

HASAN ESİRÎ'S Mİ'YÂRÜ'D-DÜVEL VE MISBÂRÜ'L-MİLEL AS A SOURCE FOR THE HISTORY OF CROATIA AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Anđelko Vlašić

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Okan Büyüktapu

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb

ABSTRACT

Ottoman soldier, official and writer Hasan Esîrî (1653/1654 – after 1731) in his work, written around 1731 and entitled *Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel* ("The Criterion of States and the Judgement of Nations"), described, among other things, the political, social and economic characteristics of Croatia, Slavonia, Syrmia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and the Republic of Ragusa at the beginning of the 18th century, i.e. the present-day territory of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Esîrî's description of the region was probably influenced by the fact that he traversed the Pannonian plain in the 1680s and 1690s during the Great Turkish War (1683-1699), and that he consulted Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Maior*, as well as presumably various Latin and Hungarian books on history and geography of the mentioned area. Esîrî's work was hitherto unknown to history researchers. Hence, this article represents an analysis of Esîrî's numerous insights about the aforementioned lands.

INTRODUCTION

Almost all information about Ottoman soldier, official and writer Hasan Esîrî derives from his work entitled *Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel* ("The Criterion of States and the Judgement of Nations"). According to the data in this work, Esîrî was born in 1653 or 1654 and died sometime after 1731, the year when his mentioned work was finished.¹ In it Esîrî described, among other things, the political, social and economic characteristics of Croatia, Slavonia, Syrmia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and the Republic of Ragusa at the beginning of the 18th century, i.e. the present-day territory of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Esîrî's description of the region was probably influenced by the fact that he traversed the Pannonian plain in the 1680s and 1690s during the Great Turkish War (1683-1699) and that he consulted Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Maior*, as well as presumably various Latin and

¹ Göker İnan, "Hasan Esîrî'nin Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel İsimli Tarih ve Coğrafya Eseri (İnceleme-Transkripsiyon)" (PhD diss., Marmara University, Istanbul, 2017), 2, 20. The authors would like to thank colleague Göker İnan for allowing us to use his unpublished PhD dissertation.

Hungarian books on history and geography of the mentioned area. Esîrî's work was hitherto unknown to history researchers. Therefore, the Turkish historian Göker İnan's transcription of Esîrî's work, which was defended as a doctoral dissertation in 2017, offers a chance for Esîrî's work to be presented to the scientific public. After the author's short biography follows a general description of his work's contents and a more detailed description and analysis of the information in the chapters about the aforementioned lands.

ESÎRÎ'S LIFE AND WORK

As described by Esîrî in his work, he joined the Ottoman army in his early twenties and participated in the Russo-Turkish War (1676-1681) and the 1683 Vienna campaign. During the subsequent Great Turkish War (or the War of the Holy League, 1683-1699) Esîrî was captured by the Habsburg forces, most likely during the Second Battle of Mohács (1687), and lived in captivity in Habsburg lands for more than two years, until 1689, as a slave of one Habsburg general ("General İştanodon").² In 1689, he managed to pay his ransom and be set free. Afterwards he rejoined the Ottoman army. In 1699, Esîrî was transferred to eastern Ottoman provinces and never returned to the territory of present-day Croatia and Hungary.³

Esîrî probably passed through eastern Slavonia along the Danube, on his way together with Ottoman forces engaged in the 1683 Vienna campaign, as well as during his captivity with his Habsburg master. After his liberation, he participated in various Habsburg-Ottoman conflicts in what is today Hungary, and possibly in Slavonia too, since the mentioned conflicts transpired in the 1680s and 1690s throughout the Pannonian plain, as the Ottoman forces were losing ground to the advancing Habsburg forces. Thus, he was possibly able to collect in person his data on the geography and history of the region. Furthermore, Esîrî claims that during his captivity he managed to obtain or read numerous books, for instance, works in Latin and Hungarian – languages he claims to have learned while a Habsburg captive. It seems also that he managed to get hold of or consult the *Atlas Maior*,⁴ famous geographical world atlas with a substantial description text, which was published by Dutch cartographer Joan Blaeu (1596-1673) between 1662 and 1672 in a number of languages. From a detailed analysis of the part of Esîrî's work on Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina it seems completely probable that he read the mentioned *Atlas* in one of its original languages, Latin, i.e. its Latin version (*Geographia quae est cosmographiae Blavianae*).⁵

² İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 4-8, 15-19; Hasan Esîrî, "Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel", Hekimoğlu 803, Suleymaniye Manuscript Library, Istanbul, 115b.

³ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 21-22, 46-47.

⁴ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 5-8, 17-18, 21-22.

⁵ Cornelis Koeman, *Joan Blaeu and his grand atlas. Introduction to the facsimile edition of Le grand atlas, 1663* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970), 48-51.

Apart from the *Atlas Maior*, Esîrî claims to have consulted numerous other sources, some of which are so far unidentified. Even if we treat his claims with caution, Esîrî can be described as an intellectual with a fondness for foreign books. His other sources for the Southeast European part of the Ottoman Empire were scarce, and included works by an unknown geographer whom Esîrî named as “Yovenesk.” His other source for the Southeast European region was the geographer Claudius Ptolemy (c. 100 – c. 170) and his work *Geography*.⁶ Bearing in mind that Ptolemy’s work is based on maps and contains only scant information about the region in question,⁷ it was probably of not much use to Esîrî, unlike the *Atlas Maior* with its rich textual description and almost contemporary historical and geographical information. Esîrî was supposedly able to read these sources and write notes about their content during his captivity in Habsburg lands (*Nemse*, as he put it; literally “Germany”, but signifying Austrian lands). He mentions “Hungarian, Latin, Italian and Greek” works, as well as accounts by “foreign travelers and traders” he had met during his travel through Habsburg lands. He also used numerous Muslim sources. Bearing in mind that these sources were published a long time before Esîrî’s work was written, one can posit that Esîrî included many of his own observations in order to “refresh” his data.⁸

