

French Travellers in Ottoman Lands, 15th – 19th Centuries

Romanian scholar-statesman Nicolae Iorga gave five conferences at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1928 that formed the basis of his book, published that year, about the travel logs of Frenchmen who had visited Ottoman lands over the course of five centuries. A Turkish journalist named Nahit Sırrı attended the conferences and wrote two articles about them and the book. Sırrı's articles were published in Istanbul in the August and September 1929 issues of *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası* (Magazine of the Turkish History Society).

Nahit Sırrı was born in Istanbul in 1895 and left Turkey during WWI, returning in 1928. He wrote for *Cumhuriyet* newspaper before moving to Ankara, where he worked in the National Education Ministry as a translator. In 1933 he put out *Varlık Dergisi* (Varlık magazine) together with Yaşar Nabi, but returned to Istanbul that same year after his father died. Sırrı wrote for various newspapers and magazines in Istanbul until his death in 1960.

Herewith the English translation of Sırrı's two articles about Iorga's conferences and his related book about French travellers to the Ottoman East over five centuries. Sırrı's articles were printed in Istanbul in the then-new, Latin-lettered Turkish script.

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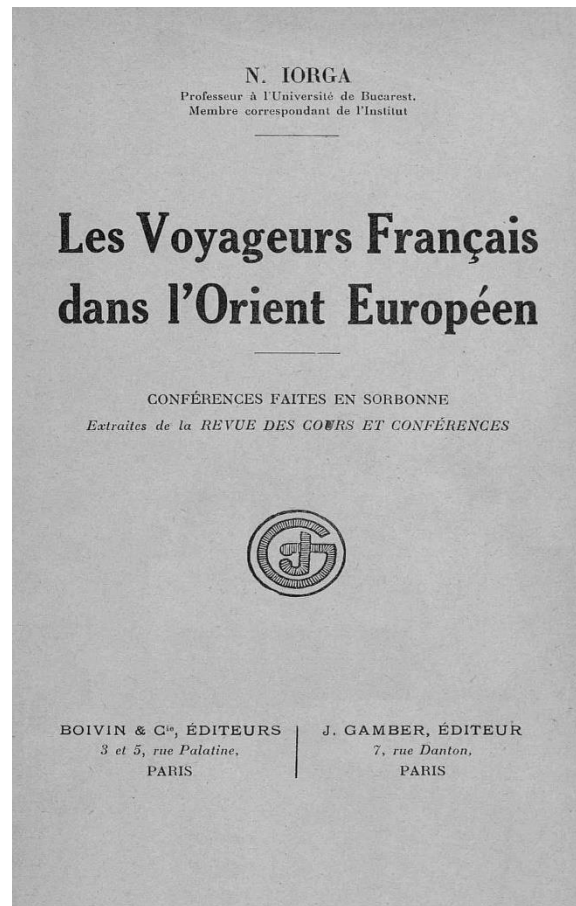
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Travelers in the East

Introduction

Nicolae Iorga, the most famous professor of Bucharest University and someone who has gained notoriety for Romania internationally, gave five conferences at the Sorbonne in Paris and then published a book entitled “French Journeys in the European Orient”. This work, published in Paris in 1928 by Boivin and J. Gamber, has 128 pages, each comprised of 41 lines. At the conferences, the travel logs of Frenchmen who had contacts in the Ottoman Empire during the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and up to 1860 in the 19th century, were the focus of each particular session.

The language of the presentations was amenable and lively and the professor’s French fluent, although the story-telling was at times rambling and confused. It must be said, though, that Iorga’s conferences were the result of his intensive research and the product of great scholarship. However, the Romanian historian seems to have been a bit lax in proofreading his book because I noticed some mistakes about recent history, rather than about the olden

times that are the main subjects. For example, on page 127, when talking about the Bavarian Othon as King for Greece, who ruled until 1862, Iorga mistakenly writes that his domineering wife Amelie was a member of the Mecklenberg dynasty when, in fact, she was from the Oldenberg dynasty. This mistake ought not be attributed to ignorance but, rather, to inattention to detail.

In any event, based on these errors, one must call into question the accuracy of the contents of the books, but since his works are so voluminous and my knowledge of the subjects lacking, I must relate the material without comment or argument. That being said, I was pleased to see that on the first page of his work, Iorga refuted the idea of fanatics that the Turks' movement into Thrace and the end of Byzantine life there was a calamity for civilization.

15th Century

The first conference, related to the travel logs of six French travellers in the 15th century, was just 16 pages, shorter than the others. Gilles le Bouvier et Berry, who later took an important position in the King's entourage, was the first traveller discussed. His travel log, entitled "Livre de la description des pays" (1), was published in Paris in 1908 by E.T. Hamy. At the age of 16, Gilles de Bourvier visited the East in 1402, the year that Timurlane battled Yıldırım Beyazıt. He departed from Venice, and stopped in Crete and Cyprus before reaching Syria, where he investigated the lives of the Moslems there and noted that goods from Damascus reached northern Germany and Poland. With regard to the Timur-Yıldırım battlefield on the Ankara plain, Gilled de Bouvier provided some information about Timur's homeland and nationality, after which he wrote about Sultan Yıldırım's fine 20,000-man army of Ottoman Turks, noting that the Turks were a quite honorable nation. Le Bouvier took this trip to see ancient lands and went as far as the borders of Armenian and Georgia and to Kefe. He wrote his travel log long after the end of his trip.

(1) "Book Describing Nations"

The second traveller discussed in the first conference was a royal fellow named Nompar de Caumont, whose travel log "Voyage d'Oultremer par le seigneur de Caumont l'an MCCCCXVIII" (1) was published in Paris in 1858 by Marki de la Grange.

The third book, published by Buchon of Panthéon Littéraire and entitled "Le livre des faits du bon messier Jean le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut" (2), contains very pertinent and detailed information. While Bouciquaut was governor of Geneva he participated in a number of wars for the Geneva Republic, including the Battle of Niğbolu ((Nicopolis)) of 1396. When Sultan Yıldırım attacked Istanbul, Bouciquaut provided assistance to the Byzantines. He noted in his work that there were Moslems even in Lithuania and he gave valuable details about the Niğbolu war. Bouciquaut mentioned the Ottoman Turks from before Yıldırım's time, providing information about Yıldırım's father Sultan Murad, whom the French called Amorat-baquin (Murad Bey).

According to Bouciquaut, the Venetians allied with Murad against the Byzantines and he described Murad as being very cordial and hospitable in his contacts with Frenchmen. Murad's domains in both Thrace and Anatolia were described by Bouciquaut as prosperous and filled with beautiful villages, home and palaces. This very civilized Turkish community had mixed Byzantine and far eastern cultures together, in Bouciquaut's view. The Crusaders had considered an alliance with Murad against the Arabs and at the Battle of Niğbolu they saw that the Turks fought with the order, tenacity and discipline of the ancient Roman armies. Although his book does not bear his name and cannot be considered a travel log, Bouciquaut provided very valuable information about the Near East, even more so than Caumont.

The fourth book mentioned was "Anchiennes cronicues d'Engleterre par Jean de Wavrin", written by Jean de Wavrin in the Picardie dialect and published by the French Historical Society. (3) In this book there is a portion about a battle between the Turks and Crusaders on the banks of the Danube River in 1445. The author's nephew Valerand was in the Crusader army that fought in this battle in the time of Sultan Murad II. The information about the battle in the book came from Valerand, who described the Romania and Romanians of the period and the awesome spectacle of the Turkish army and its military operations.

- (1) "Monsieur dü Caumont's 1418 voyage across the seas"
- (2) "The adventures of Jean Le Maingre, a.k.a. Bouciquaut"
- (3) "Ancient Chronicle of England by Jean de Wavrin"

The fifth writer discussed was Guilebert dö Lannoy and his travel to Russia and further to the east. His very thorough and well-footnoted book concerns the Slavic world, entitled "Euvre" (1), was published by Poitvin in Brussels. There is quite a bit of information about Turkey in 1420. Guilebert dö Lannoy was carrying a valuable present from the English king for Sultan Mehmed I but while in Poland he learned that the Sultan had died and that a battle for succession was underway between the new sultan, Murad I, and his uncle Mustafa. Deeming travel to Turkey dangerous, Guilebert dö Lannoy changed his route through Lemberk, where he was treated hospitably by the Armenians there. Subsequently, he went to Bessarabia where he was captured by bandits. Freed, Guilebert dö Lannoy went to the Crimea and from there across the Black Sea on a Genoese ship to the Genoese quarter of Istanbul. The Byzantine Emperor Manuel and his son entertained Guilebert dö Lannoy while he was there and took him hunting. The traveller wanted to see the battles taking place between Murad and Mustafa but the Emperor would not allow it so, after visiting Jerusalem and Egypt, Guilebert dö Lannoy returned to the West.

