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**An Essay on the Use of Travelogues as a Source of Historical Knowledge:  
Reading the Memoirs of a Venetian Merchant about Van City  
Seyahatnamelerin Tarihsel Bilgi Kaynağı Olarak Kullanımı Üzerine Bir Deneme:  
Venedikli Bir Tüccarın Van Şehri Hakkındaki Anılarını Okumak**

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**Abstract**

This research involves the analysis of the notes of a Venetian merchant about the city of Van, which he visited during his journey from Aleppo to Tabriz at the beginning of the 16th century. The traveller, starting from the shore of Lake Van, reached Akdamar Island, Gevaş and finally Van and described the geographical shapes and physical and demographic structures of these regions. His narratives about Van ended with the details of the battle that took place between Zahid Bey, who ruled Van, and Behram Bey, who came to take over the castle, one of the commanders of Shah Ismail. The object of the study is to examine the accounts of the traveller about the places they visited and the events they heard, in comparison with other sources (especially Evliya Celebi's travel book). Based on the results of the research, it is possible to find the historical equivalents of the information contained in the traveler's notes when analyzed comparatively. The notes on the occupation of Van Castle by the Safavids make the travel book the only source of the period, as there is information nowhere else. From this point of view, it can be said that the resource value of the travel book of the Venetian merchant increased. In this research, it is emphasized that the notes of a Venetian merchant can be used as a source of historical information with a comparative historical method.

**Keywords:** Van, travelbook, historical knowledge, Comparative History.

## Öz

Bu araştırma, Venedikli bir tüccarın XVI. yüzyılın başında Halep'ten Tebriz'e yolculuğu sırasında uğradığı Van şehrine dair notlarının analiz edilmesini ihtiva etmektedir. Seyyah, Van Gölü kıyısından başlayarak, Akdamar Adası, Gevaş ve son olarak Van'a ulaşmış ve buraların coğrafi şekilleri ile fiziki ve demografik yapılarını betimlemiştir. Van ile ilgili anlatıları, Van'a hükmeden Zahid Bey ile Şah İsmail'in kumandanlarından kaleyi teslim almaya gelen Behram Bey arasında gerçekleşen çatışmaya dair detaylarla son bulmaktadır. Seyyahın bahse konu yerlere ve hadiseye dair aktarımlarını diğer kaynaklarla (temelde Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi ile) karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemek araştırmanın esasını oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın ortaya koymuş olduğu sonuçlara istinaden, seyyahın notlarında yer alan bilgilerin mukayeseli olarak incelendiğinde tarihsel karşılıklarını bulmak mümkün olmuştur. Van Kalesi'nin Safeviler tarafından ele geçirilmesine dair notlar, başka hiçbir yerde bulunmaması nedeniyle, seyahatnameyi dönemin yegane kaynağı haline getirmektedir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında Venedikli tüccarın seyahatnamesinin kaynak değerinin arttığı söylenebilir. Bu çalışmada Venedikli bir tüccarın notlarının tarihsel bilginin kaynağı olarak karşılaştırmalı bir tarihsel metotla kullanılabileceğinin vurgusu yapılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Van, seyahatname, tarihsel bilgi, karşılaştırmalı tarih.

## Introduction

Throughout history, travelling to somewhere has explained with different reasons. Since ancient times, people have left from their homeland and travelled to explore unknown places for their curiosity. Apart from political, educational or economic incentives, motives for exile, immigration or opportunity could also be among the goals of travelling elsewhere. Undoubtedly there are many inducements to set off a journey. No matter what purpose travellers travelled, some of them wrote down their travels with their observations.

These narratives written by travellers have managed to attract the attention of researchers from the last few decades. The number of analyzes focused on these narratives has increased considerably until today<sup>1</sup>. These narratives, whether it could be fictional or true, have apparently become one of the main sources for the academic studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these kinds of studies concentrate on travel writings. Especially travel writing studies and its aspects to social sciences has been subjected of discussions. Introductory to see: Carl Thompson. (2011). *Travel Writing: The New Critical Idiom*. Abingdon: Routledge; Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Eds.). (2002). *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Eds.). (2004). *Perspectives on Travel Writing*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate.