Esîrî’s work falls within the context of 18th century Ottoman geography. Broadly speaking, Ottoman geographical production from the 14th century onwards was highly influenced by older Islamic geographers’ works, as Ottoman knowledge of geography was improved through translation into Ottoman Turkish and annotation of works originally written by Islamic geographers in Arabic and Persian.⁹ The first original work of Ottoman geography, *Acâyibü'l-Mahlûkat*, was written by Ali bin Abdurrahman after the conquest of Edirne (1361).¹⁰ Later, in parallel with the institutionalization seen in all areas of the Empire in the last quarter of the 15th century, Ottoman geographers began to produce more systematic works. The 16th century Ottoman geographical writing was a period in which both the translations of works of Islamic geographers continued, and the materials to meet practical needs were collected, as essential books – such as naval books, travelogues and city monographs – started to be produced.¹¹

⁶ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 5-8, 17-18, 21-22, 47.

⁷ Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Geographia Cl. Ptolemaei Alexandrini* (Venice: Vincentius Valgrisius, 1562), 78-79.

⁸ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 47-48.

⁹ Mahmut Ak, “Osmanlı Coğrafya Çalışmaları,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 2, no. 4 (2004): 167-168.

¹⁰ Günay Kut, *Acâibü'l-Mahlûkât. Eski Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları II* (Istanbul: Simurg, 2010), 1-9.

¹¹ Ahmet Taşağıl, “Hitâyname,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 17 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1998), 404-405; Mustafa b. Ali el-Muvakkıt, *Tuhfetü'z-zamân ve harîdetü'l-evân*, Nuruosmaniye Library, no. 2993; İhsan Fazlıoğlu, “Mustafa b. Ali el-Muvakkıt,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 31 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2006), 287-288; Svat Soucek,

The 17th century Ottoman geography studies were based on the solid foundation of the 16th century, and original Ottoman works were produced in quick succession. Hajji Khalifa (also known as Kâtip Çelebi, 1609-1657), Evliya Çelebi (1611-1685 or later) and Ebû Bekir b. Behrâm ed-Dîmaşkı (d. 1691) were the most well-known figures of Ottoman geography, with works that marked the 17th century as the peak of Ottoman geography studies. Ed-Dîmaşkı also played an important role in the transfer of Western-origin geography books, and encouraged his successors to do the same. Ed-Dîmaşkı translated the *Atlas Maior* into Ottoman Turkish, thus opening up another way for Esîrî to get hold of one of his most important resources.¹² In 1668, Dutch envoy Justinus Coljer (d. 1682) presented the *Atlas Maior* to Sultan Mehmed IV (1642-1693), and in 1675 ed-Dîmaşkı was chosen as translator. The translation lasted ten years and was finished in 1685, as ed-Dîmaşkı presented it to the palace. This six-volume work is supported by maps and additional information about the Ottoman Empire and other Islamic countries.¹³ If Esîrî did indeed use the *Atlas Maior* as one model for his own work – and the available evidence points strongly in this direction – he very probably consulted ed-Dîmaşkı's translation. It would be an extraordinary fact if Esîrî managed to come into possession of the *Atlas Maior*, or at least read it while he was a Habsburg captive, because it was a voluminous and expensive work and the largest book published in the 17th century.¹⁴

Piri Reis and Turkish Mapmaking after Columbus. The Khalili Portolan Atlas (London: The Nour Foundation, 1996); Seydi Ali Reis, *Kitâbü'l-Muhîb*, prepared by Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt: Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, 1997); Nasûhîs-Silâhî [Nasûhî-i Matraki], *Beyân-ı Menâzil-i Sefer-i Irâkeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han*, prepared by Hüseyin G. Yurdaydın (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976); *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi veya Hadis-i Nev / History Of The West Indies Known As The New Hadith* (Istanbul: TTT Vakfi Yayınları, 1999); Thomas D. Goodrich, *The Ottoman Turks and the New World. A Study of Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi and Sixteenth-century Ottoman Americana* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990); Aşık Mehmed, *Menazırü'l-avalim (tablil ve dizin)*, prepared by Mahmut Ak (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2007).

¹² “Ma'lum ola ki iklim-i Çin, *Kitâb-ı Atlas Macor* beyânı üzre ki vâsıfı Martinos nâm kimesne ale't-tafsîl keşide-i silk-i sûtür kılup bu minvâl üzre şerh u beyân eylemişdür ki...”, Esîrî, “Mi'yârü'd-Düvel”, 214b. See also: Katib Çelebi, *Kitab-ı Cihannüma li-Katib Çelebi. Introduction – Index*, edited by Fikret Sarıcaoğlu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2013); Katib Çelebi, *Levâmi'ün-nur fi Zulmet-i Atlas Minor: Analysis – Facsimile*, edited by Ahmet Üstüner and H. Ahmet Arslantürk (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2017).

¹³ Fikret Sarıcaoğlu, “Ebû Bekir b. Behrâm,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994), 110-111. Ed-Dîmaşkı's work is located in the Topkapı Palace Library, Bağdat Köşkü, no. 325-333. The authors would like to thank Ahmet Üstüner for the information on ed-Dîmaşkı and his work. Üstüner is currently working on the transcription of the Turkish translation of the *Atlas Maior* and preparing its critical edition.

