

# The Caravan Bridge

THE POINT WHERE  
TRADE BEGAN IN IZMIR



ERKAN SERÇE

# The Caravan Bridge

THE POINT WHERE  
TRADE BEGAN IN IZMIR



İZMİR UNIVERSITY  
OF ECONOMICS  
PRESS



Izmir University of Economics  
Publications 1  
History 1

**The Caravan Bridge  
The Point Where Trade Began  
in Izmir**

**Erkan Serçe**

Translation  
Mary Işın

English Editor  
Nilgün Dungan

Book Design  
© Ersu Pekin

Izmir University of Economics  
Publications  
Editor-in-Chief  
Raşit Çavaş

1<sup>st</sup> edition  
February 2021  
ISBN 978-605-70257-0-8

Izmir University of Economics  
Sakarya Caddesi, 156  
35330 Balçova, İzmir  
ieuyay@izmirekonomi.edu.tr  
www.ieu.edu.tr/

@ Izmir University of Economics  
Publications / Izmir University of  
Economics Economic Enterprise  
Certificate No: 49514

Izmir University of Economics owns  
the publishing rights to this book.  
Apart from short excerpts for review  
purposes, with source citation, this  
book may not be reproduced in full or  
in part by any means, distributed or  
stored in a retrieval system without  
the prior written permission of the  
publisher.

Printing and binding  
Metro Matbaacılık Ltd. Şti.  
Yahya Kemal Beyatlı Cad. No. 94  
Begos 3. Bölge  
Buca – İzmir  
Certificate No: 40921

## CONTENTS

	8
	<b>PREFACE</b>
	10
	<b>FOREWORD</b>
	12
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
	13
	<b>The Caravan Bridge: Rise and fall of an urban icon</b>
	44
<b>1 The Caravan Bridge in Prints and Drawings</b>	
	114
<b>2 The Caravan Bridge in Photographs</b>	
	162
<b>The Caravan Bridge in Postcards</b>	
	173
<b>Brief biographies of the writers, artists and photographers mentioned in the text</b>	
	179
	<b>SELECTED REFERENCES</b>
	187
	<b>INDEX</b>

## Preface

Throughout its history Izmir has been admired for its natural beauty, people, culture and cuisine; and with its large sheltered harbour this outstanding city has been an important hub for trade routes. The city's history goes back eight to nine thousand years and at every period it has been a major trading centre; a role which gained fresh momentum after it came under Ottoman rule in the 15th century. Western merchants came here to purchase a wide range of Eastern goods and commodities, such as silk, cotton and wool yarns, carpets, pharmaceutical products, and much more. In later centuries local products of the region, like raisins, dried figs, acorns, tobacco, madder, opium and cotton were added to these.

In the second half of the 19th century Izmir was the largest port in terms of export volume in the Ottoman Empire and the second largest, after Istanbul, in terms of import volume. So the "Crown of Asia Minor" became the most important commercial port in the Eastern Mediterranean and one of the foremost economic centres in the world.

Izmir's commercial district contained a greater number of commercial buildings, known as han where merchants stored their merchandise and conducted business, than any other Anatolian city. Kemeraltı Bazaar grew up around the ancient inner harbour to become one of the largest open-air markets in the world. Frenk Street, which was lined with the homes of European residents and ran

northwards along the seafront, and the Kordon Esplanade known as the Kordon, whose construction began in 1867 and was completed in 1881, soon became key centres of mercantile activity not just for Izmir and Anatolia, but for the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole.

Izmir pioneered in diverse aspects of Turkish commercial life, and the city's Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1885. The Caravan Bridge, situated at the entrance to the city, played a major role in the transformation of Izmir into an international commercial centre. As one of Izmir's iconic historical structures, this bridge was the point at which Eastern goods destined for European markets entered the city. The bridge spans the Kemer (Meles) River and is still standing today. As trade increased, it became one of the most important entrance and exit points for the city. The Caravan Bridge was a place where merchandise was unloaded and exchanged, and where the state collected taxes on goods being brought into the city. At the same time, the attractive wooded area around the bridge became one of the most popular excursion places for the people of Izmir.

In telling the story of the Caravan Bridge, this book rediscovers forgotten aspects of our city's history. It is also of special importance for us as the first publication of Izmir University of Economics Press. Our university which contributes significantly to the academic life of our city and our country will also add prestigious publications to these contributions. As such, Izmir University of Economics will continue to contribute to our city and country with scientific, cultural, social, economic and technical publications.

By uniting the business world and academia, Izmir Chamber of Commerce and Izmir University of Economics will continue to make contributions to Izmir and our country, in the form of scientific research and development projects, publications and scientific and cultural events with high synergy and added value generated by the cooperation that Turkey expects between the university, industry and the city.

I am confident that *The Caravan Bridge* will set an example for these initiatives and extend my thanks to all those involved in the preparation and production of the book.

**Mahmut Özgener**  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

## Foreword

Cities have iconic buildings dating from different periods of their development that, in people's minds, are identified with the cities where they are located. Such iconic buildings are not necessarily of any great age. When the Eiffel Tower was built as the entrance gate to the Paris Exposition held in 1889, it was the target of harsh criticism. The tower had been planned to be dismantled in 1909, but by then it had already become the symbol of Paris. Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, built in 1789-1791, and London's Big Ben, built in 1859, became symbols of their respective cities soon after they were built. As for Izmir, when asked about the symbol of the city, the unanimous answer is Konak Clock Tower.

Built in 1901 to mark the 25th anniversary of the accession of Sultan Abdülhamit II to the throne, the Clock Tower had not become the symbol of Izmir until after the Turkish Republic was established in 1923. Undoubtedly, the Clock Tower was intended to symbolise the modern face of Izmir, situated as it was in a square surrounded by government and military institutions. But Izmir, known by such admiring epithets as "the Crown of Asia Minor", "the Pearl of Ionia" and "Little Paris", also had an oriental aspect, whose symbol for more than a century was the Caravan Bridge.

This study traces the history of the Caravan Bridge, which was the symbol of Izmir from the late 1700s until the early 1900s, in prints, paintings, photographs, travelogues, stories, poetry and other media; concluding with the present day.

It is no exaggeration to say that this study is the result of nearly four years' work by several people. The English and German extracts used in the text were translated into Turkish by Leyla Esen and Christina Schnettger respectively. Without their dedicated efforts this book could not have been written. By permitting us to use visual documents and objects from their collections, Yavuz Çorapçoğlu and my friend Nejat Yentürk contributed to the lavish illustrations in the book. Associate Prof. Dr. Akın Ersoy kindly shared his photographs of the Caravan Bridge taken in 2010. Later photographs of the bridge as it is today were taken by Özgür Şenergin. Izmir University of Economics Press's Editor-in-Chief Raşit Çavaş was enthusiastic about the book project from the start, followed it closely and speeded up the work. Devrim Çakır edited the text. Ersu Pekin created a design in which harmony between text and illustrations define the book's aesthetic character. Last but not least, Izmir University of Economics honoured me by undertaking to publish the book. My sincere thanks to all of them.

Dr. Erkan Serçe

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Caravan Bridge: The rise and fall of an urban icon**

Known in French as Pont des Caravanes, in English as the Caravan Bridge, in German as Karawanen-Brücke and in Italian as Ponte della Carovana, the bridge was known in Turkish simply as Kemer Köprüsü, or the Arch Bridge, due to its high arched form that allowed the river to flow beneath it even when the water level rose. The earliest picture of the bridge dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This watercolour painting by Luigi Mayer, a painter employed by the British Embassy, depicts a calm moment, far from the fierce storm caused by the French Revolution in Europe. A caravan consisting of an indeterminate number of camels is crossing the bridge. Groups of Muslims are smoking pipes and conversing amongst themselves, entirely ignoring the caravan; emphasising the fact that this was a commonplace event. Some of them are described as engaging in *keyif*; the Turkish term presumably being used for lack of an English equivalent for a pleasant state of reverie. In addition to the bridge itself, architectural elements in the picture include a pergola roofed with reeds to give shade from the sun at one end of the bridge and a one-roomed building that was probably used by the tax collectors at the other.