The narratives of travellers are subject to many fields of study such as history, literature, geography, anthropology and cultural history. Considering history studies focusing on travellers and travel books, there are large number of researches on whether these narratives are true or not and how travellers' perceptions and imaginations about city, person or an event. Concentrating on these studies also increases the variety of researchers' questions: what was the first thing that a traveller noticed when he visited a place that he/she has not been before? What were the first impressions of the travellers about a place that they do not know? Did they have any prejudices about places where they came from the first time? What should be understood from the notes written by the traveller? Are these expressions a historical truth or not? Does travellers coming from different cultures percept the city as same as? Finally, how do their imaginations produce reality for historiography? As you can see, there are too many questions waiting to be answered. On the other hand, questions as we seek for the answers would show the way for comparatively analyzing, too.

This study comparatively deals with the questions mentioned above, with two different travellers' accounts about the same city, Van, in different times. These narratives about the Van city by an unnamed Venetian traveller who passed through the lands of the Ottoman in the early 16th century and by Evliya Çelebi who is the well-known traveller of the Ottoman Empire are the main subjects of this study. The perceptions of a Venetian traveller who was born and raised in a foreign culture and Evliya Çelebi, who was born and raised in the Ottoman lands about the Van city led to shape up of this research. Another focus is that while the Venetian merchant had come to Van before the Ottoman conquest, Evliya Çelebi visited Van after 100 years from the Ottoman conquest, so here is another significant point about perceptions and imaginations for the city. The focus of this research is on the memories of the Venetian traveller, but comparisons have been made with other sources when appropriate. Evliya Çelebi's travelbook has an important place in this perspective. Evliya Çelebi's travel book has been an important guide in matters not found in other sources or reflected in a different way.

The first traveller is a Venetian merchant whose name is unknown because he did not give any information about himself or his family to his readers in his travel accounts. The only known knowledge about him is that he knows Arabic, Persian and Turkish (Grey, 1822: 142). His narratives are related to the cities he saw on the Aleppo-Tabriz road in order to trading. He started from Bire, Urfa in

Damascus then he passed from Cemeleyn Castle, Kara Amid, Dedu Castle, Mardin, Cezire, Hisnikeyfa, Kefendur Castle, Bitlis, Tatvan, Vestan, Van, Alatedmedya, Merend, Sufiyan and finally he arrived to Tabriz. Finally he returned to Aleppo after staying in Tabriz for a while. He made his travels between the years 1507 - 1510. He describes the towns and cities with geographical information in detail. His narratives comprise from Aleppo to Tabriz route with the cities and its historical events or its past (Gündüz, 2017: 15).

The memoirs of the Venetian Merchant were first published in 1606 in the third volume of the book "Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi (Navigations and Travels)", a three-volume collection of travellers' original accounts on their travels, that it was collected by an Italian geographer and travel writer Giovanni Battista Ramusio from Travis, Italy<sup>2</sup>. Then, this travel that previously published by Ramusio was translated to English together with the other three travel notes, by Charles Grey, with the name of "A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries" and printed for Hackluty Society in London in 1822 (Grey: 1822). This travel was translated to the other languages so many times such as in Persia with the name of "Sefernâme-hâ-yı Veniziyan der İran". Tufan Gündüz translated that to Turkish with comparing Persian and English versions (Gündüz, 2017: 9). In this paper the Gündüz's translation to Turkish will be used as a main source and also Grey's English version will be considered.

The other traveller is Evliya Çelebi, whose travelogue is well-known in literature, as another focus for this article. Evliya had almost travelled all Ottoman lands in approximately forty years. His journey had began in the 1630s from Istanbul and lasted until 1681<sup>3</sup>. He wrote down in detail his journey as ten-volume book what its name is "Târîh-i Seyyâh Evliyâ Efendi". Evliya's travel accounts are remarkable in terms of various ways: he starts to describe the city geographically and gives information about its history. Then, he expresses the buildings and places in the city with their history. Finally, the description goes on people and their lives, population,

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<sup>2</sup> The First volume containing with the travels about Asia and The accounts of Marco Polo was published with in 1550; the second volume including Africa published in 1559, and the third volume about the West Indies published in 1556, three years before the second volume. (Barnes, 2007: 15)

<sup>3</sup> A brief information about Evliya Çelebi's biography, see: Mücteba İlgürel. (1995). Evliya Çelebi. *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*. (Vol. 11, pp. 529-533). İstanbul; Another work on Evliya Çelebi, see: Robert Dankoff. (2004). *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi (revised second edition)*. Leiden: Brill.

cultural elements, rumours etc. This means to a three-layered description: history, place and people (Tezcan, 2009: 17). Austrian Orientalist Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall introduced the *Seyahatname* to the Western world, so it drew the attention of Western researchers. Besides, that was published and translated in so many languages such as English, German and French etc<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, Evliya Çelebi presents more detailed information about the Van city in return for the Venetian merchant. However that does not prevent the comparison between each other.