¹⁴ Koeman, *Joan Blaeu*, 35.

There are four known copies of Esîrî's *Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel*. Two of those are located in the Suleymaniye Manuscript Library in Istanbul, one in the Library of Rare Works of the Istanbul University, and the last one is located in the National Library of Egypt. One of the two Suleymaniye Library copies, the copy known as the "Hekimoğlu 803" copy, is believed to be the autograph, or the original version of the work written by the author himself.¹⁵ The structure of Esîrî's work strongly hints towards Ottoman role models, for instance Kâtip Çelebi with his insistence on the description of every known region of the world, or Evliya Çelebi, who mentions on numerous occasions in his *Seyahatnâme* as his role model the work which he calls *Papamunta*, and which is obviously a *mappa mundi*, i.e. an unknown European world map.¹⁶ Esîrî's book represents a geographical overview of the entire contemporary known world. After the description of Istanbul and nowadays territories of Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, Esîrî describes the Western Balkan region, and an analysis of this part of the work shows that the *Atlas Maior* was one of Esîrî's greatest sources. First of all, Esîrî's work generally follows the structure of the *Atlas Maior* and its division of the region of *Illyricum* or *Sclavonia* (in Esîrî's case it is called *Soklavon*) into separate lands. However, In Blaeu's case, this region consists of five lands (Slavonia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Republic of Ragusa, and Bosnia). In Esîrî's work, on the other hand, *Soklavon* consists of six lands, namely *İslavin* or *İslevin* (more probably it was intended to be read as *İslavin*; Slavonia), *Sirem* (Syrmia – this land is in Blaeu's work described as part of Slavonia), *Bosna* (Bosnia), *Dalmasiya ya'ni Hersek* ("Dalmatia, i.e. Hersek"), *Dobravenik* (Dubrovnik, i.e. Republic of Ragusa), *Hirvat* (Croatia) and *Morlaka* (unknown area, which Esîrî describes as "part of Venice" and "next to Venice", and it could be the Velebit littoral, as will be shown below).

As is the case with the *Atlas Maior*, Esîrî describes each aforementioned land in a separate chapter, which is again divided into the following thematic subchapters, some of which do not appear in every chapter: borders (*el-hudûd*), description (*et-târif*), division (*et-taksîm*), climate (*el-havâ*), cities and towns (*el-bilâd* or *şuhûr ve kasabât*), rivers (*el-enhâr*), mines (*el-me'âdin*), domestic animals (*el-hayvânât*), wildlife (*el-vuhûş*), temperament (*el-ahlâk*), combativeness (*ahvâl-i cenk*), crops (*el-mahsûlât*), religions (*el-edyân*), language (*el-lisân*), commodities (*el-emtâ*), apparel (*el-libâs*), women (*en-nisâ*), soldiers (*el-asker*), harbors (*el-limân*), money (*ahvâl-i sikke*), armory, arsenal and shipyard (*evsâf-ı cebehâne ve tophâne ve tersâne*), customs (*el-âdet*), islands (*ahvâl-i cezâyir*), etc.¹⁷ Esîrî adds supposedly original de-

¹⁵ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 38.

¹⁶ Gottfried Hagen, "Afterword. Ottoman understandings of the world in the seventeenth century," in Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality. The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden; Boston: 2006), 228.

¹⁷ Joan Blaeu, *Atlas maior of 1665* (Köln: Taschen, [2005]), 72-89; İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 50, 51, 174, 185.

scriptions of characteristics for each described land. Sometimes these descriptions border on the outlandish, as will be demonstrated later in the article. Due to the lack of space, the contents of each chapter will be only briefly summarized, but numerous examples from said chapters will be discussed below. Furthermore, it will be indicated in the footnote text whenever the analyzed excerpts from Esîrî's work will have the same information as the *Atlas Maior*.

Esîrî summarily calls the present-day territory of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina *Soklavon*, and states that "no one lived in these lands" before the people of *Soklavon*, being composed of a number of tribes, came there via *Türkistan*, the rivers Volga and *Ten* (probably Don) and the *Tatar* (i.e. Black Sea's north coast) and settled in *Soklavon*. Thus, the *Soklavon* tribes could here be the Slavs in general. He adds that one tribe spread in the region of Transylvania and another in Hungary. Like Turkmens, he continues, "first they made tents from fur" and later built settlements. They divided into six beforenamed lands. Presently, he adds, *Soklavon* is in Ottoman Turkish (*İslâm lisânında*) called the Sanjak of *Pojega* or *Pocega* (Požega) or *İslavin*¹⁸ – thus confusing the notions *Soklavon* and *İslavin*.

DESCRIPTION OF SLAVONIA

Esîrî then states that the land of *İslavin* is situated between the rivers Drava (*Tirava*) and Sava (*Sava*) and is "very prosperous and fertile," as it has countless "refreshing (*müferrih*) vineyards and orchards, its fruits are plentiful, and their taste is unique." Apart from all sorts of apples and pears, its "prunes are so good that physicians add them to medicines" and claim that "sick people with high fever should drink the Požega [*Pojega*] prune juice." As for the "Požega pear," it is "so good that when its falls from the tree, only its stalk stays intact and the rest breaks in pieces. Pears are so good that they are stacked onto pirate ships and transferred via the Sava to Belgrade [*Belgrad*] and sold for good money. Their nutshell is so soft that one can break it with bear hands. In short, there are few lands that have fruits and vegetables so beautiful, fertile and diverse, and people so hospitable."¹⁹ The colorful description of the mentioned fruit bears a striking resemblance with numerous similarly vivid and metaphoric descriptions by Evliya Çelebi in his *Seyahatnâme* of extraordinary fruit throughout the territory of present-day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the neighboring lands. For instance, Evliya praises in a rather exaggerated fashion the fertility of the grain in Popovo Polje in Herzegovina by saying it gives a hundredfold yield. As is the case with Evliya's, Esîrî's hyperbolic descriptions should also be viewed as a figure of speech.²⁰

¹⁸ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 174.