The sixth book, by Bertrand de la Broquière and entitled "Le voyage d'Outremer de Bertrandon de la Broquière, premier écuyer trenchant et conseiller de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne" (2), was published with footnotes by Ch. Schefer in Paris in 1892. This book is more valuable than the other five combined. Like Broquiere do Lannoy, Burgonya is a province of France. In 1432 the writer went from Gant to Rome and from there by sea to the East. Broquière wrote about all the sights he saw and very carefully recorded all that he heard and believed. For example, according to Broquière, because Moslems spread a bad smell from their bodies, the elders have them secretly baptized to rid them of this smell. He

asked a Turk about Muhammed and where he is buried, learning that the body was in a grave and could be viewed. However, the Turk told Broquiére that those who saw the body could see nothing afterwards so their eyes were removed. He himself had seen many pilgrims who had returned from the Hajj in this condition. When Broquiére came to the East he did not know any local languages but he later learned Turkish, which he found easy to study and quite appealing. For this he said he was indebted to the kindness of his traveling companions.

Broquiére intended to make Jerusalem suffice in his journey to the East, but he continued on to Damascus, where he fell ill. He was nursed back to health by the Moslems there and learned about health treatments and massages unknown in the West. Regaining his health, Broquiére decided not to risk a sea journey to Europe because the pirates of an Italian prince were engaged with the Arabs in a fight. Instead, he went from Damascus to Bursa in an overland caravan returning from Mecca. The camels' saddles were gold-embroidered and one of his fellow-caravaners was a female relative of the Sultan. Along the way, Broquiére dressed like a Turk and was protected from all dangers by his companions. At the inns where he stayed, Broquiére took note of the lack of theft and the aid rendered to the poor. He praised the "kadi" ((judges)) for their hospitality toward foreigners like himself. In particular, he was impressed by the Turkish army's sense of purpose and dignity. In Istanbul, he deemed the Byzantine Emperor to be a man of good character with a beautiful Empress, although Broquiére found her make-up to be excessive. He concluded that a Turk was more trustworthy than a Greek.

(1) "Oeuvres"

(2) "Voyage across the sea of Bertandan dö la Broquiére, a servant and advisor to Philippe the Good, the Duke of Burgonya"

At that time, Broquiére encountered many Europeans in the East. There was a Florentine in Bursa, a Napolitan with an Ethiopian wife living in Beyoğlu, Istanbul, and Venetians, Genoese, Florentines and Catalonians in Edirne. The Jews in the East were fluent in French and the Hungarian defences against the Turks at the Danube had been prepared by the French. Broquiére also mentioned two Frenchman and a Spaniard who had gone all the way to Ethiopia.

Concluding the first conference, Iorga stated that: "In other words, the Turks were not at all like the vicious and fearsome creatures they were depicted as. Also, the political life along the Bosphorus was not in danger of decline, with strong systems having been developed. In the 16th century, rather than endeavoring to change it, other travellers would go there and try to understand this new, Moslem form of Rome, which had become its East version, in order to secure Europe's diplomatic and military benefits."

16th Century

İorga began the conference about the 16th century with some general observations, saying that the Byzantine civilization had adopted some elements of Islam in order to prolong Byzantine rule in Istanbul. At the beginning of the 16th century and, in particular, after Sultan Süleyman took the throne, the Ottoman world underwent a profound revolution and Süleyman proved to be stronger in his Ottoman lands than his contemporary King Charles V of Austria was in his. The Moslem and Christian communities had intermingled from their first contacts and, in fact, two Ottoman princes had married Byzantine princesses even before the seizure of Edirne.

In İorga's view, the conquest of Istanbul was a personal act by Sultan Mehmed II and it was not essential for the development of the Ottoman state. Nevertheless, after the conquest, the Byzantine civilization left quite an effect on the Ottoman Empire and although the reports that the Venetian ambassadors sent back to Venice, based on their contacts with Ottoman officials of varying ethnicity, were quite important, the travel logs of the 16th century French travellers were more so because these visitors were not content with palace hand-outs and personally mixed with the populace during long journeys in the hinterlands.

The first and most important of these travel logs had a strange peculiarity, being written entirely in verse. The travel log, entitled "Le discours du voyage de Constantinople, envoyé du dict lieu a une damoyseille Francoyse" (1), was published in Lyon in 1541 without an author's name. Later it became known that the name of the author was La Borderie. During a time of friendship between Sultan Süleyman and King Francois, when the Turks attacked the Venetian-held island of Corfu, France sent a fleet to help the Ottomans. Borderie was with this fleet and he wrote his observations entirely in verse in order not to forget his sweetheart in Lyon. He was not fond of the Turks and was pleased he did not have to go to war against them, although he registered his awe of the Turkish fleet, looking as it did "like a forest upon the sea". While coming from Corfu to Istanbul he saw Athens from a distance but said that Athens was the worst place on Earth at that time. Stopping at Sakız ((Chios)) Island, Borderie found the girls there to be the world's most beautiful and very accommodating toward the French soldiers, who availed themselves of the girls' charms. Since he was writing to his sweetheart, Borderie made sure to exempt himself from this situation, saying he was the only one who abstained. On the way to Istanbul, Boderie passed through Anatolia and saw Süleyman's young and handsome son in Manisa. As for Istanbul, he said it was the same size as Paris but not as prosperous, and he bemoaned the fact that the mosaics in Aya Sofia had been plastered over.

(1) "Statement sent to a French lady from a traveller in Istanbul"

The next traveller mentioned was Philippe de Fresne Canaye, a royal who went to the East in 1573. His travel log was entitled "Le voyage du Levant de Philippe du Fresne Canaye" (1) and it was published with some footnotes by H. Hauser in 1897. Canaye set out from Ragusa with the French ambassador to Istanbul via Bosnia and Serbia, where the women were adorned and lovely. After a 46-day trip, they reached Istanbul and Canaye joined the ambassador in meetings with the Sultan and the Prime Minister. Canaye described Sultan Selim II's expression as turbid and sinister, adding that underneath his yellow mustaches his

cheeks were sunken and puffy. Canaye would see Sultan Selim II twice more – once on a holiday and the other in a garden. On the holiday, there was a large crowd of cavalry on beautiful horses, and in the garden the “bostancıbaşı” ((commander of the imperial guards)) offered the Sultan flowers, while a group of mutes and midgets danced around. There are many pictures and abundant information about life in Istanbul in those days in the book.

The journey of Jérôme Maurand of Antibes in 1544, entitled “Itinéraire d’Antibes a Constantinople” and published by Léon Dorez in 1901, focuses primarily on the raids that Barbaros made on the west coast of Italy and the cruel acts of the crewmen, who were worse than wild tigers. In any event, in the book the author describes seeing the Sultan and he provides information about Levantine families in Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

- (1) “The Journey to the Near East of Phillipe du Fresne Canaye”
- (2) “Guide From Antibes to Istanbul”

The third book, entitled “Peregrinations du s. Jean Palerne, Foresien, secretaire de Francois de Valois, duc d’Anjou et d’Alencon, etc., ou est traicté de plusieurs isles, tant de la Mer Mediterranée que Archipelages, etc.” (1), was written by Jean Palerne in Lyon in 1606. In the book the author provides his observations in plain language about the Turkish community in the time of Sultan Süleyman, describing in detail a circumcision ceremony for one of the Sultan’s sons.

Villamont, a Maltese Crusader who went to the East in 1588, provided information about Syria and Egypt in his 1595 book “Voyages du seigneur de Villamont, chevalier de l’Ordre de Hierusalem, gentilhomme du pays de Bretagne” (2).

Next, came Francois Pavie, Baron do Fourquevaux, a 22-23-year-old youth whose hand-written writings were found in the Paris national library and published in 1896 in Bucharest. This youth met up with three French and one German friend in Venice and together they went to Aleppo via Zanta and Cyprus. He described at length the coffee he drank in Damascus, from where by caravan he went to Jerusalem and Egypt. In Egypt he was saddened when he met up with French protestants who had been captured by pirates. Pavie headed next to Rhodes and Sakız ((Chios)), whose women he described as gorgeous and accommodating, before reaching Istanbul. At that time, the Sultan was Murad III and the French ambassador was Bertier do Lyon. Pavie saw the Sultan, which was a rare sight indeed, as the monarch rarely left his palace and, in particular, the women in his harem.

The French traveller listened to the prayer-callers and marveled at the speed with which they read the prayers. He met a Jew who spoke French and claimed to be a Frenchman. This Jew had a very long beard, which he was forced to tie up whenever he swept the floor. Pavie encountered Turks in the churches, noting that they were quite respectful during mass. While in Istanbul, a new French ambassador named Lancosme arrived. From Istanbul Pavie went to Thrace, Bugaria, Bessarabia and Yaş. He spoke of feeling the decline of the Ottoman state, referring to officials who thought of nothing other than bribes and enjoyment and commenting on the country’s sluggishness and ignorance.

- (1) “Voyages of Forezli S. Jean Palerne, secretary of Francois do Valois, Duke of Anjou and Alencon, about the strange and ancient things he saw in Egypt, the rocky deserts of Arabia, the Holy Lands, Syria, Anatolia, Greece, many islands in the Mediterranean Sea.”
- (2) “Voyages of do Villamont, a royal of Börtanya and a Knight of Jerusalem”

Jacques Bongars, an ambassador who passed through Romania in 1580, recorded his observations in a travel log, which was found among Romanian historical documents.