### **The Van Accounts of Two Travellers: Evliya Çelebi and Venetian Merchant**

First of all, the observations about the Van region of the unnamed Venetian traveller are discussed. He came to Van between the years 1506-7. Then, the results will be analyzed by comparing with the accounts of the Evliya Çelebi, he came and passed from the same region. Thus, the results of our research will become more meaningful. The comparison created with imaginations about the same ways on the places in terms of geographical similarity or differences, portraitures about same buildings and, if could be done, some little changes about places. Not only Evliya Çelebi but also the literature on Van in that period was included in the study in order to criticize the knowledge in the travelogues as historical source.

After departing from Bitlis-Tatvan, the Venetian merchant comes to the shore of Lake Van. He says that the salinity of Lake Van is less than that of the Adriatic Sea. He says that Lake Van is 300 miles long and 150 miles wide, at its widest point. The traveller stated that he wandered all over the lake and wrote that there are four castles named Tatvan, Vestan, Van and Bargiri to the east of the lake and three castles named Erciş, Adilcevaz and Ahlat to the west. While Ahlat had been a big city in the past, nowadays it remained as small as a castle at that time. According to the narration of the traveller, Kurds and Armenians populations lived in these castles around the lake (Gündüz, 2017: 146). Evliya Çelebi says that Lake Van is 68 miles from east to west and its circumference is 500 miles. While the Venetian traveler states that there are seven castles around the lake, there are nine castles in Evliya Çelebi. (Evliya Çelebi, 2000: IV/82). It seems that the things Evliya Çelebi and the Venetian traveler said about the size of the lake are different from each other and this is

<sup>4</sup> Detailed information about The *Seyahatname* and its publications, see: Nuran Tezcan. (2009). *Seyahatname. TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*. (Cilt 26, ss. 16-19). İstanbul.

because they both estimate the diameter of the lake. Of course, there may have been a change in the size of the lake in 150 years, but we cannot know this for now. Today, maximum length of Lake Van is 74 miles across at its widest point.

While traveling from Tatvan to Van, the traveller also saw Akdamar Island. He also gives information about this small island on his route. The traveller's narrative begins with the geographical features of the island. According to him, the island is two miles from the land, and the traveller mentions about the existence of a city the size of the island. Although the population density of the island is high, the entire population is Christian Armenians. Not any Muslim lives on the island. Traveller states that there are many churches on the island. (Gündüz, 2017: 146) It is understood that the traveller sees this place from his description of the church of St. John, the largest church on the island. He expresses his admiration for the size of the church bell in the following words: “(...) *St. John is the largest, and has a steeple made like a tower, so high that it overlooks the whole city, and among the bells is one so large, that when it is struck, it resounds over all the mainland.*” (Grey, 1822:160). According to Evliya Celebi, Melik Calut in the time of the Prophet David, who founded Van, built a temple on this island and this temple is sacred for Christians. The island is called Ahtiman by the Kurds. The monastery on the island is still active and priests live there. He stated that there are more than two hundred clergy and monks on the island. They live a spiritual life and the entire population is non-Muslim. (Evliya Celebi, 2000: IV/153). The Venetian merchant and Evliya Çelebi depicts the island in almost the same way.

After depicting Akdamar Island, traveller mentions the gulf with a plain across the island. Although he did not give the name of this plain, it must be the place named Akdamar, today in Gevaş, which has the same name as the island. He gives information about the plain that villages around it are inhabited by Armenian Christians and they deal with cultivation because the region is suitable for agriculture. Also, the region consists of gardens and with many fruit trees. The weather condition of the place is healthy and refreshing and all around mountains are so high. (Grey, 1822: 160) (Gündüz, 2017: 146) Evliya Çelebi did not mention about that place but Akdamar town at that time was related to Gevaş district in Van (Kılıç, 1997: 121, 133).