¹⁹ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 174-175.

²⁰ Evliyâ Çelebi bin Derviş Mehmed Zilli, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, edited by Seyit Ali Kahraman and

Slavonia borders in the north with *Hungaria* (Hungary; Ottoman writers generally call it *Macar*); to the west is *Üstürya* or *Usturya* (Austria), to the south *Venedik* (Venice), and to the east *Semendire* (obviously the Sanjak of Semendire, or Smederevo). Some parts of Slavonia have “nice weather,” and some are covered with marshes. Its most famous towns are *Desbot*, *Burudi* (in the manuscript: *Desbot-i Brodi*, which was usually mentioned in Ottoman texts as *Despot-i Brod*, i.e. present-day Slavonski Brod), *Raçe* (Rača, today in western Sylvania), *Rehaviçe* (most probably *Rahoviçe*, i.e. Orahovica), *Yakova* (Đakovo), *Valpova* (Valpovo), *Atana* (unknown), *Garabiya* (in the manuscript: *Garabya*, which is probably Zagreb, because Esîrî later calls it the region's capital), *Kopranisa* (Koprivnica), *Pojega* (Požega), *Versedin* (Varaždin) and *Norograd* (in the manuscript: *Novograd*, which is probably present-day Novi Grad/Bosanski Novi).²¹

Esîrî writes that Slavonians are “tall, dry-skinned, and very gluttonous.” Even though they are rough and violent, they are very hospitable, so much so that “if they do not house guests, their neighbors burn their house.” When describing their religion, Esîrî closely emulates the excerpt from the *Atlas Maior* on ancient Slavic religion by stating that Slavonians are pagans, and that their most important god is the “thunder god, for whom they sacrificed cattle. Their woods, rivers, livelihood, good luck, bad luck, and sky, were created by various gods.”²² He continues by stating that due to their fondness of fighting, “they do not like to die in bed. They say to those who say bad things: ‘Die in bed.’”²³ He proceeds by stating that they started to accept Christianity from 800 onwards, but some are still pagans. As regards their language, Esîrî writes it is called “*İskılavon*, i.e. *Boşnak*,” and it is used in “Slavonia, Bosnia, Croatia, Herzegovina, Austria, Sylvania, Serbia, Bohemia, *Lusaciya*, Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, Muscovy, Hungary, Wallachia, Moldavia (*Boğdan*) and Circassia (*Çerkes*),” even in the lands of Islam and at the Ottoman palace.²⁴ Again, a similar statement is made in the *Atlas Maior*.²⁵ Esîrî claims that Slavonians use “Arabic alphabet, but in it are Latin and German letters.”²⁶

Yücel Dağlı, vol. VI (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 278. Robert Dankoff, *From Mahmud Kaşgari to Evliya Çelebi. Studies in Middle Turkic and Ottoman Literatures* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), 249.

²¹ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 175; Esîrî, “Mi'yârü'd-Düvel,” 22a.

²² İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 175-176; Blacu, *Atlas maior*, 75.

²³ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 176.

²⁴ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 176.

²⁵ Blacu, *Atlas maior*, 76.

²⁶ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 177.

DESCRIPTION OF SYRMIA

Esîrî writes that the former capital of Syrmia was *Kerevit* (Čerević), “a big town on the coast of Danube.” He claims that Syrmia extends as far as Osijek. Its famous forts and *kasabas* are *Mermon* (in the manuscript: *Zemun*, i.e. present-day Zemun), *Karlofça* (Sremski Karlovci), *İslankoman* (in the manuscript: *İslankamen*, i.e. Slankamen), *Varadin* (Petrovaradin), *Kerevit* (Čerević), *Banuşdora* (Banoštor), *Aylök* (Ilok), *Sotin*, *İrik* (Irig), *Kırakopofçe* (in the manuscript: *Kırakopofçe*, possibly Hrtkovci), *Mitrofçe* (Sremska Mitrovica), *Raçe* (Rača), *Nemse* (Nijemci), *Volkovar* (more probably *Vulkovar*, i.e. Vukovar), *Dal* (Dalj), *Erdud* (Erdut), *Ösik* (in Ottoman texts usually *Ösek*, i.e. Osijek), *Valpova* (Valpovo),²⁷ and more than 200 villages. Across Slankamen is *Tetil* (Titel) and the mouth of *Nise* (in the manuscript: *Tise*, i.e. Tisa), and from Osijek to *Tarta* (Darda) across the Drava extends a long bridge. To pass the Drava, Esîrî writes, the Ottomans tied together *tonbaz* (pontoon) vessels. On the road to Darda are marshes, so Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1494-1566) built a second bridge out of wooden stakes across the marshes. This great bridge is one of “world’s wonders.” Esîrî states that Sultan Suleiman exempted 12,000 local *reaya* of all taxes in exchange for the repair and protection of the bridge.²⁸