For the next century few other buildings were so closely identified with Izmir as the Caravan Bridge. Not only did almost every traveller to Izmir describe or draw the bridge, but poems and stories were written

about it and musical compositions inspired by it. The Caravan Bridge was not only the subject of scores of prints, but became the first structure in Izmir to be photographed, and many of these photographs were reproduced in books, in magazines and on postcards.

We know that the Caravan Bridge was rebuilt several times during the Ottoman period. Although it is not known for certain when it was originally constructed, experts agree that it must have been in existence at least since Hellenistic and Roman times.<sup>1</sup> The road that leads out of the city and over the bridge was the only link between Izmir and the lands to the east. The Roman province of Asia was established in 129 BC, which is the date when Ephesus, Pergamon and the old roads between Sardis and Smyrna that linked the Persian Royal Road to the Aegean Sea were rebuilt to Roman standards.<sup>2</sup> According to Akın Ersoy, the anathyrosis on the stone blocks forming the pillars that support the arch of the bridge demonstrate that it must have been built as early as the second century BC.<sup>3</sup> The bridge's importance is emphasised by bridge construction engineer Henry G. Tyrrell, who states that St. Paul probably used the bridge to enter Izmir,<sup>4</sup> and another source makes the same claim.<sup>5</sup> Although the original construction date is debatable, it is agreed that the Caravan Bridge is the oldest bridge in existence that has remained in constant use.<sup>6</sup>

“the oldest bridge  
in existence that has remained  
in constant use”

<sup>1</sup> Cecil John Cadoux, *İlkçağ'da İzmir. Kentin, En Eski Çağlardan İ.S. 324'e Kadar Tarihi*, trans. Bilge Umar, Istanbul, 2003, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Ersin Doğer, *İzmir'in Smyrna'sı*, Istanbul, 2007, pp. 108, 185.

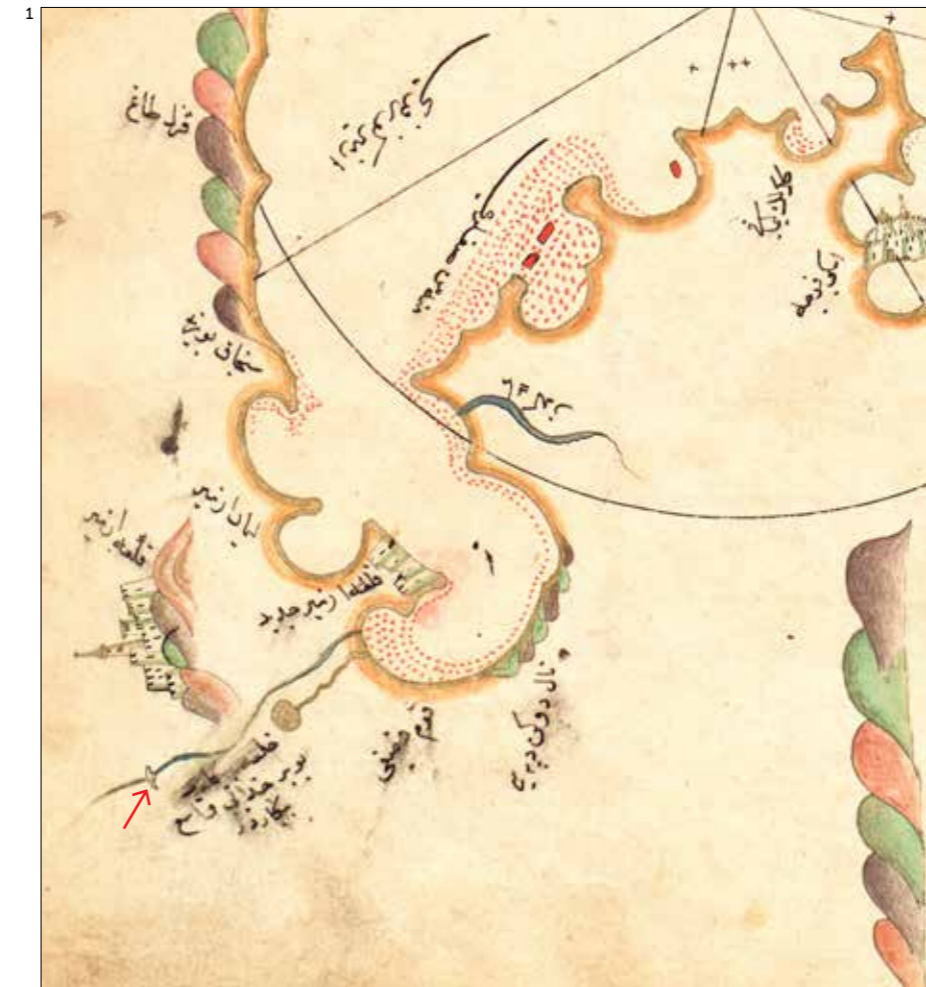
<sup>3</sup> Akın Ersoy, “Antik Smyrna'nın Kuzeybatı Anadolu'ya Bağlantısı: Kervan Köprüsü”, in *Metropolis in Ionia II*, eds Serdar Aybek and Ali Kazım Öz, Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2010, p. 142. Some sources date the bridge to as early as 850 BCE, which must derive from the mistaken identification of the river that flows under the bridge with the ancient Meles and so its association with Homer, who lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE and was thought to have written his works on the bank of this river. The origin of this claim is probably Henry Grattan Tyrrell's *History of Bridge Engineering* (Chicago, 1911, p. 18). Tyrrell asserts that as a boy Homer lived and played on the banks of this river and that Saint Paul probably entered the town over Caravan Bridge. This error was repeated with little questioning by later books on the subject. For example, see David Barnard Steinman and Sara Ruth Watson, *Bridges and Their Builders*, New York: Putnam's Sons, 1941, p. 28 and M. G. Lay, *Ways of the World: A History of the World's Roads and of the Vehicles That Used Them*, Rutgers University Press, 1992, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Tyrrell, *History of Bridge Engineering*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Steinman and Watson, *Bridges and Their Builders*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> “Bridges”, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Michael Gagarin, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 24.

1 Gulf of Izmir (detail)  
Piri Reis, *Kitab-ı Bahriye*.



Nothing is known about the form of the bridge up to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In some manuscript copies of the *Kitab-ı Bahriye* (Book of Navigation) by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman admiral Piri Reis, the bridge is indicated by a tiny mark on his map of the Gulf of Izmir, showing no details. Fragments of information about the structure are given by earlier travellers, but the first picture of the entire bridge is the watercolour painting by Luigi Mayer. Later printed images show that the bridge remained unchanged from that time until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a simple single-arch bridge approximately 12 metres long and 5.35 metres wide.<sup>7</sup> Samuel Woodruff, who arrived in Izmir

<sup>7</sup> Ersoy, “Antik Smyrna'nın Kuzeybatı Anadolu'ya Bağlantısı”, p. 142.



in 1828, went to the trouble of measuring the arch and found that at its apex it was 7 metres above the level of the river.<sup>8</sup> Akin Ersoy, however, states that today the bridge's arch is 4.29 metres above the river bed and that it was even higher when it was first built.<sup>9</sup>

The first major change to the bridge was the addition of an iron railing along each side. The last picture of the Caravan Bridge without railings is a drawing made by George Scharf in 1844 and the first description of the bridge with railings is by Théophile Gautier in 1852, so we know that the railings were added between the years 1844-1852. According to Gautier, the Caravan Bridge was “unfortunately disfigured by a villanous balustrade of cast-iron”.<sup>10</sup> Gautier was not alone in this opinion; the French painter Charles-Émile de Tournemine considered that whoever had the idea of adding the railing was a “fool”.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, this railing became an inevitable feature of pictures of the Caravan Bridge from that time on.

### The Caravan Bridge: Izmir's Excursion Place

Public parks known as mesire used for excursions and picnics by urban dwellers were typical features of all Ottoman cities. These were one of the oldest and most important gathering places. Places in the countryside on the outskirts of cities, consisting of meadows and woodland, with streams or springs that provided drinking water, were suitable for such parks. The 18<sup>th</sup> century poet Seyit Efendi enumerated İzmir's excursion places in his *Ode to Izmir*:

*The fairy-like Kaydafa is a daughter wearing a green kaftan  
If İzmir is not foremost in the world is it not the most just.*

*Especially, like the Beauty Kissed it is a place that increases  
lightheartedness,*

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Woodruff, *Journal of a tour to Malta, Greece, Asia Minor, Carthage, Algiers, Port Mahon, and Spain, in 1828*, Dartford, 1831, p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> Ersoy, “Antik Smyrna'nın Kuzeybatı Anadolu'ya Bağlantısı”, p. 142.