Iorga also mentioned Pierre Lescapier, a lawyer in Paris who had trained in Padova, and who wrote a travel log entitled “Histoire des relations entre la France et les Roumains” (1) that was published in 1918. In February 1574, Lescapier left Venice and entered Bulgaria via Spalato and Ragusa. From Sofia and Filibe he reached Edirne, where he was awed by the Selim and Murad mosques. Also, a caravansaray that Prime Minister Sokollu Mehmet Paşa had built in Lüleburgaz caught his attention. Lescapier arrived in Istanbul in April and had an audience with the Prime Minister, who said to him in amazement “for a Frenchman to come from so far away for no reason in particular is a sign of the French taking delight in such things.”

Lescapier found Beyoğlu to be about the same size as Orlean and a portion of the residents lived in Galata, whose name derives from the Greek word for milk “gala”. The women there were obsessed with ornamentation, wearing fake jewels and excessive make-up. Like Pavie, Lescapier headed north from Istanbul to Eflak and Transylvania.

(1) History of relations between France and Romania

The next works discussed were those of a few people in the retinue of the French ambassador d’Aramon, around 1550. One of them, entitled “De Topographia Constantinopoleos et de Illius Antikitibus” was published in Lyon in 1561 and written by Gyllius. This work examined the ancient artifacts of Istanbul.

With regard to the other works concerning d’Aramon, “Le Voyage de M, d’Aramon, ambassadeur pour le roy en Levant, escript par noble homme Jean Chesneau, l’un des secretaries ducict seigneur ambassadeur” (1), about the years 1547 and 1548, was published by Ch. Schefer in Paris in 1887. Another travel log, “Lettre écrite d’Alep en Syrie par Jacques Gassot, a Jacques Thiboust, seigneur de Quantilly, contenant un voyage de Venise a Constantinople de la a Touriz en Perse et son retour audit Alep” (2) was published in 1550, 1606 and 1684.

A third travel log was written by F. Anthoine Geuffroy and entitled “Briefve description de la Court du Grand Turc et ung sommaire du regne des Othmans, avec un abregé de leurs folles superstitions, ensemble l’origne de cinq empires yssus de la secte de Mahomat” (3).

In addition, Sébastien Münster’s famous travel log about the Near East was discussed by Iorga, as was a similar one about the Near East written by Angulemli André Thevet and published in Lyon in 1554. Pierre Belondu Mans’s “Les observations de plusieurs singularitez et choses memorables trouvées en Grèce, Asie, Juhée, Egypte, Arabie et autres pays étranges, rédigés en trois livres” (4) was published five times between 1553 and 1558 and is more worthwhile than all the others. Nikolai’s 1568 work “Les discours et histoires véritables des

navigation, pérégrinations et voyages faits en la Turki avec 60 figures au natural” (5) and Guillaume Postel’s 1560 work “Republique des Turcs et la our l’occasion s’offrira des meurs et loys de tour Muhammedistes, par Guillaume Postel, cosmopolite” (6) is worthy of discussion, in Iorga’s view.

- (1) “Voyage written about by Jean Chesnau, one of the secretaries to Monsieur d’Aramon, the King’s envoy to the Near East”
- (2) “Letter from Jacque Gassot, who travelled from Venice to Istanbul and from there to Tabriz and Aleppo, to Jacques Thiboust from Aleppo in Syria”
- (3) “A brief description of the Grand Turk’s palace and a summary of the Ottoman sultanate, along with the origins of five dominions of the Moslem sect and its superstitions”
- (4) “Study written in three languages about strange and memorable things encountered in Greece, Asia, Palestine, Egypt, Arabia and other strange lands”
- (5) “Genuine stories and pictures from the voyages overland and by sea made in Turkey, together with 60 nature pictures”
- (6) “Cosmopolitan Guillaume Postel’s book about the Turks’ republics and, to the extent possible, all Moslem morals and laws”

Gyllius and another traveller named Nicolas de Mofeu wrote “Soltani Solymanni, Turcarum imperatoris, horrendum facinus scelerato in proprium filium, natu maximum, Soltanum Mustapham, parricidio, patratum, authore Nicolao a Moffeu, Burgundo”, which was published in Latin in Paris in 1556. Despite the fact that the work has no new or extraordinary information, it does provide details about important sights seen by those who accompanied d’Aramon. One of these was F. Anthoine Geuffroy, a Malta Knight who spent a long time in Turkey and learned Turkish very well. The work contains worthwhile information about the Ottoman Empire up until the middle of the 16th century.

Belon was a great naturalist who went to the East from Rome in 1549. He very thoroughly investigated communal life, from villagers to fish. Among the pictures in Nicolai’s travel log, are frivolous women he procured from a market and he had them take off their decorative outfits to model for him.

All of these 16th century travel logs differ from those from the 15th century in that none of the 16th century travellers went to the Holy Land, although they were quite interested in memoirs from ancient times.

The thing that drew 16th century travellers to the East was Christianity but they even recommended to other Christians that they imitate the peace and order found in mosques. They carefully studied the first civilization of mankind to find new aspects and they also investigated the Turks, their empire and the Christians living in Istanbul. For example, Nicolai and Belon carefully described the non-Moslem women of Beyoğlu, especially the Greek women and their fondness for decoration and make-up. These women would carry all their belongings with them and even if their husbands were shopkeepers, they would wear velvet and silk petticoats, rings, ribbons and bracelets, trying to look like new brides, and sporting rings of real and fake jewels to the tips of each of their 10 fingers.

The travellers took note of the legions of Albanians who came from their homeland to work for the Turks, as well as the Jews, whom they described them as at once crafty and personable, and who took control of all trade, to the extent that they acquired all of the Turks' money and resources.

Information and examinations about the Turks were all positive. In the towns and villages, there were beautiful and available women at the guesthouses and, according to Belon, the farmer's wives were as lovely as flowers, with skin as white as milk because they went nowhere other than to the bath or to the cemetery to pray, so neither the sunlight nor the moonlight touched them. Belon explained that the women spent their time on the porches of their houses, singing with their neighbors. He noted that all the Turks were quite clean because even the smallest village has a "hamam" (public bath), something that should be the envy of Westerners.

The Turks he observed lived in great simplicity that was made possible by their preservation of sincere morality and limited needs. Belon noted that these pure and peaceful attitudes and morals were evident in all facets of the Turks' lives and they saw no reason to show off. With regard to war, the Turks were better able to withstand the rigors of war than even the Roman army. The Turkish men were, nevertheless, as pure and modest as the women. The lady of the house would never put on make-up and perfume to excess and would always speak respectfully to the servants and slaves. With regard to the slaves, they were always treated with kindness and never left wanting for anything.

When a new province was conquered the population was stabilized and a war tax imposed. Afterwards, though, everyone would return to their previous way of life in freedom. An elderly Greek on the island of Limnos told Belon that life on the island had never been so pleasant, that the population had never increased so much as it had, and all because of the peace that now existed on the island.

Nevertheless, while there was quite a bit of fondness expressed toward the Turks, the travellers were not entirely and unconditionally pleased by what they saw. For example, they found certain customs and dress to be laughable, the wooden houses to be in poor condition, some unpleasant food and music that would make the head and ears of the crudest cow shepherd in France crack, not to mention the haughty harem eunuchs. Also, the Turks would attack the Arabs and Christian-turned-Moslems, who were described as greedy, haughty, boastful, lazy and crude and unwilling to fight in war.

Sultan Süleyman was described by Geuffroy as "tall and small-boned, with a weak and disproportionate body, dark of face - burned by the sun, bald except for a bit of hair on the top, and having a high and broad forehead". All of Süleyman's works and his personality dominate all of these travel logs.

Iorga explained that thanks to the alliance between French King Francois I and Süleyman, the subjugation of the entire European continent to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was averted. According to Iorga, Süleyman would read about Aristotle in Arabic and three days each week he would listen to stories about his predecessors, on the condition that they were factual. In Iorga's view, the 16th century travellers, who were devoted to the idea of freedom, were all quite taken with the Ottoman ruler. These remarks by Iorga constituted the last lines of his second conference, which takes up pages 21-48 in his book.

17th Century

In the 16th century, many Frenchmen visited the Ottoman Empire for various reasons and they all took advantage of the guidance and protection of the French ambassador, who lived in splendor, and who provided for all their needs. In the 17th century, however, because of the internal problems in France, the position and influence that had been the hallmark of King Francois I, known in the East as the “French Sultan”, was lost. During the reigns of his successors there were bloody religious wars and France’s prestige abroad diminished, even during the reign of King Henri IV. For example, in Sultan Süleyman’s time the French ambassador d’Araman and his lavish retinue accompanied the Sultan on his Iran expedition. But when the religious wars decimated France its envoys in Istanbul were very often broke and dependent on creditors. The internal difficulties in France prevented adventurers from leaving the country and so, for a while, French travellers to the Ottoman domains would not be seen.

After this period, the first Frenchmen who began to come to the East were quite modest individuals and, contrary to the 16th century travellers, they showed an interest in the Holy Land that had been missing in the 16th century. These new travellers came along the roads of the Ottoman Empire just to Palestine and Egypt and one of them was Benard, whose visit in 1600 was published as a book in 1621, filled with stories about the voyages of the Crusaders.

The travel log of a monastery monk name Henry Castella, who also made a trip to the East in 1600, was published in Bordo in 1603 under the title “Le jainct Voyage de Herusalem et Mon Jînay, faiet en l’an du grand jubilee 1600.., par le R.P.F. Henry Castella, Fholossain, Religieusc observantin” (1) In the work, Castella wrote plainly and succinctly about some Greeks living completely separately on the Mora peninsula and provided a lively picture of the city of Raguz on the shore of the Adriatic Sea.