Esîrî praises the land in Syrmia as “very fertile” and abounding in wheat, barley, rye, oat, corn, as well as in sheep, cattle and horses. He claims that one can buy “a fat lamb for 7-8 *para*,²⁹ a big sheep for 25 *para*.” There are also “countless bees” and one can buy “for two pieces, one oka [*okka*] of honeycomb; and for two pieces, one oka of quality clotted cream [*kaymak*]; and for four pieces, one oka of quality butter.” Furthermore, “on the way from Karlovci to Osijek, in the *kasabas* of Irig, *Karagoyofçe* [unknown] and Ilok, there are numerous vineyards and orchards; more famous than these is sour cherry [*vişne*]; these sour cherries are put into hundreds of barrels and one oka is sold for 2-3 silver pieces [*akçe*] of lesser quality. It is a very prosperous region.” Esîrî continues by praising the hospitality of locals, and states that “in winter months, there is cabbage and different types of pickled vegetables.” He claims that “in Syrmia and Bačka [*Baçka*], some people practiced keeping beehives, and looked for people to do this work. [After the Vienna campaign in 1683,] these people were killed and scattered, and could not find even a piece of bread for themselves.”³⁰

²⁷ Esîrî, “Mi’yârü’d-Düvel”, 22a.

²⁸ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî”, 178-179.

²⁹ The word *para* comes from the Persian *pare* (piece), which generally refers to all means of payment. In an arrangement made toward the end of the 17th century, the *para* became the official Ottoman currency instead of the *akçe* (silver coin). Ahmet Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Tarih ve Hukûk İstılahları Kâmûsu* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2018), 988-989.

³⁰ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî”, 179.

DESCRIPTION OF BOSNIA

Esîrî states that Bosnia's name comes from the name of the river, and explains that erstwhile it had two parts: the "upper" part called Herzegovina, and the "lower" Bosnia – this could mean that he consulted an upside-down map. Bosnia is still an Islamic country, he states, and its capital is *Serây* (Sarajevo), which "earlier was big and prosperous, and was famous for its market," and in it is "a big, loud and live clocktower." Other Bosnian towns are *Vişigrad* (Višegrad), *Burut* (in the manuscript: *Brot*, i.e. Brod), *Dobnisa* (Dubnica?), *Bibka* (Bihać), *Yayıbbisa* (Jajce), *İşvinar* (in the manuscript: *İşvinyar*, i.e. Svinjar), *Banbaloka* (in the manuscript: *Banyaluka*, i.e. Banja Luka), *Giradişka* (Gradiška), *Varsa* (unknown), *İzvornik* (Zvornik), *Permonçiya* (unknown), *Hotonrat* (in the manuscript: *Kamengrad*, i.e. Kamengrad), *Vakıf* (Donji Vakuf?), *Osrovisa* (Ostrovica), *Osnurusa* (unknown), *Koropa* (in the manuscript: *Krupa*, i.e. Bosanska Krupa), *Novi* (Novi) and *Kozarsa* (Kozarac?).³¹

He continues by stating that Bosnia is a mountainous region, and thus does not have much grain, but it has a lot of corn and people make many meals out of it; there are also "various and tasty apples and pears." People raise many horses, cattle, and sheep with much wool, which is being sold in Venice, Kotor and Dubrovnik. There are many wild animals and birds, such as hawks and falcons, and red foxes whose hides they sell. With regard to metals, there are gold, silver, copper, and iron mines, and people make various quality copper pots and pans.³²

Esîrî states that in the olden day Bosnians used to worship a deity called *Mirrih* and their dead ones, and would burn them. Later they became Christians, and in *Ulabe* (Olovo), half a day's distance from Sarajevo (*Bosnasarayı*), there are churches, and in them a picture of Virgin Mary (*Meryem Ana*) made out of wood and lead, and people bring their sick ones and pray for remedy. Esîrî states that "here still come Christians and ignorant Muslims and practice these superstitious beliefs."³³

DESCRIPTION OF "THE LAND OF DALMASIYA, I.E. HERSEK"

Esîrî states that this land is "very developed and populous," with the Venetian town of *Şibenik* (Šibenik) as its capital, whose walls are "two miles long." Other towns and forts are *Tırav* (Trogir), *İspilit* (Split), *Kilis* (Klis, "a steep fort") close to the river *Solone* (Solin), which passes through the valley; Mostar is on the bank of *Nertiva* (Neretva), and over it is "a beautiful bridge with a huge arch 200 *kulaç*³⁴ long; good

³¹ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 180-181; Esîrî, "Mi'yârü'd-Düvel", 22b.

³² İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 181.

³³ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 181.

³⁴ *Kulaç* is an Ottoman unit of measure equal to the length of two arms. James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon. Shewing in English the significations of the Turkish Terms* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban 1987), 1493.

swimmers jump from the bridge.” There are also Gabela on the Neretva; Venetian Kotor inside a bay; *Karadağ* (Montenegro) at the end of the Bay of Kotor; *Nova* (Herceg Novi) in the south of the bay; *Tetina* (possibly from the Italian *Tenin*) or *Kinin* (Knin) is a steep fort in the north, on the river *Firka* (in the manuscript: *Kirka*, i.e. Krka); *İskiradin* (Skradin) and *Sin* (Senj or Sinj?) are “strong forts on the coast.” *Zadra* (Zadar) is the “biggest fort in Dalmatia, on a semi-peninsula; it is like a protrusion into the sea, and is connected by a bridge with the land. It was seven times besieged by the Hungarians.” Another fort is *Bova* (Čiovo), which “has two bridges, one from the fort to the town, and the other to the land.” Another is *Almiba* or *Umuş* (Omiš), which is located on the mouth of the river *Zitna* or *Çitna* (Cetina). The last two sentences mirror almost word for word two sentences in the *Atlas Maior*.³⁵