<sup>10</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Constantinople of To-day*, trans. Robert Howe Gould, London: David Bogue, 1854, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> M. le Dr L. Turrel, “Etude sur C. de Tournemine”, *Bulletin de la Société Académique du Var*, 1877-1878, Toulon, p. 41.

*Even the Bowstring Manufactory is a gathering place for  
beauties every day.*<sup>12</sup>

We do not know where the place known as Dilber Öpüştü (Beauty Kissed) was, but the area around Kirişhane next to Karataş and Kadifekale Castle continued to be popular excursion places. Another was an area around two ancient aqueducts through which a river called Yeşildere flowed. Called Paradiso by foreigners and Kızılçullu by the Turks, this area is today known as Şirinyer. It should also be noted that apart from the area around the Kızılçullu aqueducts known as Great Paradise, there was also a place called Little Paradise around another aqueduct known as Vezir Aqueduct because it was built by the Ottoman vezir Köprülüzâde Fazıl Ahmet Paşa over the Yeşildere (Haghia Anna) Valley. The English barrister Charles G. Addison, who travelled to Izmir in 1838, described Great Paradise as a romantic spot and recorded that Europeans frequently resorted there on festive occasions.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the most popular excursion place in Izmir until the 19<sup>th</sup> century was undoubtedly Halkapınar.

Halkapınar had all the desirable features of an excursion place in the eyes of early Ottomans: a simplicity in which the elements defined by Maurice Cerasi as “geometric rigidity”<sup>14</sup> were absent, scattered trees rather than thick woodland, and above all, that, an essential feature – flowing water that cooled the air. Moreover, it was so close to the city that it took just a short walk to get there.

The Ottoman traveller Evliyâ Çelebi visited Izmir in 1671 and found the local magnates enjoying themselves in a place that he described as the Halkalı Spring Excursion Place: “The aforementioned Halkalı Spring is a spring of clear water that pours from a rock. On all four sides are grassy meadows, gardens of roses and tulips, where the calls and cries of thousands of nightingales are heard. Great trees provide shade in this excursion place that gladdens the heart.

<sup>12</sup> Hüseyin Avni, *İzmir Şairleri Antolojisi*, Birinci Kitap, İzmir: İzmir Halk Evi Neşriyatından: no. 3, 1934, p. 201.

<sup>13</sup> Charles G. Addison, *Damascus and Palmyra: a journey to the East*, vol. I, London, 1838, pp. 322-323.

<sup>14</sup> Maurice M. Cerasi, *Osmanlı Kenti, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda 18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda Kent Uygurhğı ve Mimarisi*, trans. Aşlı Ataöv, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999, p. 207.

Thousands of fish of many kinds swim in the spring water, but since this is a sacred place, no one catches them and they approach people who come close, leaping and doing acrobatics of all kinds. These friendly fish never flee from people but eat pieces of bread and meat from their hands. By the wisdom of God, when women visit this excursion place once a week on Wednesdays no fish appear in the spring, which is an astonishing magical phenomenon. According to local people it is a spell cast by the king of Kaydefâ. In short, this is a beautiful excursion place.”<sup>15</sup>

“Another promenade  
is the Caravan Bridge,  
which crosses a small stream”

This excursion place was not confined to the area around the Halkapınar pond. According to accounts by travellers and the engraved illustrations in their books, the plain between the pond and the sea—an area that remained uninhabited until the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—was also an excursion destination. Dominique Sestini gives a detailed description of a jereed match that he watched here in 1778.<sup>16</sup> J. B. Hilair, the artist whose drawings were used for the prints in the travel book by Choiseul-Gouffier, one of the most celebrated French ambassadors to the Ottoman court, travelled to Izmir around the same time and drew a picture of the scene at the same excursion spot, probably on another day. The engraving based on his drawing depicts horsemen playing jereed, people dancing, smoking, conversing, resting while watching the sea, street sellers with their wares laid out on trays, children, women trying to control their children, a caravan driver with his camels, and dogs running around amongst them...<sup>17</sup> When Henry Post came to İzmir in 1828 he observed, “The fashionable promenade is along the water side to the northern extremity of the city, called the Point. Here is a level and spacious sand-beach, where the Turkish cavaliers may be seen every fine day, amusing themselves with their favourite and manly exercise of the *jereed*.” And he adds, “Another promenade is to the Caravan Bridge, which crosses a small stream, half an hour’s walk from the city.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, vol. 9, Istanbul, 1935, pp. 87-88 (simplified text).

<sup>16</sup> *Lettres de Monsieur l'Abbe Dominique Sestini*, vol. III, Paris, 1789, quoted by Rauf Beyru in *19. Yüzyılda İzmir'de Yaşam*, Istanbul: Literatür Yayınları, 2000, pp. 270-271.

<sup>17</sup> Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Auguste-Florent, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, vol. I, Paris, 1782.

<sup>18</sup> Post, Henry A. V., *A Visit to Greece and Constantinople*, in the Year 1827-8, New



The plain between the city’s suburbs and the headland known as Punta rapidly became built up from the middle of the century. All along the coast, shops, mills and small factories appeared, while Greek neighbourhoods expanded northwards over former farmland. The Punta plain served as an excursion place in the summer months, when Halkapınar and the other springs and small streams dried up. Unfortunately, this led to the area becoming a source of disease, as reported by a doctor who served at the British hospital in İzmir during the Crimean War. He wrote that the part of İzmir where malaria type fevers were most common was the area between the Point and Caravan Bridge to the north of Kadifekale, which formed the base of the triangle formed by the town.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the former popular

2 View of Izmir (1780s)  
Engraving: J. B. Hilair.

York, 1830, p. 285.

<sup>19</sup> George Rolleston, *İzmir 1856*, trans. Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, İzmir: İZTO Kültür Yayınları, 2010, p. 62.

excursion place was gradually swallowed up by the expanding town. During this process, the area around the Caravan Bridge became indisputably the most important promenade in Izmir.

How long had Caravan Bridge and its surroundings been used as an excursion place? Unfortunately, accounts by travellers and their drawings are the only evidence on which to base an answer, and their interest in the subject depended on their changing and varying attitudes.

Seventeenth century travellers such as Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Jakob Spon, Joseph de Tournefort and Antoine Galland give extensive information about Izmir and its environs but make no mention of the bridge and the surrounding area. Evidently, this structure and its surroundings did not attract the attention of most European travellers during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, known as the Classical Period. For them the bridge had no significance aside from being part of the city's gateway into the interior of Anatolia.<sup>20</sup> Travellers only began to show interest in the Caravan Bridge and its surroundings at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when this interest steadily increased, lasting until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Travellers' Fascination with the Caravan Bridge

It cannot be claimed that the Caravan Bridge is a structure of outstanding beauty or an architectural masterpiece. With a length of 12 metres, its unexceptional building material and single arch, it is clearly inferior to many other bridges in Anatolia. In the most extensive study of Turkey's stone bridges, the author's account of the Caravan Bridge is confined to five lines taken from the travels of Robert Walsh.<sup>21</sup> A French journalist who visited Izmir during the Crimean War wrote the following after seeing the Caravan Bridge:

Despite the constantly passing camel trains, I found it impossible to believe that this miserable Roman arch and collection of taverns, which are as mean as the filthiest hovels on the turnpikes

<sup>20</sup> For example, see E. van der Nijenburg and Johannes Heyman, *Travels Through Part of Europe Asia Minor, The Island of Archipelago*, vol. I, London, 1759, p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> Cevdet Çulpan, *Türk Taş Köprüleri Ortaçağdan Osmanlı Devri Sonuna Kadar*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1975, p. 207.