The travel log of Henri dö Beauvaux, who made a trip in 1604-1605, was published in the city of Nancy in 1615 and contains elements of political intentions and goals. At the time, one of France’s main foreign policy goals was the protection of Christians in the East and there are some words in this regard. Also, the French ambassador’s audience with the Sultan was described and there was information about the Ottoman army and naval fleet included, as well.

Iorga talked about an anonymous travel log published in Paris in 1615, entitled “Pelerin veritable de la terre Jaincte” (2), which he found in a library in Paris, but only its second section. In the work, the author’s opinion is that the Ottomans would be annihilated by a powerful attack by Christianity but the author registered his disappointment about the French King not using the backing of the Pope to launch such an attack. In any case, there are some very interesting observations by the author about Istanbul, which he toured with an Istanbul monk as his guide. He gave the name of the Sultan as being either “Ahmet” or “Mehmet” and characterized him as both brave and cruel. Also, the author said that Moslems call wine “Satan’s urine”. Included in the work is information about the Ottoman army, officers, Moslem clergy, various groups of social classes and food, as well as praise for the Ottomans’ attention to their health, the speed of judicial affairs and the discipline of the army.

The fourth 17th century traveller mentioned by Iorga was a priest named Boucher who wrote a travel log, or perhaps it ought to be called a pilgrimage log, entitled “Bouquet sacré, compose des plus belles fleurs de la Terre sainte” (3) that was published in 1620. The most prominent aspect of this author’s writing was its emotionally poetic style that is clearly reflected in the work’s title. While describing the various and continuous mistreatment inflicted on him by the Arabs during his pilgrimage, Boucher took great pains to include many parables and illustrations in his story. In this regard, Iorga made mention of the precise text concerning the tortures the poor pilgrim suffered at the hands of the Arabs, noting that “there is great value in seeing what it was like to go to Jerusalem under these conditions.”, sarcastically, but with elegance, referring to the pilgrim’s power of imagination and exaggeration.

- (1) “The sacred journey of the revered priest Henry Castella, of the sect of experts, who went to Jerusalem and Mount Sinai for celebrations in 1600”
- (2) “A genuine pilgrimage to the Holy Land”
- (3) “The beautiful flowers of the Holy Land”

During this period, one Michel Baudier wrote the first history of the Ottoman Empire in French. It was published in Paris in 1617 under the title “Inventaire de l’histoire general des Furcz.. juoques en l’année 1617” (1) The same author also published a work entitled “The Palace of the Chinese Emperor” in 1624 and it includes quite a number of observations and plentiful information about the palace of “the Emperor of the Turks”.

“Voyad d’orient du reverend père Philippe de la Tres Jainiete Frinité” (2) was written by this priest about his 1629-1630 journey, but it was not published until 1669.

Subsequent journeys by a number of French travellers after 1630 were made to the East for political reasons. The decline of the Ottoman Empire that began in the time of Sultan Süleyman revived interest in crusades. One Duke du Nevers and a descendant of the Byzantine Paleologue emperors dreamed of establishing a Christian sultanate in Istanbul and they had propagandists roam the Balkans with this hope in mind.

The letters of Jean de Gontaut-Biron, Baron of Salignac, who was the French ambassador in Istanbul from 1605 to 1610, were published in 1889 in Paris by one of his descendants with the title “Ambassade en Turgue” (3), although these letters cannot be considered a travel log. In this regard, Angusse, the secretary to the ambassador, who died from grief after the killing of King Henry IV in 1610, wrote about the ambassador’s trip to Turkey and his time there but this work was never published.

- (1) “Table of contents of the general history of the Turks up to 1617”
- (2) “Journey to the East by Phillipe, a revered priest of the most sacred order of Frinité”
- (3) “Ambassadorship in Turkey”

Another French traveller, Francois Arnaud, wrote notes about his trip to the East in 1605 and these were included in a work entitled “Florilegium Vogié” that was published in Paris in 1909. Arnaud had visited Athens and Istanbul prior to his 1605 trip. Another work by a member of Ambassador Jean de Gontaut-Biron’s staff named Bourdier, who was quite an avid hunter, was found in the national library in Paris. Bourdier wrote in great detail about going to Trabzon, the Caucasus, Erzurum and then to the hot springs of Bursa “or more accurately, Yalova”. He described the Sultan he saw as “standing as motionless as a statue”

and included in his work a large amount of varied and detailed information about the Ottoman armies and peoples.

Next, Iorga mentioned the notes of a Jesuit priest named Canillac, who talked about the orderliness of the Ottoman soldiers and auctions where items from the churches of the Patriarchate were pawned. The work was entitled “Relations inédite des missions de la compagnie de Jésus a Constantinople dans le Levant au XVII siècle” (1) and published in Paris in 1864.

A book was published in Paris in 1628 about the embassy of de Breves, who was a successor to Jean de Gontaut-Biron, entitled “Relation des voyages de M.de Brèves tant en Grèce, Ferre sainte et Egypte, qu’aux royaumes de Funis et d’Alger” (2). The book recounts the ambassador’s 22 years in office in Istanbul and his belief that the Ottoman Empire was doomed to collapse, as well as his ideas about hastening this collapse, inciting the empire’s Christians to rebel, taking hold of the Christian Janissaries, and turning the Iranians, Georgians and Poles against the Ottoman Empire. However, in a strange twist, in the book the author examines in great detail the commercial benefits and services to Catholics that France gained thanks to the alliance between the French King and the Ottoman Empire.

Another work, written by an unnamed member of the retinue of a diplomat named Des Hayes, who went to Jerusalem is entitled “Voyage du Levant fait par le commandement du roi” (3) and it was published in Paris in 1624. This travel log focuses on the importance of Catholicism among the Eastern Christians.

A secretary to the French ambassador in Istanbul, Marcheville de Cesy, wrote a memoir in which he discussed the status of the Catholic religion in the East and how the ambassador had prevented the Greek Patriarch’s initiative to have Calvinism accepted. The author also discussed a trip to Jerusalem with the ambassador, who was well-received there wearing French clothes and who stayed in the city for 22 days. Subsequently, the ambassador met with the Emir “Fakardin” and this discussion formed the basis for France’s relations with Syria. In the book, the author states that there were more than 80,000 Catholics in the Ottoman Empire who served as a safeguard in the middle of the Christian world of the Near East.

- (1) “Unpublished information about missionaries of the 17th century Jesuit order in Istanbul in the Near East”
- (2) “The story of the journeys of Monsieur de Brèves to Greece, the Holy Land, Egypt, and the kingdoms of Tunus and Algeria”
- (3) “A journey to the Near East made by order of the King”

Tavernier, who went to the East in 1630, getting as far as Sonda Island ((Indonesia)), and who achieved great things for French commerce, wrote “Six voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier, en Turquie, en Perse et aux Indes” (1). The work was published in Rouen in 1713 and was widely acclaimed. Yet, Iorga asserted that this book had no real value and suggested that, in all likelihood, the book had been written by someone else.

According to Iorga, the book by Jean Copain, who served for a long time as the French consul in Egypt, with the odd and bold title “Le bouchier de l’Europe ou la geerre sainte, contenant des avis politiques et chrétiens, qui peuvent servir de Lumiere auy roiset souverains de la chrétiené, pour garantir beur états des inquisitions destures et reprendre ceux

qu'ils ont usurpés sur eux, avec une relation de voyages faits dans la Turgui, la Thébaïde et la Barbarie" (2) is preferable to Tavernier's famous book. It was presented to French Minister Souvois in 1665 and published in Siyon in 1686. The Ottoman Empire's status is described in dark words and the Ottoman army is characterized as having sunk quite low. The author goes on to urge the formation of a new Crusade.

The work by Saboullay-Segouz, a rural noble, which came out in Paris in 1633, is said to be thin in the literary sense but very rich in terms of its illustrations. "Le voyage du sieur du Soir, contenu en plusieurs lettres écrites du Levant, avec le relation du siège de Babylone, fait en 1633 par Sultan Mourat" (3) was published in Paris in 1664 and it is the story of a journey made in 1639 by a young man who was the friend of the French ambassador. The author describes Turkish women in very sweet and amusing language and his travels in Greece.

- (1) "Six Journeys by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier to Turkey, Iran and India"
- (2) "Defense of Europe or Sacred Crusade: containing the story of journeys to Turkey, northern Egypt and northern Africa, together with studies, and policy guides for Christian kings and rulers for the protection of property from Turkish assaults and the re-taking of land that the Turks have seized"
- (3) "The story of the seizure of Babil by Sultan Murad in 1633, along with various letters from Siyor dü Suvar written from the Near East"

"Les voyages de Balthasar de Moncenys, documents pour l'histoire de la science avec une introduction" (1), was published in Paris by M. Charles Henry in 1887. The work contains very pertinent information about a trip to Turkey in December 1646. Moncenys, who had visited Spain and Egypt, found the streets of Istanbul clean and noted that the fortune-telling was quite prevalent. He was saddened to see the slave markets and felt revulsion at the sudden confiscations of large estates and executions. In his work, Moncenys included two live descriptions of Sultan İbrahim, who was known by the moniker "deli" ((crazy)): "I saw the Sultan while he was eating in his bed. With both hands, he was stuffing food into his mouth and communicating with hand and arm gestures. He then got up and urinated into a silver bowl; the Sultan was enjoying himself with women amid the beating of large drums that were bigger than barrels and made of brass. Next, he was enclosed in a place with his bodyguard and the door was closed. They cried like two small children behind this door and within this prison İbrahim continually bit himself and hit his head against the walls."