Furthermore, Esîrî enumerates four “big and famous” rivers: *Tertova* (Neretva), *Çetina* (Cetina), *Korka* (Krka), and *Rama* (probably Rama, tributary of the Neretva), and states that this region’s water is “mild,” air “beautiful,” land fertile, and it abounds in various fruit and numerous sheep, cattle, horses, fish, and wild animals. He stresses that sheep have offspring two times a year, and “*Hersek* horses are sought for.” He claims this region has numerous gold, silver, copper, and iron mines, and that the following goods are sent to Italy, Venice and *Kızıl Elma* (Vienna?) for sale: sheep, goats, cattle, horses, wool, honey, beeswax, lead, tar, candle wax, hides, figs, olive oil, cheese, and dried fruit, and these products make a yearly profit of 47,000 “gold pieces” (*altun*, here probably signifying Venetian ducats).³⁶

Esîrî describes locals as having “very white tan that quickly becomes pink” and being “hazel-eyed,” “strong and belligerent,” with clothes similar to Muslims but more tight and in red and blue colors. Men wear fur caps; women have nice tans and “proportional bodies,” wear white clothes and red covers on the heads, and “speak beautiful Turkish.”³⁷ Here it is unclear whether these Turkish-speaking locals are Muslim or not; what we can say for sure is that Esîrî was describing local Dalmatian/Herzegovinian women when stating that even among the rural population there were many who fluently spoke Turkish.

The region can muster 30,000 – 40,000 soldiers (this data is possibly copied from the *Atlas Maior*),³⁸ and Venetian forts on the coast house 4,000 salaried soldiers. Moreover, 400 horsemen and a few thousand footmen go to war for Venice if needed, and another few thousand soldiers from Montenegro represent Venice’s total fighting force in this region (this data is also very similar to the information in the *Atlas Maior*).³⁹ To this data Esîrî adds his judgement, declaring that “if the

³⁵ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 183; Blacu, *Atlas maior*, 80.

³⁶ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 183-184.

³⁷ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 184.

³⁸ Cf. Blacu, *Atlas maior*, 82.

³⁹ Cf. Blacu, *Atlas maior*, 82.

whole of Dalmatia were to be conquered, Venice's force would be broken," because its manpower comes from Dalmatia. He adds that "most of Dalmatia is in the hands of the Ottoman state," and this is possibly the description of the Dalmatian hinterland and Herzegovina, as the author considers the two regions one and the same, and later claims that Venice's manpower comes from Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania (*Arnevid*).⁴⁰

DESCRIPTION OF "DOBRAVENİK [I.E. DUBROVNIK,] [OTTOMAN] PEOPLE INCORRECTLY SAY DOBRA-VENEDİK"

Esîrî states that the Republic of Ragusa (or Dubrovnik) has two parts, first of which is "Old Dubrovnik," i.e. *Apidaros* (evidently the ancient Greek colony Epidauros at the location of present-day Cavtat), which he describes as "a strong walled city beneath a huge mountain." Its people are merchants, and merchants come here from many lands, Muslim too. "At night, [its inhabitants] stretch a chain across the harbor."⁴¹ This sentence is very probably copied from the *Atlas Maior*.⁴² In the vicinity of Dubrovnik is a strong Venetian fort called *İskopo* or *Kiroma* (*Chiroma* in the *Atlas Maior* – very probably the island of Lokrum). Esîrî describes how Ragusa offered money for this fort but Venice refused to sell, as it has a strategic influence on Dubrovnik. If Ragusa had this fort, he adds, "not a single Venetian ship would be able to pass."⁴³ This description of *Kiroma* was also most probably copied from the *Atlas Maior*.⁴⁴

Esîrî lists other Ragusan forts as follows: *Agosta*, *Milida*, *Mizo*, *Dendarin* (later in the text: *Sen Andirya*) and *Sentapiri* (later in the text: *San Petri*). The latter is stony but cultivated, and has vineyards and orchards and various fruit. These islands are enumerated in the exact same order in the *Atlas Maior*: *Agosta* (Lastovo), *Meleda* (Mljet), *Mezzo* (Lopud), *S. Andrea* (Sveti Andrija) and *S. Pietro* (Sveti Petar).⁴⁵ Other Ragusan islands mentioned by Esîrî are: *Langoza* or *Lagosta* (*Lagosta* in the *Atlas Maior*, present-day Lastovo) and *Korşol* (later in the text: *Korçoli*, i.e. present-day Korčula). The latter abounds in olives, grapes, fish and various fruit. Malidar (*Melita* in the *Atlas Maior*, present-day Mljet) is east of Korčula. Another island is *Volobana* (most probably a misreading of "ve Luppana", as it is written in the *Atlas Maior*, i.e. present-day Šipan).⁴⁶

⁴⁰ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 184.

⁴¹ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 185.

⁴² Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 83.

⁴³ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 185-186.

⁴⁴ Cf. Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 83.

⁴⁵ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 83.

⁴⁶ İnan, "Hasan Esîrî," 189.