of Paris or Lyon, was the celebrated Caravan Bridge, whose picturesque delights have been the subject of numerous poems. Yet it has been the object of so much admiration. Great God! What would the enthusiasts of this villainy say if they took the trouble to look at the so little admired but so admirable Roman bridge of Saint-Chamas in France?<sup>22</sup>

So what happened to suddenly arouse the interest of Western travellers in the Caravan Bridge at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Most of the Classical period travellers were motivated by the prevailing fashion for travelling in search of antiquities. The concept of “archaeological travel” was first proposed by Jacob Spon (1647-1685) and

3 Saint-Chamas Bridge (France)

<sup>22</sup> Eugène Jouve, *Guerre d'Orient. Voyage à la suite des armées alliées en Turquie, en Valachie et en Crimée*, Paris: Librairie D'Alphonse Delhomme, 1855, pp. 34-35.

involved examining ancient structures in situ.<sup>23</sup> This idea lost none of its appeal over the following centuries and was not confined to travellers who had received a classical education; merchants, diplomats, writers and even pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, searched for traces of ancient Greece and Rome. For these travellers a broken Greek inscription that might be found near the Caravan Bridge was far more important than the bridge itself. The Meles river was worth seeing because Homer had been born on its shore. When visiting the bazaar they sought out antiquities, determined not to leave without at least purchasing a Greek or Roman coin. Similarly, they climbed Pagos Hill not to see the spectacular view of the Gulf of Izmir, but to examine the ruined castle and theatre, and from there made their way to Ephesus, Sardis, Pergamon and other ancient sites. Naturally, their travel accounts and illustrations also focused on the same subjects.

Towards the end of the same century, travel in search of the “picturesque” led to defining the East in pictures. Meanwhile, the British stopped relying on accounts by French travellers for their knowledge of the East and began to include the Ottoman lands in their so-called “grand tours” of continental Europe and Italy in particular. British travellers such as Richard Pococke, Richard Chandler, Richard Dalton and Robert Wood, together with various officials funded by the Society of Dilettanti, published high quality illustrated books about ancient buildings.<sup>24</sup> Ambassadors began to travel beyond Istanbul and the shores of the Bosphorus Strait into Anatolia, accompanied by artists in their employ. The abovementioned Luigi Mayer accompanied the British ambassador Robert Ainslie on a journey through Anatolia, producing scores of drawings. Landscapes, which had previously not been regarded as serious art, now acquired a new respectability, and for British artists infused with the romantic spirit of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, scenic views of Izmir and its environs, particularly around the Caravan Bridge, satisfied their expectations.

In the course of the Enlightenment, western Europe shaped its idea of distant lands in accordance with its own imagination.<sup>25</sup> For

“one of the most beautiful  
places”

<sup>23</sup> Irini Apostolou, “Doğu’da Seyyahlar: 18. Yüzyılda Görsel Bakış Açıları”, in *18. ve 19. Yüzyıllarda İzmir: Batılı Bir Bakış*, Istanbul, 2013, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Apostolou, “Doğu’da Seyyahlar:...”, p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> On this subject see Edward W. Said, *Şarkiyatçılık, Batı’nın Şark Anlayışları*, trans.

travellers and artists whose concepts of the East were based on texts such as *One Thousand and One Nights*—which became known in the West thanks to the first translation by Antoine Galland—and the *Letters* of Lady Montegu, Izmir was one of the first places they saw in the Near East. Artists in particular found nothing appealing in the confusion of life in the city, the “narrow dirty streets” and people living in poverty. On the other hand, views of the city from the sea or from Kadifekale castle, and of the Caravan Bridge, were far more in keeping with the romantic scenes they had imagined.

After describing the Caravan Bridge as “one of the most beautiful places I know of”, Maxime du Camp wrote enthusiastically: “This is Asia, the real Asia of our dreams.”<sup>26</sup> Almost all western European travellers saw everything that they had sought in the East brought together here: Caravans of camels, coffee houses with sofas around the walls, some built on the banks of the river, others on the branches of trees, minstrels reciting poetry and playing the saz, story-tellers entertaining their audiences, Muslims in turbans seated on sofas in conversation or stretched out lazily, black servants, people smoking long pipes or drinking coffee, and on some special occasions, Muslim women. To one side of the bridge was a large Muslim cemetery with its tombstones shaded by cypress trees, which had always been an appealing sight for Westerners. Moreover, accompanying all of these beneath the bridge flowed the Meles river, on whose banks Homer was thought to have composed the *Iliad*.

### “A rose from Homer’s grave”

The belief that Homer, author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, regarded as being among the foundation stones of Western culture, had been born on the shore of the Meles river in Izmir, and that his epic poems had also been composed in a cave close to his birthplace clearly excited travellers’ interest in Izmir and the Caravan Bridge. Homer, “prince of poets”, is thought to have been born in the mid-9<sup>th</sup>

Berna Ünler, Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1999; Rana Kabbani, *Avrupa’nın Doğu İmaji*, trans. Serpil Tuncer, Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 1993; Thierry Hentch, *Hayali Doğu, Batı’nın Akdenizli Doğu’ya Politik Bakışı*, Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Maxime Du Camp, *Souvenirs et Paysages d’Orient*, Paris: Arthus Bertrand, Libraire, 1848, p. 32, 34.

- 4 Portico of Homer  
See a large reproduction of this picture  
on p. 57, Fig. 19



century BCE, but questions regarding his blindness, whether he was really the author of those epics, whether he had really been born in Izmir, which river was actually the Meles on whose shore he was said to have been born, gave rise to a whole body of literature devoted to the debate. Azra Erhat, a translator of Homer's epics into Turkish, recalls that one university professor told him, "The Homer question would fill forty thousand volumes!"<sup>27</sup>

Whatever the debates surrounding Homer, the interest felt in him never disappeared at any period of history after his name had first been heard. When the Roman world began to embrace Christianity, the problem arose of how to fit the Trojan War and Homer into biblical history, and a compromise was reached by dating Moses prior to the Trojan War.<sup>28</sup> In his *Divine Comedy* Dante, guided by Virgil, descends into Purgatory, where the wise idolators who never knew Jesus Christ are held, and is there met by Homer, who carries a sword in his hand:

*Consider that one, armed with a sword...  
Before the three advancing like their lord;  
For he is Homer, poet with no peer*<sup>29</sup>

From the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Europe began to dream of its distant past, Homer and his works gained even more importance. Travellers set out in search of the land where the Trojan Wars took place and of Homer, poet of poets, creator of this "founding and immortal" epic. Among the settlements in the Ionia region claimed to be the poet's birthplace, İzmir was one of the most likely candidates and its association with Homer began. Upon seeing the remains of the Temple of Janus, the 17<sup>th</sup> century traveller Wheler assumed he had discovered the Homerion, which according to Strabo was situated in the Agora and contained a wooden statue of Homer.<sup>30</sup> And in the late

<sup>27</sup> Homeros, *İlyada*, trans. Azra Erhat and A. Kadir, 6th edn, Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Homeros'un Dünyası*, trans. Devrim Çetinkasap, 2nd edn, Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015, p. 125.

<sup>29</sup> Dante, *İlahi Komedyâ Cehennem*, trans. Rekin Teksoy, Istanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 1998, pp. 64-65.

<sup>30</sup> George Wheler, *A Journey into Greece*, London, 1682, p. 242.