A young man named Thévenot published a very valuable book entitled "Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant" (2) in 1664. He had come to the East from Rome in 1655 and he provided quite a bit information about the Greeks, in particular. Like a number of other travellers, he praised the "flightiness" of the women of Sakız ((Chios)) island. Thévenot stayed in Istanbul for eight months and visited the Prime Minister and the Şeyhülislam and was well-received all over the city, except for when some young children threw potatoes at him. Thévenot provided information about coffee, which was not then known about in Europe, noting that it was good for the stomach and digestion and that it was used each evening by French merchants who worked during the night. He also remarked about the musical instruments in the coffeeshops and the games of chance played there.

In two studies by a Capuchin monk named Thomas, included as chapters 29 and 31 of "Etudes franciscaines" and entitled "Ambassadeurs de Frances et capucins francais a Constantinople au XVIIe siècle, d'apresle, Jurnal du P. Thomas de Paris" (3), Thomas

related the adventures and the very busy lives of the French ambassadors. This monk came to Istanbul in 1616 and worked in the French embassy until 1671, when he died.

- (1) “The journeys of Balthasar de Moncenys, with an introduction and historic science documents”
- (2) “The story of a journey to the Near East”
- (3) “The diary of the monk Thomas of Paris and the French ambassadors and Capuchins of Istanbul in the 17th century”

One of the ambassadors Thomas wrote about was a young one named De la Haye and a priest in his entourage wrote about his own experiences in Turkey from 1665 to 1669. This account was published in Paris in 1925 by Hubert Pernot, with footnotes, and entitled “Un voyage en Turquie en Grèce du B.P. Robert de Dreusc, aumonier de l’ambassadeur de France (1665-1669)” (1). In the work the author described the way Köprülü Mehmet Paşa treated the French ambassador, an audience with Sultan Mehmed IV and trips to Edirne and Tisalya. In addition, he related the details of a hunt by the Sultan that included 20,000 people.

A work entitled “Nouvelles relations du Levant” (2) was published in Paris in 1667 by Toulet and concerns his travels in Turkey, Iran and other countries in the East over nine years. In Isfahan he met a Persian named Seyyit Ağa on the recommendation of a French merchant in Isfahan and was told that “Turks are as unloved as the devil”. Toulet began his trip in Venice, passed through Dalmacia and found himself in Raguz during the carnival season. In the Ottoman Empire, he dressed like a Turk and went by the name İbrahim. After passing through Saraybosna ((Sarajevo)), he entered Bulgaria and found the Bulgarian girls to be as appealing as French girls. Next, he passed through Edirne, where the French ambassador’s son was imprisoned, before reaching Istanbul. There he saw the Sultan and Prime Minister Köprülü Mehmed, whose frightful appearance he described as “lips like weapons fit for a monster and two teeth that stuck out from those lips.”

Quiclet de Ragüzü’s travel log was published by his family in 1664. He came to Istanbul via Saraybosna and Edirne. Thanks to his good Turkish, he was able to roam far and wide. His information is quite interesting, although his death was very mysterious. In fact, supposedly, he was thrown to his death from the embassy wall because of the crime of revealing a number of secrets.

Jacques-Paul Babin was a priest who visited Greece in 1655 and next came to Istanbul and Izmir, from where he sent his travel log to Lyon and it was published there in 1674. Comte de Laborde’s work entitled “Athens in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries” was published in Paris in 1854. The work relates how a man in Athens named Démètre Beninzeles (Vénizélos) taught a number of children in this cave of ignorance.

- (1) “The journey of the priest Robert du Drecux, who served in the French embassy, to Turkey and Greece”
- (2) “New revelations about the Near East”

Guilletière, whose notes “Athènes ancienne et modern” (1) and “Lacdemone ancienne et nouvelle” (2) were published in Paris in 1675 and 1676, respectively, seemed to have a vivid

imagination. He described Greece under Turkish administration and recorded an escapade by Sultan Mehmed IV with a village girl named Nahani in Tisalya. In his work, Guilletière imagined that the Ottoman Sultans would become Christians and revive the Byzantine sultanate.

A few years later, Yacob İpon of Lyon came to Greece and Istanbul with an Englishman, who would also publish a travel log, and published a work entitled “Voyage d’Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce et du Levant, fait aux années 1675 et 1776” (3). At the time of his visit to Istanbul, Köprülü Mehmet Paşa died and Fazıl Ahmet Paşa replaced him as Prime Minister. İpon returned to France via the Aegean islands and the Mora peninsula, where he conducted studies. He produced a dictionary of the Greek spoken among the people and included it with his travel log, making it a very noteworthy work altogether.

The French ambassador Nointel was very active in his work and travels. He was a great defender of French interests and, like his distant predecessor d’Aramon, he surrounded himself with learned men who accompanied him on his trips and conducted very successful research.

The first of these travellers, who began their roamings as of 1672, was Antoine Yalland, a secretary at the French embassy. He lived in Istanbul from 1670 to 1673 and succeeded in translating “A Thousand and One Nights” tales. Secondly, there was D’arvieux, who arranged the ceremonies related to the visit to France of Süleyman Ağa, who was sent there by Sultan Mehmed IV. D’arvieux was a merchant and had been sent to Turkey by the French state. He had gone to Damascus in 1662 and met Fazıl Ahmet, who was the governor there at that time. He drew excellent pictures of Istanbul and Edirne and related the battles between the Turkish army and the Poles during their war. When Fazıl Ahmet became the Prime Minister for Sultan Mehmed IV, D’arvieux was a good friend to him.

- (1) “New and old Athens”
- (2) “New and old Lasedemonya”
- (3) “Journey to Italy, Dalmatia, Greece and the Near East in 1675-1676”

At that time, Mehmed IV was 38 years old. D’arvieux saw the Sultan amid a great crowd of his Janissaries, soldiers and officials, describing his eyes as being big pop-eyes that were purplish yellow and his beard as being a light color and two-sided. He added that “Köprülü Ahmet Paşa was a great statesman like his father but more refined and polite. He spoke slowly and said little. And although he was mild-mannered, he had a seriousness and dignity befitting a prime minister.”

Another of du Nointel’s secretaries, a man named Delacroix, wrote prolifically about the East. He went with the Turkish army in the war against Poland in the Balkans, Dobruca and Boğdan, related the conditions of Greek and other churches, and studied the status of the Turkish navy.

Next came a two-volume work entitled “Memoires du sieur de la Croix. cy-devant secretaire de l’ambassade de Constantinople, contenant diverses relations très curioses de l’empire Othoman” (1) that was published in Paris in 1684. In his work the author asserted that French King Louis XIV was the greatest child of the Catholic Church, the protector of Christians in the East and had kept Ottoman pride in check. He added that the Aegean Sea was open, the entire Syrian coast undefended and the Turkish Straits ruled only by their

currents. Delacroix described Ambassador du Nointel's visit to Edirne in 1671. At the time, Köprülü Mehmet Paşa was still alive and received the ambassador there. Delacroix described the Prime Minister as having a red, pock-marked face and a fearsome black beard. The Sultan received the ambassador but was always on the move and rarely in Istanbul.

A work by an unnamed author entitled "Miroir de l'Empire ottoman ou l'état present de la cour et de la malice de grand seigneur" (2) was published in Paris in 1678 and, although not well known, the work is one of the most valuable in terms of the information it contains about the East. According to Iorga, the author spent five years in servitude to the Sultan, who gave him a gift on the one occasion he saw the ruler in person, and he did not write his name on his work because he was ashamed of having changed religions to become a Moslem.

A non-political individual named Grelot wrote "Relation nouvelle d'un voyage a Constantinople" (3) that was published in Paris in 1680 and he dedicated his book to King Louis XIV. The work contains valuable information about the East and Istanbul, in particular. Grelot worked for Ottoman Ambassador Mustafa Ağa in France for a year and then went to Turkey as if he was a Turk returning home. He said that the Sultan's palaces were modest compared to the French King's and with regard to Bab-I Ali ((Ottoman government center)), he likened it to a monastery and farm buildings in the middle of a rural area.

- (1) "Memoir containing very interesting information about the Ottoman Empire by Siör de la Croix, the secretary to the French ambassador in Istanbul"
- (2) "Picture of the Ottoman Sultanate or the current status of the ruler's palace and army"
- (3) "New picture of an Istanbul journey"

The work entitled "Ambassades de M. le comte de Guilleragues et de M. de Girardin auprès du grand Seigneur" (1) by Ambassador du Guilleragues and Girardin was published in Paris in 1687. It contains dry language in relating political events like negotiations about "capitulations". Du Mont wrote "Voyages en France, en Italie, en Allemagne, a Malte et en Turquie" (2), the first volume of which was published in Lahe in 1669. In the work there is much information about the East and a description of the author's audience with French Ambassador Chateauneuf.