The other part of the Republic of Ragusa is *Ragoza*, and one of its forts is *Apidarosk* (here the author confused the Epidaurus from a few sentences before), a strong fort that is also called “New Dubrovnik” (this information is also stated in the *Atlas Maior*).⁴⁷ Esîrî states that another fort (Ottoman Turkish *kal'a* could also be a “town”) is on an island called *İstanyo* (*Stagno* in the *Atlas Maior*, present-day Ston – which, however, is not an island).⁴⁸ Another fort is called *Loronciya* (obviously the Lovrijenac Fortress). Esîrî states that one of the Ragusan nobles is named commander of the fort, and the commander is changed every 24 hours (this claim is repeated in the *Atlas Maior*).⁴⁹ Other forts are *Tiripina*, *Sabyon* and *Çilo*; these forts are mentioned as *Tribigna* and *Sabioncelo* in the *Atlas Maior*, which are present-day Trebinje and Orebić.⁵⁰

Esîrî proceeds by stating that Dubrovnik has five harbors; “three of those are big and galleys can enter in them,” as well as 800 small boats.⁵¹ The first part of this sentence was probably copied from the *Atlas Maior*.⁵² Dubrovnik’s weather is heavy and sultry, and it “causes all diseases among people.” In the vicinity are many lakes, and in them many “tasty fish.” Although the land is stony, inhabitants can “harvest two times a year” and diligently turn bad land into vineyards and orchards. They raise various fruit, especially lemons, bergamot oranges, quinces, pomegranates, grapes, figs, apples, pears, roses and other flowers.⁵³

Esîrî claims that people in Dubrovnik live short, and writes that there is “no person living longer than 80; if they do, it is a surprise.”⁵⁴ The exact same claim is put forward in the *Atlas Maior*.⁵⁵ He states that the inhabitants are stingy and do not like guests, as guests have to pay in order to stay there (*sic!*). Locals are “mostly traders,” and their “seamanship is on an advanced level.” With regard to women, they are very skillful and very beautiful, and dress boldly. There are many brothels, he claims, and adds that inhabitants marry their daughters after 25 years of age.⁵⁶ By this latter statement he repeated a claim from the *Atlas Maior*.⁵⁷ The locals speak the same language spoken in Croatia and Bosnia – but their nobles speak Italian. Esîrî describes Ragusa’s political system by stating that they choose 12 nobles among 100

⁴⁷ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 83.

⁴⁸ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 186; Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 83.

⁴⁹ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 188; Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 84.

⁵⁰ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 84.

⁵¹ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 186.

⁵² Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 84.

⁵³ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 186.

⁵⁴ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 186.

⁵⁵ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 84.

⁵⁶ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 186-187.

⁵⁷ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 84.

nobles in total, who have to be at least 25 years old, and each of those 12 nobles rules for one month. The chosen 12 nobles use a glass box called *balota*, in which they put a gold-covered ball. Every month, the 12 nobles stand around the box, put the hand in it and try to catch the ball. The one who catches it becomes the duke (*duka*). The winner is responsible for all the affairs of the state, and he does not exit the palace; “if he does, they kill him.”⁵⁸ This claim is repeated in the *Atlas Maior*.⁵⁹

When compared to Evliya Çelebi's portrayal of Dubrovnik in his *Seyahatnâme*,⁶⁰ Esîrî's description seems less authentic – especially when we take into account numerous borrowings from the *Atlas Maior*. The only Ragusan characteristics mentioned by both authors are the strength of the Ragusan walls, the existence of numerous Muslim merchants in the city (Evliya, however, describes the merchants in a more detailed manner), and the collective rule of twelve nobles (here probably referring to the Ragusan Minor Council). Other information on Dubrovnik in these two works is completely different, and it thus becomes obvious that Esîrî had not used the *Seyahatnâme* as his source or model for his own work. Moreover, Evliya provided us with a more thorough, direct and detailed description of Ragusan customs and public events – in other words, with an authentic Ottoman view of the city. Esîrî's account, on the other hand, seems more “encyclopedic”, as if collected from various sources rather than from his own experience.

DESCRIPTION OF CROATIA (HIRVAT)

In the olden times, it was conquered by king *Leyborina* (probably a distorted form of Liburnia, the name of an ancient region along the northeastern Adriatic coast). In the north, this region is separated by the Sava from Slavonia, in the west is *Vender Markıya* (probably *Windische Mark*, as it is named in the *Atlas Maior*; it was a medieval frontier march of the Holy Roman Empire, generally located on the territory of Lower Carniola, or Dolenjska region in present-day Slovenia).⁶¹ Its old capital was *Feyomi* (Fiume, present-day Rijeka) on the river *Feyomi* (Fiumara, present-day Rječina). Esîrî claims that the inhabitants chose the *kasaba* of *Çeçihun* as their new capital, “a strong and steep fort.”⁶² The initially undecipherable *Çeçihun* becomes obvious when the *Atlas Maior* is consulted: it is *Bigihon* (as in the *Atlas*), i.e. Bihac.⁶³ The most important fort is *Petrina* (Petrinja), and others are *Kostaniça* (Kostajnica), *Dobniya* (Dubica?), *Kolostad*, and *Karlıştad* (Karlovac); if this a

⁵⁸ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 187-188.

⁵⁹ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 84.

⁶⁰ Evliyâ Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. VI, 259-263.

⁶¹ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 77.

⁶² İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 189.

⁶³ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 77.

mistake of doubling the name of the same fort, it was also done in the *Atlas Maior*.⁶⁴ There are many rivers, among them Sava, *Koleb* (Kupa), *Dona* or *Ona* (Una), *Maris* (Mrežnica?), *Dobra-galina* (Dobra and Glina), *Soklos* (unknown), and *Donan* (unknown). The land is fertile, and its people raise wheat, barley, rye, oat, sheep, cattle, horses, pigs, grapes, various fruit, olives, olive oil, butter, honey, candle wax, and wool, and export them to Italy and Austria. Esîrî states that Croats are “arrogant and vulgar” and “do not like anyone or themselves.” They also constantly criticize and blame three nations, and say “Germans are drunkards, Slavonians [*Iskalavon*] are ruthless, and Hungarians are stubborn.”⁶⁵ The same description of Germans and Slavonians is mentioned in the *Atlas Maior*.⁶⁶

DESCRIPTION OF KORLAKA (IN THE MANUSCRIPT: MORLAKA, I.E. MORLACCHIA), “WHICH IS UNDER VENICE BUT PART OF HIRVAT”

