

An Introduction for the World Traveler

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Οἱ απανταχοῦ εὐρισκόμενοι Χριστιανοί, ὅσοι τοῦ ἱεροῦ καταλογοῦ καὶ μοναχικοῦ τάγματος, καὶ ὅσοι τοῦ κοσμικοῦ, χάρις εἴη ὑμῖν ἅπασι παρὰ Θεοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Γνωστὸν ἔστω ὑμῖν ἅπασιν, ὅτι ὁ τὸ παρὸν γράμμα τῆς ἡμῶν μετριότητος ἐπιφερόμενος, τοῦνομα Ἐβλιὰ Τσελεπῆς, ὑπάρχει ἀνὴρ τίμιος, καὶ ἄνθρωπος τῆς εἰρήνης· ἔχει δὲ ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ ἔφεσιν περιηγητῆς γένεσθαι κόσμου, καὶ ἱστορεῖν τόπους, καὶ πόλεις καὶ γένη ἀνθρώπων, οὐδεμίαν κακίαν ἔχων ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ἢ ἀδικῆσαι ἢ βλάψαι τινά. Μαρτυροῦμέν τε αὐτὸν ἅπασιν, ὅτι ἐστὶ ἄνθρωπος εἰρηνικὸς καὶ καλὸς, διὸ καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν πάντας δέχεσθαι αὐτὸν ὡς καλὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ ἀξιοῦν εὐμενείας καὶ ἰλαρότητος τοὺς εὐσεβεῖς χριστιανούς, ὅπου ἂν διάγη ἢ ὁδοιπορῇ ἢ ἐν γῆ, ἢ ἐν θαλάσῃ, ἢ ἐν πόλεσιν, ἢ ἐν κώμαις, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνερευνώμενος ἢ ἐξεταζόμενος, ὡς ἄνθρωπος ὢν εἰρήνης ἐγνωσμένος παρ' ἡμῶν καὶ παρὰ πολλῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων· οὕτω ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ εἴη μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

Christians dwelling everywhere, those of the priestly class, those of the monastic order, and those of the laity—the grace of God our saviour and Lord Jesus Christ be unto you all.

Let it be known to you all, that the bearer of this present letter from our humble self, Evliya Çelebi by name, is honorable, and a man of peace. He has the desire and inclination to be a world-traveler and to investigate places, cities, and the races of men, having no evil intention in his heart to do injury to or to harm anyone. We bear witness to all concerning him that he is a peace-loving and good man, wherefore we call on all devout Christians to receive him and to judge him worthy of kindness and good fellowship, wherever he stays or travels, whether on land or at sea, whether in cities or in villages, neither questioned nor examined by anyone, in that he is known by us and by many others as a man of peace. Do this that the grace of God may be with you all.

Pinelopi Stathi, in an article in *Archivum Ottomanicum*, has brought to light a charming letter of introduction for Evliya Çelebi, issued apparently from the Oecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.¹ The text presented in this publication is clear, but seems to incorporate a few proofreading errors. It is therefore reproduced here with all the dative cases, subjunctive and optative moods, etc., that the writer is likely to have used.

¹ Pinelopi Stathi. "A Greek Patriarchial letter for Evliya Çelebi." *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005/2006). pp. 263--68.

Although the article provides an English translation, some of the flavor of prolix but competent classicism is slightly missed, e.g., in the final sentence, where an imperative followed by a purpose clause in good classical syntax is rendered somewhat oddly. I have supplied my own translation

The generous tone of this letter is exemplary. Although the broader form may be a sort of boilerplate letter of introduction, the description of Evliya and his mission is clearly a reflection of his own sense of his purpose in life. Since the document is an undated archival copy, probably made some time after Evliya's death, Stathi offers a range of possibilities for its original date. My own preference would be to place the original in 1667 when Evliya, now a wealthy heir to much of the fortune of Melek Ahmed Paşa, made one of his rare revisits to Istanbul. On this occasion, he had the resources to charm the Constantinople Patriarchate into a recognition of his quite genuinely peace-loving vocation.

In the broader context of the article, Stathi makes one observation that is a bit surprising: “. . . it is difficult to speak about a complete and accurate edition since the manuscript tradition is not settled down” (p. 264). For books 1 through 8 of the *Seyahatname* there is by this time no question at all about the manuscript authority for an edition.² The sequence of manuscripts in the S family includes all surviving parts of Evliya's own fair copy, written in Cairo at the end of his life. Robert Dankoff has persuasively argued that books 9 and 10, bound like the rest into a two-book volume, were so badly water-damaged that they were probably discarded after the major copying effort initiated by Hacı Beşir Ağa in 1742. Even in the case of these two final books, the strong tendency of the immediate copies, Ms Istanbul, Beşir Ağa 452 and Ms Istanbul, Pertev Paşa 462, to retain the pagination of Evliya's own manuscript provides us with unusually sound guidance toward a text of books 9 and 10, as can be seen in the transcription recently published by Yapı Kredi Yayınları. There are few Ottoman texts of any length whose manuscript authority is anywhere near as certain as that of the *Seyahatname*.

² In my study, “The Manuscripts of the *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi,” *Der Islam* 52 (1975), pp. 278—298 (cited in Stathi, p. 264 n.4), I noted (p. 296), “The essential basis for a critical edition is now clear. As Kreutel has already stated, for books 1 through 8, there is only one paleographically significant source, manuscript S (Folge A).” This claim has not been seriously challenged for the past 30 years, and the YKY transcription accepts the status of this manuscript.