In all of these works there is no mention of the Christians under Ottoman rule suffering any ill treatment or cruelty. In addition, the discipline and order of the Ottoman army is depicted in a good light. While describing a military march-past in front of the Sultan, Galland declared that nowhere in Europe, other than in France, would such perfection and order be found in an army. Also, he wrote that the populace was very respectful vis-à-vis their mosques and their worshipping, but not fanatical and very kind toward foreigners.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the Ottoman victory in the Crete war, the defensive force of the Ottoman Empire was seen as lacking. Peace was desired rather than going off to war. In fact, when the Cossack raiders attacked Istanbul in 1619 the French and merchants were forced to provide assistance for the defense of the city. While the focus of relations with the Ottoman Empire was commercial, some writers revived the idea of Crusades. In this regard,

du Nevers dreamed about a new Byzantine Empire and together with Grand Duke of Tuscany he created a pirate group made up of the Knights of Malta to raid Mediterranean shores and had many French royalists, who later joined the French navy, participate in this group.

- (1) “The ambassadorships of Count de Guillaques and Monsieur du Giradin to the Great Sultan”
- (2) “Journeys in France, Italy, Germany, Malta and Turkey”

18th Century

The 18th century works discussed at the conference included one with exquisite pictures of the East but it was written by a Dutchman named Corneille le Bruyn, rather than by a Frenchman, and dated 1700-1702. An individual named Lebrun translated this work, entitled “Voyage au Levant, c’est adire dans les principaux endroits de l’Asie mineure, dans les isles Chio, de Rhodes, de Chypre, etc. de meme que dans les plus considerables villes d’Egypte, de Syrie et de la Ferre sainte” (1) into French. The traveller brought two artists with him on the journey, one Dutch and one Italian, who painted the pictures.

The first French travellers in this century were sent on official duty to search for old medals and money, and to gather information about books. The first of these was Paul Lucas, whose travel log entitled “Voyage du sieur Paul Lucas au Levant” (2) came out in Rouen in 1704. The work concerns journeys made in 1688 and 1696. Lucas stayed at the home of a Greek woman in Istanbul, where he met a young man who tricked him into believing that he was a descendant of the Byzantine Paleologues. Lucas brought the young man back to Paris so he could be groomed for the Istanbul throne. Lucas had been assigned to go to the East in the last days of King Louis XIV but he presented his work to King Louis XV. The traveller went as far as Yenişehir ((Larissa)) but because the roads to Mora were blocked by Turkish soldiers, he could not go any further. From the standpoint of ancient research, Lucas’s work was considered quite important by experts in the field. His observations also included stories of Greek women inviting travellers to drink wine and the opinion that Jewish money-dealers were the world’s most devious hoodwinkers. Lucas served as a doctor to the Sultan’s sister in Istanbul and he wrote about the history of the Ottoman Empire from 1703. The archeological information in his book is of great importance.

Pitton du Fournefort’s “Relation d’un voyage du Levant” (3) was published in Paris in 1717. He was sent with a doctor and a painter by the French government and he roamed Crete and other islands in search of works to enrich the King’s Academy collection. In itself, the work is not particularly valuable.

- (1) “Journey to places in the Near East, in other word Asia Minor, Sakız ((Chios)), Rhodes, Cyprus and other islands, and the most important cities in Egypt, Syria and the Holy Land”
- (2) “Journey of Paul Lucas to the Near East”
- (3) “The story of a Near East journey”

La Motraye's work has some very interesting information. This individual was supported by money from a number of Englishmen. He came to Turkey, remaining away from France for 27 years. His work is entitled "Voyage du sieur A. de la Motraye en Europe, Asie et Afrique) and it was published in Lahey in 1727. This man came to Turkey at the beginning of the 18th century and in 1714 he was still in the East. He went to Bender ((Bendery in today's Moldova)) and visited Swedish King Charles XII, who was there temporarily. La Motraye accompanied the King on his way back to his homeland via the Balkans. He also provided information about the Sultan's palace, which he entered as an assistant to a watchmaker, and about the Valide Sultan's Aynalı Palace. La Motraye also went to İzmit to visit deposed Hungarian King Tököly, who, although he drank less than his wife, died of alcoholism.

The next work discussed was published in Paris in 1721 and entitled "Nouvelle description de la ville de Constantinople avec la relation du voyage de l'ambassadeur de la Porte ottoman et du séfour a la cour de France" (1), at the time when Çelebi Mehmet went to Paris as the Ottoman ambassador. The author has remained unnamed but the information in the work is quite interesting, with many new details about the monuments and buildings of Istanbul, including ones about the Yedikule prisons. According to the author, the prison was nothing like a jail and the inmates walked freely within the walls. Among them were two sons of kings, who had very nice rooms and four servants each. He also described the wrestlers who displayed their talents in front of Beyazit Square and the shops and mosques of the city, as well as Sultan Ahmed's person and palace in vivid detail.

In 1722, Pellegrin, somewhat of a poet and rather talkative, wrote about Mora, where he served as a consul in a town. His work entitled "Relation du voyage du sieur de Pellegrin dans le royaume de la Morce ou recueil historique de ce quis est passé de plus remarquable dansce royaume depuis la conquête que les turcs en ont fait sur les Vénitiens" (2) was published in Marseilles.

"Memoires historiques sur l'ambassade de France" (3), which includes the reports of Du la Haye, du Chateauf and du Désalleurs, was published by Ch. Schéfer in Paris in 1894. "The story of the journey of the Ottoman ambassador and his residence at the palace in France, together with a new description of Istanbul"

- (1) "Journey of the Ottoman Ambassador and the story of his residence in the palace in France, along with new descriptions of Istanbul"
- (2) "The story of the journey of Pellegrin in the Kindom of Mora or a summary history of events in Mora since the Turks seized it from the Venetians"
- (3) "Historical memoir about the French ambassador"

A priest named Sevin, who was a member of the Academy, went to Turkey at the time when du Bonnac was the ambassador, and wrote about the Prime Minister's horse, saying that it was the size of the horse of the famous Man of LaMancha Don Quixote. Sevin wrote some works with the assistance of Sait Efendi, who was a great admirer of Aristotle, and a Jewish rabbi named Fonseca and tried to plagiarize them by concealing their involvement. Along with another priest named Bignon, Sevin was able to see the works in the Turkish libraries, including a 7-volume history of Ethiopia, a similarly-sized history of Egypt and many other papers and documents. These written works were burned on the order of Sultan Murad IV,

although some of them fell into the hands of Prince Constantin Maurocordato. Sevin was able to return to France with 600 written works for the King but he said that documents belonging to nations who were conquered by Timurlane were preserved in Buhara. He obtained some very valuable documents from the Greek Patriarch. Nevertheless, Sevin did not like either Istanbul nor Turkey, characterizing it as the worst place in the world. He described the Sultan as loathsome and the women as fat, adding that the hair and beards of the Afghan ambassadors who entered the city were in utter disorder. (1)

A priest named Fourmont, a friend of Sevin's, went to the East in 1729 and 1730 to find old currencies but did not write an account of his trip. However, his nephew, who was an interpreter for the King in Eastern languages and especially Arabic, wrote "Description historique et géographique des plaines d'Héliopolis et de Memphis" (2), which was published in Paris in 1755. Count ((Anne Claude)) de Caylus and Ambassador Count de Bonnac came to Istanbul in 1716 but their travel log was never published.

De Saumery, who published "Memoires et aventures secretes et curieuses d'un voyage au Levant" (3) in Liyej in 1732, was actually a Dutch citizen of the German Empire. He remained in the Ottoman Empire for three years and followed the developments in the empire from 1715 onward. In his work, he provided details about the holiday of the flowers, evenings of tulips, the beauty of Belgrade Forest and Kağthane Valley. In addition, De Saumery mentioned the plan of Ottoman Ambassador to Paris Çelebi Mehmet, for a canal at Versailles and his return to Turkey with his son Said ((Yirmisekizzade Mehmed Paşa), who enjoyed alcohol and who contracted a disease from a woman he was with, as well as the travel of the Sultan's son to France. De Saumery also wrote a two-volume work about the Ottoman Empire between 1715 and 1723.

Although De Saumery did not claim to be an expert on ancient monuments, the events he described from his personal life were quite interesting and remarkable. For example, he mentioned an Armenian prince said to be 500-years-old; visiting Sakız ((Chios)) island and encountering the beautiful and promiscuous women there, all of whom had syphilis; finding Prince Rakoezy, a pretender to the Hungarian throne, in Istanbul and noticing his shabby clothing and untidy appearance – including a beard down to his waist; becoming friends with a Frenchman named Bossonet, who was the palace jeweler; witnessing the circumcision of three of the Sultan's sons in 1721, attended by 20,000 Janissaries and a group of infidels to whom the Sultan gave lavish gifts; the demise of the Dutch Ambassador Collyer, who spent exorbitantly on a Greek woman, and the many enjoyable hours spent in Collyer's home; and a ceremony in honor of the King of Georgia together with the Polish ambassador. The fourth volume of this work was never published.