18<sup>th</sup> century a drawing was even made depicting the portico of Homer on the banks of the Meles right at the end of Caravan Bridge.<sup>31</sup>

The Meles was the link between Caravan Bridge and Homer. The question of which of Izmir's rivers is the Meles – on whose banks Homer is claimed to have been born, giving rise to his cognomen Melesigenes (son of Meles) – has long been debated by scholars.<sup>32</sup> Numerous travellers were aware that the river flowing beneath the Caravan Bridge just out of Izmir, which had been newly established in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE at the earliest, could not have been the Meles associated with Homer, who had been born in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. One writer noted: "Indeed some scholars have denied that the name of this river is the Meleus, but most people are happy to accept a legend that adds memory and association to this spot, which is already enchanting in its own right."<sup>33</sup> But some were disappointed at the sight, which conflicted with the mythological Meles of their imagination: "It is, however, no longer the 'Silver Meles', but in the summer season, little more than a dirty pool for ducks on one side, and washing wool on the other."<sup>34</sup> Another traveller who presumably visited Izmir in the summer months to find the Meles not a foaming stream but a dry river bed covered with pebbles, could not help commenting ironically: "Homer must have been blind to have sung about this river with such enthusiasm."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Museum Worsleyanum; Or a Collection of Antique Basso-Relievos, Bustos, Statues, and Gems; with Views of Places in the Levant, Taken on the Spot in the Years MDCCCLXXXV. VI. And VII*, vol. II, London: Septimus, Prowett, 1824, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> For a few examples, see B. F. Slaars, "Dissertation qui précise la situation du fleuve Mèlès", *Revue Archéologique*, vol. 16, Paris, 1867, pp. 214-234; Cecil John Cadoua, *İlkçağ'da İzmir. Kentin, En Eski Çağlardan İ.S. 324'e Kadar Tarihi*, trans. Bilge Umar, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003, pp. 32ff; Hasan Malay, "Smyrna, Meles ve Halkapınar", *Dr. Eren Akçiçek'e Armağan*, ed. Gökser Gökçay, İzmir, 2010, pp. 131-135; George E. Bean, *Eski Çağda Ege Bölgesi*, trans. İnci Delemen, Istanbul: Orion Yayınevi, 1995, pp. 25-27.

<sup>33</sup> *The Illustrated Times*, 21 March 1857, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Josiah Brewer, *Patmos, and the Seven Churches of Asia: Together with Places in the Vicinity, From the Earliest Records to the Year 1850*, Bridgeport, Ct.: Bradley and Peck, 1851, p. 101.

<sup>35</sup> Victoire Cochet Du Vaubesnard, *Jérusalem! Si Jamais Je t'Oublie!: Pèlerinage Français En Terre Sainte; Septembre 1879; Souvenirs d'Une Pèlerine Bretonne*, Sarlat: Imprimerie Michelet, 1880, p. 197.



5 A caravan passing in Izmir (1911-1912)  
Jean Emile Labourer

Homer's controversial past and debates about the course of the Meles or even which river it was, did not affect most travellers and romantic writers, nor even prevent them from further embroidering legends about Homer and İzmir. The famous Danish poet, story-teller, novelist and playwright Hans Christian Andersen even imagined that Homer's grave was on the banks of the Meles in his short account based on his impressions of the Meles in 1841:

A camel-driver came by, with his loaded camels and his black slaves; his little son found a dead bird, and buried the lovely songster in the grave of the great Homer, while the rose trembled in the wind. The evening came, and the rose wrapped her leaves more closely round her, and dreamed: and this was her dream. It was a fair sunshiny day; a crowd of strangers drew near who had undertaken a pilgrimage to the grave of Homer. Among the strangers [126] was a minstrel from the north, the home of the clouds and the brilliant lights of the aurora borealis. He plucked the rose and placed it in a book, and carried it away into a distant part of the world, his fatherland. The rose faded with grief, and

lay between the leaves of the book, which he opened in his own home, saying, "Here is a rose from the grave of Homer."<sup>36</sup>

### Fascination with Caravans

Deserts, caravans and camels... When they reached their destinations, these were the three things that most made Westerners feel that they were in the East. Most people had heard of these in biblical stories; literate people from accounts of pilgrims to the Holy Land or from stories in *One Thousand and One Nights*, which had figured in their dreams from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. For those who began their eastern journeys from Izmir, there was no chance of seeing a desert upon arriving; however, caravans consisting of hundreds of camels, caravan leaders and camel-drivers in local costume, and camels that they were probably able to see and touch for the first time sufficed to make them feel that they were really in the East. The principal place where they could find all these things together was the Caravan Bridge. Gustav Cirilli, a doctor from Izmir, summed up the relationship between caravans and the bridge in the following words: "If it were not for the camel trains that make a picturesque sight fit for the brush of Gerome or Benjamin Constant, this bridge is of no interest at all in my opinion."<sup>37</sup>

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century Izmir became one of the most important destinations on the Silk Road.<sup>38</sup> Great Persian caravans consisting of 600-800 horses and as many camels set out from Isfahan on their seven-month long journey; passing through Kersan, Kum, Tahrán, Kazvin, Tebriz and Erivan before reaching Erzurum in Anatolia. After paying taxes to the Ottomans for the foreign silks that they carried, the caravans travelled to Tokat and from there to Izmir. This was the route most extensively used by silk merchants in the 18<sup>th</sup>

<sup>36</sup> K. Hamsun and H. C. Andersen, *İstanbul'da İki İskandinav Seyyah*, trans. Banu Gürsaler-Syvertsen, 2nd edn, Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1995, pp. 82-83.

<sup>37</sup> Gustave Cirilli, "De Smyrne à Hiérapolis", *La Nouvelle Revue*, Vingt-Deuxième Année, Cilt VII Novembre-Décembre, Paris, 1900, p. 431.

<sup>38</sup> See Necmi Ülker, "The Role and Importance of Izmir on the Silk Trade, XVII<sup>th</sup> and XVIII<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *İpek Yolları Deniz Araştırma Gezisi Konferansları*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993, pp. 93-111.

“Let the stranger station himself  
near the *cafenehs*  
of the Caravan-bridge ...  
his gratification will be  
ineffably intense”

century. Persian caravans usually arrived in Izmir between January and October.<sup>39</sup> The caravan regularly set out once a year in a particular direction and consisted of 2500 camels, horses and mules. A caravan of a thousand camels was regarded as medium-sized, and one of 450 camels, 100 mules and donkeys as small. Under normal conditions caravans could travel for 12 hours a day.

The renowned Prussian field-marshal Helmuth von Moltke, who travelled through Anatolia as a young officer, observed how a caravan was organised and the way in which it travelled: “In a caravan of 600 camels and 400 mules, the camels are linked by ropes in groups of ten or twenty and walk in line. Their owners ride in front of them on small donkeys or horses, while their servants walk. Camels that have no donkey to lead them will not move. When the caravan reaches the place where it is to stay the night, the leader of the caravan rushes to the front and points out the halting place. The camels are unloaded and the bales are arranged in a rectangle, inside which each traveller prepares his own bed. Meanwhile the camels and mules are untied and driven out to graze, while the horses are fettered. When darkness falls the camels are rounded up and tethered in line within the enclosure.”<sup>40</sup>

Even in the late 1830s, when Izmir no longer played an important role in trade along the Silk Road, Robert Walsh observed that 800 camels crossed the bridge into the city every day.<sup>41</sup> William Knight, who lived in Izmir for many years, summarised what such a sight meant for Westerners: “Let the stranger station himself near the *cafenehs* of the Caravan-bridge, over which pass, day after day, hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of camels, laden with the imports from the west, and the rarities and luxuries of the east; and, as they halt before the collectors of municipal tolls and customs, and the inspectors of firmans and *teskerehs* here stationed, let him study the picturesque groups they compose, and his gratification will be

<sup>39</sup> Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *18. Yüzyılda İzmir’de Ticaret (1700-1820)*, trans. Çiğdem Diken, İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2006, p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke’nin Türkiye Mektupları*, trans. Hayrullah Örs, 2nd edn, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1995, p. 214.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Walsh and Thomas Allom, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor*, vol. II, London: Peter Jackson, late Fisher, son, & Company, 1839, p. 8.

6 A camel in Izmir (1850s)  
René Gillotin



ineffably intense.”<sup>42</sup> In a newspaper article P. Granal wrote that such a sight presented a subject fit for artists: “Sometimes we heard bells giving warning of the arrival of the next caravan after it had been delayed to allow the crowd to disperse; and shortly afterwards a train of camels laden with goods of all kinds would pass by, one after the other. After crossing the bridge, the drivers would halt the camels. At a signal the camels would sink down on their knees to permit their loads to be untied. They would form a circle inside which the bales were laid. The camel-drivers would go to fill their skins with fresh water and give food and drink to the poor animals, which groaned with delight. Then the men would take their own food and afterwards, before sleeping, light resin torches on all sides. Some kept watch at night, while the rest would sleep on the bales inside the circle. There is nothing more picturesque than the Caravan Bridge lit up in this way; the lights swaying in the wind, floating in the water of the river, on the trees and on the avenues of dark cypress trees. Even without mentioning the motionless long-headed camels seated in a ring, the thick-set Tatar camel-drivers sleeping in the centre of the ring, and

<sup>42</sup> William Knight, *Oriental Outlines, Or a Rambler’s Recollections of a Tour in Turkey, Greece & Tuscany in 1838*, London, 1839, p. 304.