The traveller continued his route from Akdamar and reached the center of Gevaş, namely Vestan Castle. He says that the distance between Akdamar and Vestan is a two-day road. Vestan was at that time, if it is true, a place where only the city and the market remained,

because it was destroyed by Shah Ismail. The inhabitants of the Vestan people are Kurds. There are many villages with Kurds. Although the traveller says that this place was destroyed, he states that his blessing is abundant, that it is a place where white honey, cheese and oil is produced, and that it is even sent to Tabriz by caravans. (Grey, 1822: 161) (Gündüz, 2017: 146) As can be understood from here, although Vestan Castle was destroyed by Shah Ismail, the city was not touched by him. The fact that the city is not damaged and the market is located shows that trade is active here. The statement that from time to time cheese and oil were sent to Tabriz by caravans confirms that determination. The city where is on the road to Tabriz must have led to this. When Evliya Çelebi saw Vestan, the walls of the castle had been in ruins. When he entered through the northern entrance door, he saw that in the city had remained a small number of households and there had been nothing more than a market. It is understood that nothing much has changed in the castle during 150 years. However, Evliya Çelebi mentions the existence of a town outside of the castle. This town, which is covered with vineyards and gardens, has a mosque, two inns, a bathhouse and a maximum of ten shops. (Evliya Celebi, 2000: IV/155). This knowledge indicates that the city has developed over time.

The Venetian merchant finally came to the center of Van city and the castle. Van Castle attracts the attention of the traveller who reaches Van from Gevaş in one day. Van Castle is a castle that was built of solid stones on a hill (like a building on a rock) with water flowing from all sides. The traveller states that the city of Van is narrow and long and about one mile in size. On the upper part of the rock, there is a fountain that the people in the castle use as a water source. Below Van Castle is a big city in which most of the inhabitants are Armenians, but Kurds live in the castle. The supplies of this city, which is one mile from the sea, are well maintained. (Gündüz, 2017: 146-147) (Grey, 1822: 161) Evliya Çelebi describes the Van Castle in detail. He writes down the history of the Van city, from the building to that time the situation of the castle, soldiers in the castle. Then he notes that administration of the depending cities and its governments related to the centre of the state (Evliya Çelebi, 2000: IV/98-110) This detailed description of Evliya Çelebi parallels the narratives of the Venetian traveler. he describes it as a high castle built on the caves on the rocks, which he likened to a camel sitting in the middle of the plain. As the Venetian merchant said, the water flowing from the castle only comes out of one place. (Evliya Çelebi, 2000: IV/105-107). Evliya Çelebi's other narratives about Van are



incomparably different from those of the Venetian Merchant. The most important reason for this is that the elapsed time is one hundred and fifty years. In such a long period of time, the political, economic and demographic structure has changed, change is inevitable. However, the Venetian did not hesitate to mention the political events of his time and recorded an important political event about the history of Van.

The traveller mentions a Kurdish ruler named Zidibec (probably Zahid Bey<sup>5</sup>). Zahid Bey is the ruler of the Van fortress and his sons rule the other castles around Van. Zahid Bey is not under the authority of Shah İsmail. Zahid Bey had money coined with his own stamp in his name from copper, gold and silver. Shah Ismail sent a chief named Bayram Bey (probably Dulkadiroglu Behram Bey<sup>6</sup>) to Van with an army of ten thousand to take control of Zahid Bey. The traveller says that he heard the event in Tabriz from his good friend Aga Musa Bey of Trebizond who was a chief of bombardiers. In other words, the traveller is not eyewitness to this event. (Gündüz, 2017: 147) (Grey, 1822: 161)

Since Shah Ismail did not want this independent administration of Zahid Bey, he sent Bayram Bey to Van with his army. Zahid Bey sent a man to Bayram Bey to kiss his hand as soon as he heard this. After Zahid Bey's apology was accepted by Bayram Bey, he left the castle with a few unarmed companions and came to Bayram Bey. He repeated his loyalty to Shah Ismail by tilting his head forward in Safavid or Persian custom, and whenever he mentions Shah Ismail's name, he repeats this action with respect. He asked Bayram Bey to be a negotiator for Shah İsmail to forgive him and to help him in accepting his apology. Bayram Bey accepted this request and had a banquet prepared for Zahid Bey in the plain. While these events were happening, Zahid Bey started to look for remedies to save himself from this situation. He wanted to permission to Bayram Bey and said that he would be sent to the castle with his trusted men and that he would deliver the castle to them. Then he asked for two days off to go to Shah Ismail. Thereupon, Bayram Bey assigned his commander named Mansur Bey to take a position to the castle by going with Zahid Bey. He promised that the rule of the castle would be with Mansur Bey on behalf of the Shah Ismail until Shah's orders were reached to the castle, and then perhaps Zahid Bey would be the

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<sup>5</sup> Tufan Gündüz named Zidibec as Zeydi Bey in his translation but this name should be Zahid Bey. I will explain in the following pages why Zidibec is Zahid Bey.