- (1) "Lettres sur Constantinople de M. l'abbé Sevin, de l'Académie Royal des inscriptions et belles-lettres, écrites pendant son séjour dans cette ville, au comte de Caylus (Letters written to Count de Caylus by the priest Sevin, a member of the French Academy, while he was in Istanbul)"
- (2) "The history and geography of the Heliopolis and Memphis plains"
- (3) "Memories and adventures during a journey to the East"

A traveller named Tollot wrote a work entitled “Nouveau voyage fait au Levantés années 1731 et 1732, contenant les description d’Alger, Tunis, Turquie, Tripoly de Barbarie, Alexandrie en Egypte, Terre sainte, Constantinople, etc.” (1), which was printed in Paris in 1742. In the beginning of the work, the author castigates those who write travel logs based on “eyewitness accounts” although they have never gotten up from their desks. Tollot arrived in Istanbul just at the time when the Patrona Halil rebellion was ending and each day he saw 30 rebels hung. He visited Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem, Cyprus, Rhodes and Sisam ((Samos)) Island. In Izmir he noticed how freely the French there lived, the summer houses they owned and their hunting trips. Tollot also described the coming to Istanbul of Russian Ambassador Chatscherbatov, whom Tollot accompanied. He noted that the “Hassa” ((Sultan’s bodyguards)) soldiers lacked military bearing and that they all carried rice spoons with them. With regard to the Sultan of the period, Mahmud I, Tollot described him as follows: “The Sultan’s clothing was not the least bit extravagant. He wore a splendid but plain turban and his “tuğ” ((horsetail)) had pearls and small diamonds, one of which was the size of a small walnut and quite stunning. In the front and back of his turban there were diamonds, as well. His sword and all the weapons carried by the Sultan’s chief eunuch were decorated with gold and diamonds. The Sultan had a dark complexion, quite a badly pock-marked face, beautiful eyes, a Roman nose, and a an elliptical, rather than a round, face. I only saw him while he was on his horse so I cannot say with certainty, but I judged his height to be short.”

(1) “Journey to the Near East in 1731 and 1732, including descriptions of Algeria, Tunus, Turkey, Tripoli, Alexandria, the Holy Land, Istanbul and other places”

Jean Claude Flachet wrote “Observations sur le commerce et sur les arts d’une partie de l’Europe, de l’Asie, d’Afrique et même des Îndes Orientales” (1), which was published in Lyon in 1766. Flachet identified himself as “the King’s director of the Senşamon ((armaments)) factory and institutions in the Near East, and a member of the Lyon science, literature and industry academy”. His two-volume work was dedicated to a Minister. Flachet was both a merchant and a scientist. He made mechanical dolls that were the delight of the women in the Sultan’s harem and won him the kindness of the eunuch there. Among the needlessly boastful aspects in his book, there were some very interesting items of information. Flachet first passed through central Europe and Hungary before coming to Eflak ((Wallachia)), where the ruler was Costantin Maurocordato, who like his father and grandfather was a philosopher and who lived in splendor reminiscent of the Byzantine emperors. In reality, Maurocordato’s situation was quite dismaying and dangerous. Nevertheless, Flachet felt that he had the ability to be a great national leader, like Peter the Great.

Flachet arrived in Istanbul in great excitement and dove into the life of the city. He was the first to explain the tulips of Istanbul to Europe and described the view of the thousands of lights that illuminated the endless types of tulips at the Çırağan Palace. Although his work was dedicated to a French minister, Flachet did not shy away from asserting that the scene in Istanbul was as lovely as that of the Gardens of Versailles, which French King Louis XIV had made. Flachet included very valuable information about the year 1754 in Turkey when Sultan Mahmud I died. He even hosted the women of the palace at his home in Beyoğlu once and became well acquainted with the particulars of the new palaces at Beşiktaş, Topkapı and Ağabahçesi. When he returned to France in 1756 he took some artists with him.

Another very noteworthy traveller was Guys, a doctor from Lyon who came to the East with a friend. His family was involved in commerce with the East and since his father-in-law and another relative died in the East, he cannot be considered a stranger to the region. His work entitled “Voyage bittéraire dans la Grèce, ou betters sur les grecs anciens et modernes, avec un paralleled beurs moeurs” (2) was published in Paris in 1771. Guys asserted the view that it was essential to meet modern Greeks in order to understand the ancient ones. He was a member of the Marseilles Academy and well-spoken in both Turkish and Greek. Guys collected many folk songs and brought much information about Eastern folklore to the West.

- (1) “Observations about commerce and industry in parts of Europe, Asia and even East India”
- (2) “A literary journey in Greece or letters containing comparisons between the virtues of ancient and modern Greeks”

The first portion of the work of Ghoiseul-Gouffier, who was a member of the Academy in Paris and famous in Paris society, was published in 1782, but the second half was not published until 1849. It was entitled “Voyage Pittoresque dans l’Empire Ottoman, en Grèce, dans la Troade, les iles de l’Archipel et sure les cotes de l’Asie Mineure” (1) and although the writing style is not very appealing, the work is nevertheless noteworthy. In Istanbul, where he served a long term as French ambassador and even stayed on after he was relieved of duty, Ghoiseul-Gouffier had a French-Arabic press in Istanbul and published Viguiier’s work on Turkish grammatical elements. His work also included much information about Greek civilization, a passion of his.

A priest named Le Cevalier published “Voyage de la Propontide” (2) in Paris in 1800. He was well acquainted with ancient works. Le Cevalier served as secretary to a Boğdan ((today’s Moldova)) prince and died during the Turkish-Russian war of 1788. In his work, together with information about ancient times, there are details about Turkish monuments in Istanbul, the lifestyle of the people there, defensive forces of Istanbul and the Greek churches there.

There are some important connections between the works of Guys and other philosophers and political travellers at the end of the 18th century. One of these was Charles du Peyssonnel, who was born in 1727. He worked as a lawyer in Istanbul and returned there in 1790, when he died. He served as the French consul in Crimea, Crete and Izmir, writing a history of Crete while there. His information about Crimea is quite noteworthy. During his time there, the Crimeans had relations with France and, by necessity, with the Russians, as well. Despite the fact that Russia initially claimed to want independence for Crimea, subsequently, after Crimea broke away from the Ottoman Empire, Catherine the Great, at a gathering of all of her drunken statesmen, demanded that Crimea abandon its desire for independence. Peyssonnel’s work about Crimea was first stolen by his secretary and secretly published. But together with two reports about commerce in Izmir and Crete, this work about Crimea was published in Holland in 1787 with the title “Observations sur le commerce de la Mer Noire et des paye qyui la bordent, auxquelles on a joint deux mémoires sur le commerce de Smyrne et de l’isle de Candic”. Peyssonnel served in Crimea from 1755 and floated many ideas about potential commercial activities, mentioning Boğdan, Eflak and Bulgaria in this context, as well. He submitted a report entitled “A report about the political and military situation in

Little Tatars ((Crimea))” to the French King’s ministers in 1755 and he was more knowledgeable about these subjects than anyone else in Europe.

- (1) “An enjoyable journey in the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Troas, the Aegean Sea and the coasts of the Near East”
- (2) “Journey in the Sea of Marmara”

Another foreigner who was well-informed about the Ottoman Empire at that time was de Fott, a Hungarian who was the son of someone in the entourage of Rakoczy, the pretender to the Hungarian throne. Although he wasn’t French, de Fott was trained in France and essentially thought like a Frenchman. Initially, he travelled to the area of the Turks north of the Black Sea and his “Observations sur les turcs et les tatars” (1) provides lengthy reports about the Crimea. Passing through Eflak and Boğdan, where he found the status of the Ottoman Empire to be in decline, de Fott reached Istanbul during the time of Sultan Selim III and he hoped that the Sultan’s army reforms would enable the Ottomans to defeat the Russians. This was the same time that the famous French commander Vauban’s works were translated into Turkish and de Fott succeeded in having quite a few reforms introduced into the Ottoman Army in this context. His book about the East was printed three times and translated into a number of languages. In the work, he envisioned an independent group made up of “Fener” ((Phanariot)) Greeks and local foreigners from the Turkish, Greek, Armenian and Jewish elements of Istanbul. He related that one night in the Fener section of Istanbul when he was at the home of Boğdan Bey Jean Callimachi, the pillow on his bed was so finely embroidered that it left an impression on his face by the following morning and hindered his sleep.

- (1) “Observations about Turks and Tatars”

With regard to Hauterive’s travel log, this was published in a geography magazine in 1877 by Ubcini, who was an expert in Turkish-Romanian relations. Hauterive was an important person in France and went to serve a Boğdan prince as his secretary, relating his impressions, which included some about Bucharest. En route there through Bulgaria, Hauterive suffered attacks by cockroaches and was only able to overcome this experience by a chance meeting with a beautiful woman, who took care of him. In his work, Hauterive spoke well of Turkish rule, noting that the Christians in Romania were well-treated by Istanbul and the rulers Istanbul sent to Romania. All the villages he saw were prosperous, with plentiful chickens and geese, horses and oxen, dogs and cats, and sheep and goats.

On the other hand, Carra, who was the secretary to a Boğdan prince, said exactly the opposite of Hauterive in his short and assertive work entitled “Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie” (1), which was published in Iași in 1777. A man named Salaberry wrote “A History of the Ottoman Empire” and also “Voyage en Turquie” (2), focusing on Eflak, which was under Austrian occupation at the time. But the most important book about the Romanian race, Hauterive’s “Moldavie en 1785” (3) was published 20 years ago by the Romania Academy, which in its introduction, wrote that the selection of Couza as “bey” ((ruler)) in 1859 had been a benchmark for Eflak and Boğdan and validated Hauterive’s words that “those of Eflak and Boğdan have shared the same troubles and a history that has led them to a shared fate.”