7 A street in Izmir (1850s)  
René Gillotin

the night watchman with one hand on his pistol and the other on his sabre, it was a scene fit for the greatest painters.”<sup>43</sup>

For those who, apart from drawings in the pages of books, were seeing these animals for the first time, the camel was almost a mythical creature. Their height, their swaying gait as they

<sup>43</sup> P. Granal, “Variétés. Smyrne. Le Pont des Caravanes. – Natchio.”, *Le Temps*, 30 Septembre 1837.

followed a donkey, their limpid eyes, the incredible weight of the loads they carried, their tirelessness, their frugality, and the way they sank to the ground at a command from the camel-driver, were enchanting sights for those watching at the Caravan Bridge. A lady plucked up courage to touch the camels and hurried to write these lines: ‘I saw more than a hundred untethered camels with my own eyes and touched them with my own hand; they were alive and not stuffed.’<sup>44</sup>

The advance of railway lines along the valleys of Western Anatolia changed such scenes. This new form of transport promised producers and merchants more efficient and cheaper carriage for their goods. Although the camel-drivers endeavoured to compete with the railway, they inevitably lost the struggle. In the end they had to be content with carrying goods from their places of production to the nearest train stations. In Izmir camel transportation became largely restricted to carrying goods between Kemer Station and the city’s commercial district. The effect of this on the Caravan Bridge, as will be explained below, was that the bridge stopped being a halting place for caravans and became merely a means of crossing the river for people entering the city.

Nevertheless, the famous composer Edward Elgar, who arrived in Izmir in 1900, wrote in his diary, “This was my first touch with Asia and I was quite overcome – the endless camels made the scene more real than Stamboul – the extraordinary colour and movement, light and shade were intoxicating”.<sup>45</sup> In 1914 one writer noted that in Izmir “those who seek speed in trade use the railway, while those who want a cheaper, easier way prefer camels.” But the same writer noted that the number of camels, mostly in Aydın, Izmir and Saruhan, had dropped significantly from its former level of twenty-five thousand.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Olympe Audouard, *L'Orient et Ses Peuplades*, Paris: E. Dentu, Libraire de la Societe des Gens de Letters, 1867, p. 319.

<sup>45</sup> Emre Aracı, *Elgar Türkiye’de, İngiliz Bestecinin İstanbul ve İzmir Günleri*, Istanbul: Pera Müzesi, 2004, p. 83.

<sup>46</sup> Hüseyin Rifat, *İzmir 1914. Aydın Vilayeti 1330 Sene-i Maliyesi Ticaret Rehberi*, ed. Erkan Serçe, Akademi Kitabevi, 1997, pp. 24-25.





8 *Meddah (Story Teller)*  
Amadeo Preziosi

### “Izmir’s theatre”

In his 1806 travel notes, Robert Semple described the Caravan Bridge at some length: “The relators of stories are the actors of the Turks, and coffee-houses are their theatres. Caravan Bridge is the theatre of Smyrna.”<sup>47</sup> It was not just the story-teller that he came across on Caravan Bridge and who enlivened his stories with mimicry that inspired Semple to make this comparison. Even though he did not agree with its ideology, Semple had lived through the American Revolution and his ideas had been shaped by the humanistic attitudes of the Enlightenment. At Caravan Bridge he thought he was witnessing how Izmir’s population of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds displayed a shared humanity that transcended these differences: “Turks, Greeks, Jews, Armenians, and Franks, unroll their mats, fold their legs under them, like the camel, and give themselves up to the reveries of coffee and tobacco.”

In later years travellers who arrived in Izmir drew attention to this shared way of life and recreation that they saw in the vicinity of Caravan Bridge. Ethnic and religious communities, which in the city inhabited separate neighbourhoods, here came together, smoking pipes, drinking coffee and sherbet, and listening to the same music. It even appeared that Muslims did not object to *rakı* and other alcoholic drinks being sold openly. Owing to the different holidays of the various religious communities, the numbers of a particular community that gathered here would have varied. Charles Addison, who happened to visit the Caravan Bridge on a Greek festival, may have seen no Turkish women, but he observed Greeks, Turks and Europeans there.<sup>48</sup> Another traveller wrote, “There is no other place which affords so favourable an opportunity for viewing, in one imposing *coup d’oeil*, all the various costumes and characters of Smyrna.”<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Robert Semple, *Observations on a journey through Spain and Italy to Naples; and thence to Smyrna and Constantinople*, vol. II, London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1807, pp. 203-206.

<sup>48</sup> Charles G. Addison, *Damascus and Palmyra: a journey to the East, with a sketch of the state and prospects of Syria under Ibrahim pasha*, vol. I, London: R. Bentley, 1838, p. 146.

<sup>49</sup> Henry A. V. Post, *A Visit to Greece and Constantinople, in the Year 1827-8*, New York: Sleight & Robinson, Printers, 1830, p. 285.



9 *A cemetery in Izmir (1858)*  
David Hall McKewan



10 Sultan Abdülaziz  
Photograph: Abdullah Kardeşler

### “City of the dead”

The Turkish Cemetery was one of the most important elements that completed the picturesque scene at Caravan Bridge. Right after crossing the bridge in the Tepecik direction, the cemetery stretched over a large area on either side of the road. With its silence and simplicity, its tombstones with finials in the form of carved turbans, its closely planted cypress trees and Muslim Turkish women mourning their dead beside the graves, this place attracted the attention of foreign travellers. Westerners never failed to be excited by “these icons of loneliness peculiar to the East”.<sup>50</sup> James Emerson found the melancholy sadness and repose of Muslim gravestones with the groves of cypresses, each at the head of its marble-turbaned tomb, much more affecting than the gaudy monuments and frippery decorations of Pere la Chaise, or the “storied urn and animated bust” of Westminster and Santa Croce: “It is in these spots that one feels truly in the East, where all around reigns the stillness of death.”<sup>51</sup>

The simplicity of the tombstones, in contrast to those of Europe, enhanced their sentimental attraction and aroused awareness of mortality in the living. “Roughly sculpted turbans indicate the narrow space where wealth, beauty, youth, grandeur are swallowed up, and with them, alas! all the noble hopes of life.”<sup>52</sup>

### Sultan Abdülaziz and Aziziye Garden

The most important change to take place in the environs of Caravan Bridge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a new park established to commemorate Sultan Abdülaziz’s stay in Izmir upon his return from his journey to Egypt. On the morning of 3 April 1863, Sultan Abdülaziz, accompanied by his sons, ministers, military and civilian bureaucrats and other members of his retinue, set out for Egypt, where he would stay for a month. The sultan’s eldest son Yusuf İzzeddin, recently

<sup>50</sup> Reinhold Schiffer, “Avrupalıların XIX. Yüzyıl Başlarındaki İzmir’le İlgili Görüşleri”, trans. Çiğdem İpek, *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1/ 2 (1992), p. 356.

<sup>51</sup> James Emerson, *Letters from the Aegean*, New York: J. & J. Harper, 1829, p. 80.

<sup>52</sup> Ida Saint-Elme, *La contemporaine en Egypte, pour faire suite aux Souvenirs d’une femme: sur les principaux personnages de la République, du Consulat, de l’Empire et de la Restauration*, vol. II, Paris: Ladvocat Libraire, 1831, p. 248.

appointed commander-in-chief Keçecizâde Fuat Paşa, High Admiral Mehmed Paşa, chief royal physician Marko Paşa, aides, secretaries, imams and other staff members sailed on the flag ship *Feyz-i Cihat*. The other royal princes, Murad, Abdülhamid and Mehmed Reşad, each of whom was destined to accede to the Ottoman throne, sailed on the frigate *Mecidiye*. Other ships in the fleet were the frigate *Taif* and the corvette *İzmir*, which carried high ranking officers and civil servants; the steamships *Sinop*, *Beyrut*, *Kars* and *Gemlik*, carrying horses, carriages and lower ranking members of staff, and the postal ship *Peyk-i Şeref*. The fleet arrived in Alexandria harbour on the morning of 7 April. Here Sultan Abdülaziz was welcomed by the governor of Egypt İsmail Paşa and afterwards travelled with his retinue to Cairo. After a week of visiting factories, museums and the pyramids, engaging in official talks and attending receptions, banquets and entertainments, the convoy set sail on 15 April from Alexandria for the voyage home and arrived in Izmir on 21 April. Sultan Abdülaziz and his retinue stayed in the city for four days, during which they travelled to Ephesus by train and visited Bornova and Buca.

