different cities of the Ottoman Empire, to discuss mobility among Ottoman *‘ulamā*, while Omer Merzić and Vedrana Šimić analyse foreign travel writers’ perceptions of religious orders in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the long nineteenth century. Finally, Ines Aščerić-Todd draws on Arthur J. Evans’s 1875 travelogue *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on foot* to explore aspects of religious freedom, tolerance and co-existence in nineteenth-century Ottoman Bosnia, concluding that his account reveals a remarkable level of religious freedom, co-existence and tolerance among the different Bosnian religious communities (‘milletts’).

Part 3. Travellers from diplomats, merchants and physicians, to photographers, botanists and kings

The five chapters in this Part discuss travellers with a wide range of motives and objectives. First, Maja Perić describes how diplomats from the Low Countries provided vignettes of Early Modern Belgrade and its surroundings and discusses these first-hand descriptions and images of women in the Ottoman Balkans. Jennifer Scarce describes the return of the Cornish merchant Peter Mundy (1597–c. 1667) from Constantinople to London in 1620 through the Balkans, where he noted local customs, languages and dress which were all new to him. Alexandru Balas describes the travels of Martin Honigberger, who practised medicine in the Ottoman Empire in 1816–1828 and 1836–1838 and showed a keen interest in Eastern homeopathic medical practice, local communities and ways of life. Kristina Milković discusses the pharmacist, botanist and naturalist Bartolomeo Biasoletto (1793–1858), who described the botanical journey of His Majesty King Friedrich August of Saxony through Istria, Dalmatia and Montenegro in the spring of 1838. Finally, the chapter by Anastasia Uskovač focuses on a little-known secret diplomatic mission (1842–1845) by Girault de Prangey (1804–1892), one of the first surveyor-photographers in the Middle East, and his connection to the celebrated French poet Alphonse de Lamartine’s Anatolian Colonisation Project.

Part 4. Fantasies, images and folktales

The six chapters in this Part open with a study by Doris Gruber, which focuses on the use of images of nature in Ottoman lands in travel writing and questions why fantastic creatures such as mermen, dragons, revenants and unicorns found their way into travel writing such as Ludovico de Varthema’s *Itinerario* (1510). Michael Erdman then discusses how an Ottoman poet, Enderunlu Fazıl Bey, depicts men and women from various Ottoman lands in works that were tinged with eroticism, misogyny, xenophobia and racism. Janet Starkey’s chapter focuses on three painter-writers, Louis Dupré, Edward Lear and Mrs Mary Adelaide Walker, who all published illustrated volumes of travel in Rumelia during the nineteenth century, while Melike Tokay focuses on the tales and folklore collected in coffeehouses and published by three Western travellers to Turkey at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century. Using Joseph Campbell’s narratological theory ‘The Hero’s Journey’, Gemma Masson re-examines *Under the Yoke* by the Bulgarian nationalist Ivan Vazov (1850–1921), which has become a classic of Bulgarian literature. Finally, Aida Abadžić Hodžić discusses an illustrated Bosnian magazine, *Nada*, published between 1895 and 1903, that contained excerpts from travelogues describing Bosnian everyday life, focusing her attention on Heinrich Renner’s travelogue *Durch Bosnien und die Herzegovina, Kreuz und Quer* (1896) to examine how representations of Bosnia were formulated in accordance with the chosen media.

Part 5. Imperial discourse, the rise of nations, and rapportage

The final Part of the collection of papers also includes six chapters. First, Cristina Erck discusses the life of the Tyrolian scholar, Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861), who was offered a prize by the Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters to research the history of the Empire of Trebizond. Fallmerayer subsequently travelled to the Middle East as a companion to the Russian Count Osterman-Tolstoy. Paul Starkey focuses on the English traveller Edith Durham, best known for the book *High Albania* (1909), who became progressively more identified with Albania and the Albanians, and whose observations fed into the political controversies of the period between the two World Wars. Patrick Schilling discusses the concept of ‘Ottoman Orientalism’ through the lens of a series of articles by the Ottoman Turkish journalist Ahmed Şerif that appeared in the İstanbul-based newspaper *Tanin* between 1909 and 1914. Pietro Dalmazzo focuses on Italian imperial ambitions in the eastern Adriatic after Italy was unified in 1861 by examining the work of the reporter Vico Mantegazza and ethnographer Antonio Baldacci; while Konstantin Dragaš, in his study of reportage (1774–1922), describes how Italian travelogues introduced their Italian readers to the Orient with its multicultural cities during this period. Finally, Azra Hasanović brings the volume into the twenty-first century by focusing on authentic travelogues published in *Bosanska Sumejja* (2000–2022), the ‘Magazine for Women and Family’.

Understanding Balkan place and ethnic names

Interpreting any geographical or ethnographic information in travellers’ accounts can be a challenge. Names and other information may be cited in Ottoman Turkish, Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Venetian, Latin, Italian, English or French, with a wide variety of spellings for people, places and local terms. Regional names might be those of Ottoman *vilayets* or Serbian bishoprics, though it was not until 1864 that Ottoman provinces (*vilayet*), and sub-provinces (*sancak*) were defined in Rumelia. Some words and phrases are spelled in travellers’ accounts as the travellers heard them; others can only be understood with a knowledge of specific historical backgrounds or with access to source material to disentangle them. Today, there is often yet another layer of place names: hence Manastır (also spelt Monastir) is now Bitola; Ioánnina can be spelt Janina and Yanina; Smyrna is now İzmir, and so on. Frustratingly, in many accounts, other places and characters that the travellers encountered on their journeys remain unnamed.

The problem is well encapsulated by the following quotation from the English artist, author, poet and traveller Edward Lear (1812–1888), best known (in the English-speaking world, at least) for his ‘nonsense poetry’:

Whatever he may already know of ancient nomenclature Epirus, Molossia, Thesprotia, etc: is thwarted and confused by Turkish divisions and Pashaliks. Beyond these, wheel within wheel. a third set of names distract him in the shape of native tribes and districts Tjamourià, Dibra etc. And no sooner does he begin to understand the motley crowd which inhabits these provinces: Greeks, Sclavonians, Albanians, Bulgarians or Vlachi, then he is anew bewildered by a fresh list of distinctive subsplittings: Liape, Mereditti, Khimáriotes and Tóskidhes. Races, religions and national denominations seem so ill

defined or so entangled that he would give up the perplexing study in despair were it not for the assistance of many excellent books. (Lear 1851: 11–12)

Note: The TIOL2 seminar was held in 2022, shortly after the coronavirus pandemic and associated lockdowns. The chapters are to the best of the editors' knowledge original contributions and their content has not been published elsewhere, whether by the same author or another. All best efforts have been made to find suitable images and to obtain permissions to publish under somewhat difficult circumstances following lockdown. We extend our thanks to our many colleagues in museums, libraries and universities in this respect. Any shortcomings in obtaining permissions will be rectified in any subsequent edition. Special thanks go to the staff at Archaeopress for all their support in the production of this book, which we hope will shed important light on Ottoman lands, and on the Balkans in particular — a region that has often hitherto been somewhat neglected as peripheral to Ottoman studies.

Note on transliteration: We have based transliterations from languages using the Arabic script on the *IJMES* (*International Journal of Middle East Studies*) system, for which see <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/57d83390f6ea5a022234b400/TransChart.pdf> Given the complex languages patterns in the area under discussion, however, complete consistency has been impossible to achieve, and for this we can only beg the reader's indulgence.