It is difficult to discern which land is hidden under this name, as Esîrî states that its inhabitants “tried to be a separate kingdom but failed,” that they behaved as “thieves and bandits, and still do the same. When the Hungarians and Germans fought against each other, they plundered the territory like rabid dogs.” He claims that in 1592, “a huge Islamic army came and destroyed them, burned them and killed 40,000, and enslaved 30,000 people and brought them to Istanbul, and collected a huge booty.” Some of them are Muslim but “some are unbelievers and they fled to Venice. These Muslims are useless and live like unbelievers.”⁶⁷ The region in question could be Morlacchia, i.e. the Velebit littoral, which was under the control of Uskoks, who continuously harassed Ottoman territory in the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th century, thus justifying Esîrî’s negative characterization of them which, judging by the manuscript, was Esîrî’s original contribution to the work.

CONCLUSION

With respect to the totality of Esîrî’s work, it is certainly a valuable geographical book of its time, as it contains numerous interesting insights that offer a glimpse into the worldview of an early 18th-century Ottoman geographer. However, in light of the fact that it borrows heavily from at least one other geographical work of the period, it offers a limited amount of information for researchers of contemporary Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian history. Our search for the non-*Atlas Maior* sources for Esîrî’s work was hitherto unsuccessful, which does not mean that

⁶⁴ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 78.

⁶⁵ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 190.

⁶⁶ Blaeu, *Atlas maior*, 78.

⁶⁷ İnan, “Hasan Esîrî,” 190-191.

in time other sources will not be identified upon the pages of Esîrî's voluminous work. Owing to his abundant borrowings from the *Atlas Maior*, in some places in his work it is almost impossible to discern his own contributions from those of the author of the *Atlas*. However, it seems that his observations about the northern part of Croatian littoral (Morlacchia) are his individual remarks. It is unknown whether he had collected these data through personal visit to this region. Contrary to Evliya, Esîrî does not boast of his travels, and as can be discerned from Esîrî's biography and his work, he did not travel extensively through the territory of present-day Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, so as to give us richer and more "personal" comments – as Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnâme* does. Thus, the latter still remains a peerless Ottoman source for the history of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina at the turn of the 18th century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

- Esîrî, Hasan. "Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel". Esad Efendi 2109-2110. Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Istanbul.
- Esîrî, Hasan. "Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel". Hekimoğlu 803. Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Istanbul.

PUBLISHED SOURCES AND LITERATURE

- Ak, Mahmut. "Osmanlı Coğrafya Çalışmaları." *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 2, no. 4 (2004): 163-211.
- Akgündüz, Ahmet. *Osmanlı Tarih ve Hukûk İstilâhları Kâmûsu*. Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2018.
- Aşık Mehmed. *Menazırü'l-avalim (tablil ve dizin)*. Prepared by Mahmut Ak. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2007.
- Blaeu, Joan. *Atlas maior of 1665*. Köln: Taschen, [2005].
- Evliyâ Çelebi bin Derviş Mehmed Zillî. *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Revan 1457 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*. Edited by Seyit Ali Kahraman and Yücel Dağlı. Vol. VI. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002.
- Dankoff, Robert. *From Mahmud Kaşgari to Evliya Çelebi. Studies in Middle Turkic and Ottoman Literatures*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008.
- El-Muvakkıt, Mustafa b. Ali. *Tuhfetü'z-zamân ve harîdetü'l-evân*. Nuruosmaniye Library, no. 2993.

- Fazlıođlu, İhsan. "Mustafa b. Ali el-Muvakkıt." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, no. 31. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2006.
- Goodrich, Thomas D. *The Ottoman Turks and the New World. A Study of Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi and Sixteenth-century Ottoman Americana*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990.
- Hagen, Gottfried. "Afterword. Ottoman understandings of the world in the seventeenth century." In Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality. The World of Evliya Çelebi*, 215-256. Leiden; Boston: 2006.
- İnan, Göker. "Hasan Esîrî'nin Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel İsimli Tarih ve Coğrafya Eseri (İnceleme-Transkripsiyon)." PhD diss., Marmara University, Istanbul, 2017.
- Koeman, Cornelis. *Joan Blaeu and his grand atlas. Introduction to the facsimile edition of Le grand atlas, 1663*. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970.
- Kut, Günay. *Acâibül-Mahlûkât. Eski Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları II*. Istanbul: Simurg, 2010.
- Ptolemaeus, Claudius. *Geographia Cl. Ptolemaei Alexandrini*. Venice: Vincentius Valgrisius, 1562.
- Nasûhü's-Silâhî [Nasûh-i Matraki]. *Beyân-ı Menâzil-i Sefer-i Irâkeyn-i Sultan Süleyman Han*. Prepared by Hüseyin G. Yurdaydın. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1976.
- Redhouse, James W. *A Turkish and English Lexicon. Shewing in English the significations of the Turkish Terms*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban 1987.
- Reis, Seydi Ali Reis. *Kitâbü'l-Muhîr*. Prepared by Fuat Sezgin. Frankfurt: Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, 1997.
- Sarıcaođlu, Fikret. "Ebû Bekir b. Behrâm." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10, 110-111. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1994.
- Soucek, Svat. *Piri Reis and Turkish Mapmaking after Columbus. The Khalili Portolan Atlas*. London: The Nour Foundation, 1996.
- Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi veya Hadis-i Nev / History Of The West Indies Known As The New Hadith*. Istanbul: TTT Vakfı Yayınları, 1999.
- Taşaođlu, Ahmet. "Hitâyname." *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 17, 404-405. Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1998.