Louis Gardey kept a detailed record of the sultan’s journey and noted that during his stay in Izmir he took a close interest in Izmir’s problems and made separate donations to each of the different religious communities in the city.<sup>53</sup> He also gave 345,000 piasters to the governor of Aydın, Ahmed Paşa, for improvements to public buildings, infrastructure and open areas, including the Bornova road and the environs of the Caravan Bridge. During his stay in Izmir Abdülaziz must have seen the Caravan Bridge at least twice; the first being a brief glimpse from the train window when travelling to Ayasuluk (Ephesus). Gardey wrote, “The magnificent gardens display to us their golden apples and spread their scents. At Caravan Bridge the picturesque views commence”.<sup>54</sup> The second occasion was during the journey to Buca: “From the mosque, the Sultan goes through the Turkish and Armenian neighbourhoods and over the Caravan Bridge, which is a place worthy of crowning our pleasures

“At Caravan Bridge  
the picturesque views  
commence”

<sup>53</sup> L. Gardey, *Voyage du Sultan Abd-ul-Aziz Stamboul au Caire*, E. Dentu Palais-Royal, Paris, 1865, 250.

<sup>54</sup> Gardey, s. 221.

under the beautiful sky of Ionia. Judge how delightful this place must be from its name Grand Paradise.”<sup>55</sup>

Sultan Abdülaziz departed from Izmir on 25 April for the return journey to Istanbul. Two months later, in June 1863, the Izmir Grand Assembly convened to discuss improvements to be made in the vicinity of the Caravan Bridge. The assembly noted that the area at one end of the bridge—the Arch Bridge as it was known in Turkish—had traditionally been used by local people as an excursion place and park, and the area at the other end for the animals of travellers to rest, but that the former had become unkempt and dilapidated; and decided that since there was no other excursion spot for the people of Izmir to visit, thirty to forty thousand piasters of the funds provided by the sultan should be spent on improvements to this area, which should henceforth be named after him. It was decided that a jetty should be constructed on piles along the river bank with a small bridge across the river; seating built at various points in the open space for people to sit and rest, and a monument erected in the centre in commemoration of the sultan’s visit to Izmir.<sup>56</sup>

The decision to redesign the environs of the Arch Bridge brought to light a past transaction concerning the land here. One of Izmir’s leading merchants, Kapanizâde Hacı İbrahim Efendi, claimed that the areas in question had been leased to him. In his petition to the city council, İbrahim Efendi claimed that in 1844, when Mehmed Paşa was serving as Izmir’s tax officer, both areas had been leased to him for the annual sum of 900 aspers and that this gave him the right to build on the land. Kapanizâde Hacı İbrahim Efendi was in possession of two documents bearing the seal of Mehmed Paşa that proved his claim,<sup>57</sup> but when he applied to the authorities to have these deeds renewed,<sup>58</sup> his request was turned down. Izmir City Council based their rejection of his claim on Article 94 of the Land Act, which ruled that open spaces in villages or towns or outside them that were allocated to the local community for purposes such

<sup>55</sup> Gardey, s. 252.

<sup>56</sup> (BOA) İ.MVL. 22170. Decision of the Izmir Grand Council dated 17 Muharrem 1280 [3 July 1863].

<sup>57</sup> (BOA) A) MKT.UM. 322/6.

<sup>58</sup> (BOA) A) MKT.NZD. 257/73.

as keeping carts or herding animals, counted as public roads and could not be bought or sold, built on or leased to any private individual; and that if anyone made use of such land the local community could prohibit them.<sup>59</sup>

Soon after the Supreme Council approved Izmir’s Grand Council’s plan to spend some of the sultan’s gift on improvement of the area around Arch Bridge,<sup>60</sup> an order was issued.<sup>61</sup> The final project did not cover an area as large as the Grand Council had proposed; nevertheless, the excursion place at Arch Bridge was redesigned and named Aziziye Park, after Sultan Abdülaziz. The outline of Aziziye Park is marked on Izmir plans of 1876. A guidebook published for foreign travellers in 1878 recommends that its readers visit the Caravan Bridge and adds: “On nearing Caravan Bridge there is on the left the Azizieh public garden, which has pleasant scenes on the bank of the Meles. In it are some antiquities found in the river.”<sup>62</sup> On the same site today is a small park called Aziziye Mülkiyeliler that is largely concreted over.

In the late Ottoman period, apart from replacing stones at the base of the bridge, few changes were made in its vicinity. As will be shown below, from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the city expanded eastwards and new neighbourhoods developed between Basmahane and Caravan Bridge, and even beyond it in towards Tepecik. Today Caravan Bridge is no longer at the entrance to the city but situated in a park within the city. But first we must look at the impact on Caravan Bridge of the Izmir-Aydın Railway, which was one of the major causes of the city’s expansion.

### The Izmir-Aydın Railway and the Caravan Bridge

Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Izmir remained the Ottoman Empire’s foremost international trading port after Istanbul. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century radical changes in the global economic system meant that Izmir stopped

<sup>59</sup> *Düstûr*, Birinci tertip, Istanbul 1289, I, p. 277

<sup>60</sup> (BOA) MVL. 651/8.

<sup>61</sup> (BOA) İ.MVL. 22170. Order dated 21 Safer 1280 [7 August 1863].

<sup>62</sup> *Handbook for Travellers in Turkey in Asia: Including Constantinople*, London: John Murray, 1878, p. 262.

*“The bridge that used  
to be crossed by the long  
caravans of camels has been  
abandoned for its neighbour  
on the railway.”*

being part of the long-distance caravan trade route, becoming instead a centre for marketing raw materials and agricultural products from its own hinterland. The city was the heart of an economic region stretching from the Gulf of Edremit to Isparta, and agricultural products such as cotton, madder, grapes, figs, olives and acorns, and cottage industry products such as kilim rugs and carpets were transported by caravan to be sold on the Izmir market. For the caravans that set out from the places of production, Caravan Bridge continued to be their point of arrival in the city. However, these caravans were no longer measured in thousands of camels; instead the largest consisted of 200 camels and other pack animals. These caravans travelled to Izmir mainly between August and December, and there the goods they carried were processed and exported. As we will see below, these caravans were an inherent part of the picturesque scenery at the Caravan Bridge.

From the 1840s onwards foreign capital held a rapidly increasing share of commerce in Western Anatolia and created financial instruments that would ensure fast investment growth. The first important step in this direction was the Izmir-Aydın railway project, which was to speed up the transportation of produce from the fertile Küçük Menderes basin to Izmir. In 1855 Robert Wilkin, an English merchant engaged in trade in Izmir, and his four partners submitted a proposal to build a railway between Izmir and Aydın to the Ottoman government and asking to be granted a concession. With the support of their ambassador the desired concession was granted in September 1856 and then purchased from these merchants by a British consortium, which established a company called the Smyrna-Aidin Ottoman Railway and set to work.<sup>63</sup>

The railway was to be built in three stages, the first of which was a 70 kilometre stretch as far as the Aydın Mountains. The starting point of the railway in Izmir was an area of flat land nearly one kilometre from Caravan Bridge. The first foundation stone of the Izmir-Aydın Railway was laid on 22 September 1857 by Mustafa Paşa, governor of Izmir, and Blunt, the British consul in Izmir, at an elaborate ceremony which was reported in *The Illustrated London News*, accompanied by a detailed drawing.<sup>64</sup> The ceremony marked the first step in a

<sup>63</sup> Orhan Kurmuş, *Emperyalizmin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, Ankara, 1982, p. 38.