The travel logs from the latter part of the 18th century differed from those written earlier in that the former focused on the Greeks and the beautiful girls of Sakız ((Chios)) island, whereas the latter were more serious, for example those written about “Memleketeyn” ((Eflak and Boğdan, today’s Wallachia and Moldova)). Nevertheless, almost all of these works share an appreciation for Turkish morality and strength. For example, La Motraye noted that shopkeepers who were given too much money by a customer would travel to the customer’s neighborhood far away to return the extra amount. The Christians in Beyoğlu were able to enjoy their holidays the same way they did in their own countries, wearing masks, drinking alcohol, singing songs and, by paying a small tip, having their servants arrange a visit to Aya Sofia. Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire suffered many calamities and lost quite a bit of territory, the splendor of the empire was maintained. But after 1715, the army resorted to pillaging, while the Sultans lived in their own dream world and the Russians benefitted in war from the diminished Ottoman military readiness. Christian subjects of the empire became increasingly independence-minded and withdrew from the general way of life, and despite the efforts of Minister Rağıp Paşa and Sultan Selim III, the lethargy and moral decay could not be forestalled. Meanwhile, the Jews and Armenians took control of economic life, while the Greeks tried to restore Byzantium.

19th Century

There were so many 19th century French travellers to Ottoman lands that it would be impossible to discuss them one by one. But the borders had changed dramatically and the word “East”, which heretofore meant Turkey, Greece, Eflak and Boğdan, and the provinces of Serbia and Bulgaria, no longer applied. For one thing, as of 1821 Greece became independent, and Eflak and Boğdan gradually began to unite with Serbia toward independence, too.

Iorga explained this transformation of the Ottoman Empire’s borders and took note of Sultan Mahmud II’s bloody dissolution of the Janissaries and the reforms that began to take shape under Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Ali Paşa, Fuad Paşa and Mithat Paşa. Nevertheless, Iorga characterized these reforms as superficial and opined that they did not penetrate enough to influence the Eastern mentality of Anatolia.

Iorga told us that he would not discuss the travel logs of 19th century Frenchmen who visited Greece and Eflak and Boğdan, and began his review of the 19th century with the travel logs of visitors to the remaining Ottoman Empire. The French Revolution had started and this restricted the arrival of travellers from France. Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt, a part of the Ottoman Empire, was more of a conflict between France and England, according to some Frenchmen, and preceded increasing disputes between those two countries, with minimal impact on Istanbul.

One of the first French travellers to the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century was Olivier, whose travel log was entitled “Voyage dans l’Empire Ottoman, l’Egypte et la Perse” (1). His journey occurred at the prompting of the new French Republic, during its first six years of existence. When Olivier reached Istanbul in 1793, French influence was at its nadir. French ambassador Sémonville was replaced by Descorches, who was subsequently brought to Fravnik in Bosnia and imprisoned. In his place, Fonton, an interpreter, came but was forced

to resign, too. French interests in Istanbul were left to its merchants there and the flag of the French Republic began to be attacked, not by Turkish officials, but by the Austrian embassy. Frenchmen supporting revolution walked the streets of Istanbul at their peril. This may be why Olivier characterized the Turks as ignorant, haughty and fanatical, whereas he found the Greeks to be smart, pleasant and skilled.

When it comes to the two works written by Felix de Beaujour, these were considered more interesting than Olivier's. deBeaujour's works were entitled "Fableau du commerce de la Grèce" (2), about a trip he took around 1790, and "Voyage militaire dans l'empire Ottoman" (2), which he wrote in 1800. He visited the borders of the Ottoman Empire, finding many French officers with Tepedelenli Ali Paşa in Albania. De Beaujour noted that the son of Pazvan was in charge in Vidin and that the artillery and military schools in Istanbul were in French hands. It is understood that he came to the East on a secret mission of sorts. In his work, he wrote not only about the existing fortifications on the Ottoman borders, but he also conducted many studies about fortifying these borders as far as the Danube, Prut and Dniester rivers.

Castellan wrote "Lettres sur la Grèce, l'Hellespont et Constantinople, faisant suite aux Lettres sur la Morée" (4) between 1808 and 1811. In the work, the pictures are quite noteworthy but the text is rather too courteous. F.C.H.L. Pouqueville was a doctor whose travel log, entitled "Voyage en Morée, a Constantinople, en Albanie et dans plusieurs autres parties de l'Empire Ottoman", was published in 1805.

- (1) "Journey in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Iran"
- (2) "A view of Greek commerce"
- (3) "A military journey in the Ottoman Empire"
- (4) "Letters about Greece, the Dardanelles and Istanbul, to follow letters about Mora"
- (5) "Journey to Mora, Istanbul, Albania and many other parts of the Ottoman Empire"

Pouqueville was a member of the science and industry commission in Egypt after the French occupation, which is the reason he went to the East. However, he was forced to go ashore on the Mora peninsula and was arrested in Navaren before being transported to Frapoliça in the interior. Being a doctor, he even gained entrance to harems. Pouqueville provided very noteworthy information about the Albanians and he gradually became fond of the Greeks. With regard to Istanbul, he noted that 1,800 Frenchmen had died in the prison there, although he described the Sultan as being very honorable. Pouqueville also wrote about İshak Bey, who was a student in the school that de Fott established in Istanbul, and who went to Marseilles, Lyon, Paris, Africa, through central Europe and Italy, remained in Russia until 1782, returning to France twice before finally going back to Turkey. Pouqueville's first work was so popular that a second was called for and in 1826 he published "Voyage de la Grèce" (1) in Paris. For this book he travelled again to the Balkans but this time on official duty as the French envoy to Tepedelinli Ali Paşa, a post he held until the Paşa's execution. Nevertheless, Pouqueville remained in Yanya at that time. His six-volume work contains very important information about the Balkans.

In 1817, Pertusier, a French artillery officer serving at the French embassy in Istanbul, wrote the noteworthy "Promenades pittoresques dans Constantinople et sure les rives du Bosphore" (2) and this work included pictures painted by Dréat. ((Antoine Ignace)) Melling, an architect and painter to Sultan Selim III and his sister Hatice Sultan, wrote "Voyage

pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore” (3), which was published in Paris in 1819 and includes many pictures. Another painter named Dupré published “Voyage a Athènes et a Constantinople ou collection de portraits, vues et costumes Grecs et Ottomans ar Louis Dupré, élève de David” (4) with even more beautiful pictures than Dréat’s noteworthy text, as well.

Firmin Didot visited the East in 1816-1817 and wrote “Notes d’un voyage fait dans le Levant” (5) that focuses mostly on Greece.

- (1) “Journey to Greece”
- (2) “Pleasant excursions along the shores of Istanbul and the Bosphorus”
- (3) “A pleasant journey to Istanbul and the Bosphorus”
- (4) “Journey to Athens and Istanbul or Greek and Ottoman portraits, views and costumes collection by Louis Depré, a student of David”
- (5) “Notes from a journey to the Near East”

Count de Forbin’s “Voyage dans le Levant en 1817-1818” (1), which was published in Paris in 1819, concentrates on Asia. Viscount de Marcellus, a former minister plenipotentiary, published a travel log entitled “Souvenirs de l’Orient” (2) in Paris in 1839. In his work he writes about his time on the Aegean islands, where he found a statue of Venus de Milo, and during his return to France he passed through Bulgaria and Eflak, writing a bit about both of them, as well.

The famous travel log of Chateaubriand entitled “Itinéraire de Paris a Jerusalem” (3) was published in 1806, after Pouqueville’s first work had come out. Chateaubriand’s work is quite noteworthy from a literary standpoint but the contents related to the East are not very informative. On the other hand, Lamartine’s “Voyage en Orient” (4), which describes a much later journey, contains much better comments and information.

Poujoulat, who was sent to the East to remedy some of the elements of Michaud’s history of the Crusades, published “Lettres d’Orient” in 1830, which is rather ordinary but, conversely, Buchon’s work entitled “La Grèce Continentale et la Morée, voyages, séjour et études historiques en 1840 et 1841” (5) is very worthwhile with regard to Greece in the Middle Ages and related French effects, being considered as one of the most important works in this area of research.

Brayer, a doctor in Istanbul, published “Voyage en Bulgarie” (6) in Paris in 1843. This work contains very warm-hearted words about the Turks and the descriptions of Istanbul are excellent. Also, in 1843, Blanqui wrote a travel log in which he vividly described Serbia under the rule of Miloch Obrenovitch and Istanbul, as well. Gerard de Nerval’s travel log is quite striking but it lacks any link to reality. On the other hand, Theophile Gautier’s “Constantinople” (7) is quite valuable in terms of its writing and poetry, along with the information provided.

- (1) “Journey to the East in 1817-1818”
- (2) “Mémor of the East”
- (3) “Guidebook from Paris to Jerusalem”
- (4) “Journey in the East”
- (5) “Journey, residence and research in Greece and Mora in 1840 and 1841”
- (6) “Journey in Bulgaria”