<sup>6</sup> Bairambec should be Behram Bey. Tufan Gündüz named Bairambec but Behram Bey is true one.



ruler of the castle by means of Bayram Bey, if he would persuade Shah Ismail. (Gündüz, 2017: 147-148) (Grey, 1822: 162) Zahid Bey and Mansur Bey with about a hundred soldiers set out to take the castle. Upon reaching the gate of the castle, first Zahid Bey passed by, then Mansur Bey and his soldiers entered. Suddenly, the gates of the castle were closed and Zahid Bey's armed soldiers, who were in ambush and numbered one thousand five hundred, appeared and killed Mansur Bey and his men. While these events were happening, Bayram Bey thought that Zahid Bey would keep his promise. However, Zahid Bey went towards Bayram Bey with his men. In the battle between these two armies, both sides suffered great losses (according to the narrative, the loss of Zahid Bey was about three hundred people, but the number of casualties of the other side was not given). Bayram Bey was even injured in three parts of his body. Zahid Bey retreated after this conflict and closed the doors of the castle and fortified himself against him. Meanwhile, Bayram Bey bombarded the castle with two moderate-sized canons. The reasons for the ineffectiveness of the attack were the strong walls of the castle and the lack of well-trained gunners. Van Castle was under siege for three months. Finally, they discovered the fountain in the castle and bombarded the flowing water. Thus, the flow direction of the water changed and the water wanting up started to flow down. After that, Zahid Bey felt insecure and he took his wife, two sisters and his treasure with his fifty trusty men and ran away. In the morning, Bayram Bey heard the news that Zahid Bey had escaped. As soon as the people in the castle heard this, they sent an ambassador to Bayram Bey and promised that they would surrender the castle. They also asked Bayram Bey to ensure the safety of life and property of the people in the castle. After this mutual acceptance, Van Castle passed into the hands of Bayram Bey, namely Shah Ismail. Bayram Bey later returned to Tabriz and Shah Ismail ordered celebrations to be held everywhere on the occasion of the conquest of Van Fortress. (Gündüz, 2017: 148-149) (Grey, 1822: 162-164).

When the traveller gave information about the places he passed, he recorded a historical event in the region in his notes. Was such an event actually occurring? Of course we should look for the answer to this question elsewhere. The datas in the literature are sufficient to answer our question. When the Safavids were interested in Van, the Zahid II bin Izzeddin from the Izzeddin dynasty was ruling in Van (Kılıç, 2012: 505). The date that the Safavids conquered Van could be 1505 or 1506 because after Shah Ismail gained his domination in Persia, he organized two expeditions to Kurdish

emirates in the east of Anatolia in 1505-1506. (Yinanç, 1989: 93) These campaigns should be on the local Kurdish emirates ruling around Van and Hakkari. The story of the capture of Van, which the traveller heard from his close friend Ağa Mehmed Bey from Trabzon, must have taken place on this date. The Venetian traveller was already joining Shah Ismail's army over going to Dulkadirli Emirate in 1507 and moving with him. (Gündüz, 2017: 126). When they reached Tabriz, the time of the event must have been very new. His mention of the entertainment organized in Tabriz after the conquest of Van also supports this assumption. While Kurd Bey was appointed as the commander of Van, Bitlis and Erciş regions, his deputy was Dulkadiroğlu Behram Bey. (Kilic, 2012: 506). This information emerges a historical timeline to Venetian merchant's accounts.