<sup>64</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, XXXI/885 (31 October 1857), pp. 436-437.



process that was to change the future of caravans, camel-drivers and Caravan Bridge. A year later the main railway terminal was built at Punta (Alsancak). The first station on the route was called Kemer and built near Caravan Bridge. However, even though Punta became the main terminal the road over Caravan Bridge continued to be the main eastern entrance to the city for quite some time. Albert Renouard was one of those who realised the devastating impact of the railway on Caravan Bridge and its environs: “Unfortunately civilisation, there as elsewhere, has come to destroy poetry: two iron bridges, over one of

11 Construction of the Smyrna-Aidin Railway (1860)  
David Hall McKewan

which passes the Ephesus railway, span the Meles. The bridge that used to be crossed by the long caravans of camels has been abandoned for its neighbour on the railway... The locomotive with its long line of wagons twisting behind it like a snake, arouses a strange sensation as it whistles past amidst a cloud of smoke, alongside heavily laden camels led by figures in biblical costumes. This is the beginning of the invasion of Asia by Europe, of the absorption of the world by its smallest yet most voracious part.”<sup>65</sup>

The coming of the railway led to a sharp fall in the number of caravans arriving in İzmir. Although the caravan drivers endeavoured to resist this development, in the end they were obliged to make do with providing transport between production areas and the train stations. Moreover, the last stop for those who still preferred to use camels to carry their goods to İzmir was not Caravan Bridge but the warehouses built around Kemer Station. No longer was Caravan Bridge a place where weary camels rested after their long journey to İzmir. Instead, it was just a point on the road used by trains of just three to five camels carrying goods from the warehouses at Kemer Station to the commercial district of İzmir. With the construction of the esplanade and from the 1880s onwards the direct rail link between Punta and the commercial heart of the city, caravan traffic through the area around the bridge declined even further.

### New neighbourhoods

Another important development that determined the fate of Caravan Bridge and its environs was the expansion of İzmir’s urban area. Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century İzmir had been a dense and compact settlement that extended as far as Bella Vista (today Gündoğdu) to the north, the Jewish Cemetery (Bahribaba) to the south, and from the foot of Kadifekale Castle to Basmahane in the east; there tapering as far as Bella Vista. İzmir’s thriving economy attracted a considerable migrant population from both inland Anatolia and the Aegean islands. The newcomers settled near neighbourhoods belonging to members of the same religious communities, resulting in their expansion; well-off Greeks settled near Punta, while middle and low income groups established new

<sup>65</sup> Albert Renouard, *Chez les Turcs en 1881*, Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1881, pp. 303-304.

neighbourhoods on the east side of the city. The first settlement near Caravan Bridge was Aya Vukla, on a narrow strip of land between Kemer Street, which stretched from Basmahane to the bridge, and the Muslim neighbourhoods. This was followed by the Aya Konstantin neighbourhood, which stretched from the Muslim cemeteries beyond Caravan Bridge to the vicinity of Kemer Station. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this neighbourhood quickly became notorious for its brothels on and around Sakızlılar Street and for its high crime rate.

### Changing leisure pursuits

The railway and urban growth cannot fully explain why Caravan Bridge gradually lost its role as an excursion place. Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were limited opportunities for recreation and leisure in communal spaces. These consisted of coffee houses and taverns on back streets in residential neighbourhoods and the commercial district, a few private clubs and a waterfront promenade known as the Marina.

From the 1840s onwards, İzmir’s flourishing economy quickly brought about a significant change in its demographics, and by the 1860s the number of foreign residents in İzmir had risen to over fifteen thousand. In addition, the number of Greeks from mainland Greece and the Aegean islands was around forty thousand. Reforms introduced by the Tanzimat Edict and other new laws that followed enabled non-Muslims to move about more freely, while at the same time new forms of entertainment began to take root. Among the interesting venues created during this period were European-style cafés that sprang up along the shore and offered new types of entertainment. These cafés were built

12 İzmir’s esplanade (1910s)

13 Kivoto Café (left), Kaptan Paolo Café (far right)  
*Le Monde Illustré* (1873)



on wooden piles driven into the sea near the shore. They served all kinds of drinks, including champagne and beer, and on hot summer nights the cool sea breeze entered through their open windows, while the splashing of the waves could be heard through gaps in the floor boards. Theatre plays, concerts and other shows were held in these cafés at certain periods and on particular days, so they were often referred to as *café-chantent* or *café-concert*.

The most famous waterfront cafés in Izmir were the Captain Paolo, Kivoto (Arche) and Belle Vue. Captain Paolo's situation and large size made it a must-see destination for visitors to Izmir. This café was situated in the area known as Marina or the English Quay, while Kivoto stood between the Greek and German consulates a short way past Captain Paolo. Paolo was largely frequented by Levantines and Kivoto by Ottoman Greeks. Further on was the Belle Vue, which was named after the neighbourhood where it was situated, which marked the boundary of the city at the time. This café was the best place to watch the sunset. Other cafés included the Alcazar, the Poseidon, the Levantino and the Papasilipo. However, unlike these cafés, the Captain Paolo, Kivoto and Belle Vue were situated not on the shore but actually over the sea.

In 1867 another event took place that changed Izmir radically. The first concession was granted for the construction of a quay that was to extend for 4800 metres between Punta and Sarı Kışla in Konak.

By 1876 this quay was almost completed except for the last 100 metres, and buildings began to spring up along the First and Second Esplanades, including offices, hotels, cafés, taverns, beer houses and new entertainment venues where plays and circuses performances could be held. In the neighbourhoods of Karşıyaka, Karataş, Göztepe and Güzelyalı, which had originally been summer resorts, similar entertainment venues were soon established, as they became more easily accessible with the advent of trams and ferry services across the gulf. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century cinemas and beer gardens were added to these. The picturesque coffee houses along the banks of the Meles at Caravan Bridge were unable to hold their ground against these new forms of entertainment.

John Murray published his first guidebook for travellers to the Levant in 1840, and many new editions of the guide followed. Until

*“the name ‘Caravan Bridge’  
was forgotten and it was known  
only as Arch Bridge”*

the 1895 edition, three of the five excursions in the vicinity of İzmir recommended in these guidebooks included Caravan Bridge,<sup>66</sup> but from then on Caravan Bridge was no longer mentioned as a destination, but merely as a landmark visitors passed on their way to other destinations.<sup>67</sup> Photographs taken by the Genevan photographer Edmond Boissonnas in 1919 bear witness to the fact that Caravan Bridge and its environs had lost much of their former attraction.<sup>68</sup>

As if signalling the loss of Izmir's multicultural character, after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the name “Caravan Bridge” was forgotten and it was known only as Arch Bridge. Although evidence is scant, it is reasonable to assume that the way of life in the area had undergone radical changes. Arch Bridge was now entirely surrounded by commercial buildings, and in the 1950s, when it became impossible to cope with the increased traffic on the Tepecik road, the bridge was widened to enable all kinds of vehicles to cross easily. A booklet about the municipal works of the period boasts that “once a single line of vehicles had difficulty crossing the bridge, but now three lines of vehicles of all types can comfortably cross side by side.”<sup>69</sup> In 1958 the Municipal Council decided that block number 1604, which included Arch Bridge and Aziziye Park, should be transformed into a commercial district, “while preserving the existing facilities as far as possible.”<sup>70</sup> Today a narrow green area parallel to the river known as Aziziye Mülkiyeliler Park is all that remains of the once extensive public park here.

<sup>66</sup> *Handbook for Travellers in the Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Constantinople: Being a Guide to the Principal Routes in Those Countries, Including a Description of Malta, with Maxims and Hints for Travellers in the East*, London: J. Murray, 1840, p. 264.

<sup>67</sup> *Handbook for Travellers in Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, Persia, etc.*, Ed. Charles Wilson London: J. Murray, p. 79.

<sup>68</sup> Edmond Boissonnas, *Smyrne. L'Image de la Grece*, Geneve: Editons d'Art Boissonnas, 1919.

<sup>69</sup> *Beyaz Kitap*, İzmir: İzmir Belediyesi, 1954.

<sup>70</sup> [APİKAM], *İBMT*, Extraordinary Meeting no. 3 held on 28 August 1958, p. 26.