According to this information, the notes of the Venetian merchant are fairly accurate. The name that the Venetian merchant called Zidibec was actually Zahid Bey and he was the member of the Izzeddin dynasty family that ruled the region (Kılıç, 1997: 13). Also, the person named as Bairambec (by the traveller) whom Zahid Bey fought against was Dulkadiroğlu Behram Bey, who was the deputy of Kurd Bey, the commander of Shah İsmail. According to this information, the notes of the Venetian merchant have a fair share of accuracy. The name, which the Venetian merchant called "Zidibec", was, actually, Zahid Bey and he was a member of the Izzeddin dynasty family that ruled the region. The person named "Bairambec" that Zahid Bey fought against was Dulkadiroğlu Behram Bey, who was the assistant of Kurd Bey, the commander of Shah İsmail. According to the traveller's notes, the reason of that Behram Bey came to conquer Van was that Zahid Bey did not obey Shah Ismail. In fact, there was a conflict between the Safavids and the Dulkadirs over the dominance of the southeast Anatolia region, especially Diyarbakir, under the control of Akkoyunlu State<sup>7</sup>. In 1507, while the Venetian traveller was telling the story, Shah Ismail went on an expedition over Erzincan because Dulkadiroğlu Alaüddevlü Bey was trying to capture Diyarbakir in order to be ascended Murad Bey from Akkoyunlu to the throne of the Akkoyunlu State (Gündüz, 2008: 452). So, Behram Bey's capture of Van coincided with this time. It seems that the traveller's narratives, albeit hearsay, reflect the truth. This narrative,

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<sup>7</sup> Shah Ismail, because of his hostility with Dulkadirli Alaüddevlü Bey, declared war on him. So much so that he thought of everything to defeat Alaüddevlü Bey. He even got permission from Sultan Bayezid to cross the Ottoman lands. This clever operation resulted in Alaüddevlü Bey's withdrawal. Shah Ismail went on by destroying the places under control and captured Harput and Diyarbakir. (Cezar, 2011: 694)

which coincided with Shah Ismail's expedition, ultimately led us to learn the details of a historical event.

Another issue is that Zahid Bey escaped from the castle. What happened to Zahid Bey after he ran away from the castle? Izzeddin Dynasty was not only ruling Van at that time. It was the principality center of the Van Izzeddin Dynasty. It was ruling in an area extending to Hakkari, together with the castles around Van. When the Safavids took Van under siege, Zahid Bey evacuated the Van fortress and fled to Hakkari. Thus, the center of the principality shifted from Van to Hakkari. (Tan, 2017: 6) It is not a coincidence that the principal center of the Izzeddin dynasty, the dynasty of Zahid Bey, shifted to Hakkari, in fact, it is related to the Zeynel dynasty, which ruled Hakkari in the Ottoman period (Kılıç, 1997: 13-14). Conclusionally, the Venetian Merchant's notes, like he say in his account's introduction<sup>8</sup>, is generally true in terms of battle narrative.

### Conclusion

Considering the stories of the Venetian traveller, the use of knowledge as historical source becomes meaningful using comparatively. Analysis in that way is very important in terms of the use of travel book narratives. While placing the Venetian traveller's narratives as the main source in the base of the research, any data to verification or mistification of the knowledge could be used as the object to comparison like this study. The information in the literature regarding the place and time of the traveller's arrival confirms to a great extent the Venetian traveller's narratives. In fact, the battle that the traveller has heard and noted at that time is actually nothing more than an elaboration of a historical fact. Or for now, this travel book turned into the only main source with the details of the capture of Van Castle by Shah Ismail. This makes this travel book one of the most important sources of the period. This statement is about not only political but also social history because the only source about the knowledge at that time is this travel book for Van's social and political history.

When describing a city, the traveller refers to the city's geographical features, buildings and the latest demography. It seems that the most important reason underlying is the issue of defining a place the traveller sees for the first time. When we look at the

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<sup>8</sup> Merchant says: *"but they may be assured for the rest that I will tell nothing but the truth of what I have seen and heard, not exaggerating anything, but simply narrating as becomes an honest merchant who does not know how to adorn his tale by his words."* (Grey, 1822: 141)

accounts, it could be understood that these are related to transportation and security because he focused on geographical descriptions and the locations of the places. The notes in the travel book are not only memoirs, but also a guide for those who will come to the region after himself. That's why, wherever we look for any information related to a place where the traveller wrote down, we see descriptions on geography and locations, and demographical notes about cities. Demographical descriptions should be written especially to express the existence of those who are different from them. For example, while narratives about Armenians and their religious structures are given more space in the book, the Muslim population is briefly mentioned or their religious structures are not even mentioned. The fact that the author is a merchant also shaped his narratives. In his notes on cities, references to the city's supplies, transport networks, important commodities or security are predominant. As a result, this study focused on a Venetian merchant's narrative about Van in 1506-1507. This narrative analyzed comparatively with other sources, especially Evliya Çelebi's travel book and other modern researches to confirm the descriptions.

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