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## WRITING THE ORIENT: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTTOMAN SOCIETY IN THE TRAVEL OF EDUARD SACHAU (1845–1930)

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### ABSTRACT

*In the nineteenth century, the writings of European travellers became a textual vehicle by which the West sought to understand the Orient. Based on first-hand but highly subjective data, they contain comparisons between the Orient and the Occident which distinguish the two regions from one another. Thus, they played an important role in shaping the Western perception of the Orient. This article focuses on the German Orientalist-philologist Eduard Sachau (1845–1930), who held a chair at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Berlin and also served as the director of the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen (Institute of Oriental Languages). Sachau's journey to the East began in 1879 and lasted about six months. His travel notes were published (in 1883), under the title *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (Travel in Syria and Mesopotamia). In the nineteenth century, not only the British and French but also the German travellers had an important role in shaping the Western perception of the Orient. Following Edward Said's groundbreaking work *Orientalism* (1979) this study will argue that Sachau's narratives produce certain stereotypes. It will be made the case through analyses of the forms of expression, perceptions and cultural patterns that Sachau chose in order to construct an orientalist discourse, when he described different ethnicities, religions and sects.*

*Keywords: Travel, Orientalism, Eduard Sachau, Orient, West, Ottoman*

## SCRIVERE SULL'ORIENTE: LA RAPPRESENTAZIONE DELLA SOCIETÀ OTTOMANA NEL VIAGGIO DI EDUARD SACHAU (1845–1930)

### SINTESI

*Nell'Ottocento, gli scritti dei viaggiatori europei divennero veicoli testuali attraverso i quali l'Occidente cercava di intendere l'Oriente. Basati su informazioni di prima mano, sebbene molto soggettivi, mettevano a confronto l'Oriente e l'Occidente, evidenziandone le distinzioni. In questo modo influenzavano fortemente l'idea che veniva a formarsi tra gli occidentali dell'Oriente. L'articolo s'incentra sull'orientista e filologo tedesco Eduard Sachau (1845–1930), professore all'Università Federico Guglielmo a Berlino (oggi Università Humboldt) e direttore dell'Istituto di*

*Studi Orientali. Nel 1879 Sachau intraprese un viaggio di circa sei mesi in Oriente, pubblicandone poi nel 1883 gli appunti in un libro intitolato Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien (Viaggio in Siria e Mesopotamia). Nell'Ottocento non solo viaggiatori inglesi e francesi, ma anche quelli tedeschi influenzarono in modo significativo la percezione occidentale dell'Oriente. Rifacendosi all'opera pionieristica di Edward Said Orientalismo (1979), nel presente studio si sostiene che le narrazioni di Sachau creino certi stereotipi, e si propone di dimostrarlo attraverso un'analisi delle forme di espressione, percezioni e modelli culturali scelti da Sachau per costruire un discorso orientalistico nelle sue descrizioni di diverse etnie, religioni e sette.*

*Parole chiave: viaggio, orientalistica, Eduard Sachau, Oriente, Occidente, ottomano*

## INTRODUCTION

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* has played a significant role in understanding the West's perception of the Orient, by combining detailed textual interpretation with discourse analysis. In his book, Said argues that Western civilization created the Orient as 'the Other', by transforming it into a new entity, "with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles". Furthermore, he emphasizes that the Occident constructed the Orient through a process of imagination that was informed by cultural parameters (Said, 1979, 2). "The Orient was seen as an exotic, erotic, a frightening place and also as an inferior, unprogressive place, forever trapped in time simultaneously attractive and repulsive" (Laisram, 2006, 1). These stereotypes found their expression in literature, art, philosophical discourse and politics but crucially also in travel writing. In this context, Said believes that the travels by Marco Polo, Mandeville and Pietro Della Valle and many Crusaders and Christian pilgrims in the Middle Ages, constitutes an important vehicle for understanding, defining, experiencing and recreating the Orient and considers the travel literature with critical viewpoint. Travel writing plays a crucial role in his theoretical construction of Orientalism (Said, 1979, 58).

As Said points out that travel writing is a lens "through which the Orient is experienced and shapes the language, perception and form of the encounter between East and West" (Said, 1979, 58) that are historically, geographically and culturally separate from each other. This also turns into a relationship with continuity "usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (Pratt, 1992, 6). Said considers the production of texts relating to travels in the nineteenth century as a part of the West's own cultural hegemony. These texts became the primary textual vehicle for constructing the Orient as the 'other' and disseminating it. Based on highly subjective data, they contain precise comparisons between Orient and Occident, which highlight the cultural differences between the two spheres. In other words, the travel narratives became a part of the orientalist discourse (Said, 1979). The impressions of the travellers, which involve contacts, contrasts, similarities and conflicts with a new world, are converted into notes during the journey and shortly after and these notes are transferred to different types of texts, which serve literary or scientific purposes (Sharp, 2002, 155). This is quite a complex process. When a traveller converts his notes into a book, he adds inherently something from his own soul to the travel writing. The greater the distance between the experience and the writing of the journey, the more space fictionality and subjectivity will gain. This time interval permits the traveller to fill up the gaps according to his own imagination, by using and creating certain stereotypical assumptions. In this sense, travel means the recreation of the impressions and experiences (Soukah, 2016, 36). The stereotype constitutes a certain generalization that is highly resistant to change, not open to criticism and scrutiny and that characterizes an object, a person or group by certain cultural patterns and values based on lacking information about culture and people (Bausinger, 1998, 160).



The German travellers' narratives play an important role in the theoretical construction of how the Germans imagined the Orient. By analyzing literal, scholarly, political and travel texts written in the nineteenth century in Germany, Polaschegg's work has an important place in researching and interpreting the perception of the Orient (Polaschegg, 2005). Soukah argues in his dissertation that the Germans' attitudes to the Orient were not less colonial, imperialist and hegemonic than the Anglo-French tradition (2016). In the last decades the study of encounters between East and West from the Middle Ages to the present day has been shaped by cultural theories in the studies of the German literature. Brenner's comprehensive work (1990) offers a rich overview of the most important theories concerning the German travel writing. In sum, one can say that in the nineteenth century, the German travellers from different professions with different intentions and methods produced certain stereotypes such as brutality, despotism, pollution, laziness about the Orient, Islam and the Ottoman people. These stereotypes had an impact on literature art and even on daily life in German speaking world. One of these travellers was Eduard Sachau (1845–1930). As an orientalist-philologist, Sachau who was a very important figure of German academic orientalism (Orientalistik) visited the Ottoman Empire between 1879 and 1897 and subsequently produced a book called *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*. This work can be considered from two angles: First, his travel was a process of the production of orientalist knowledge, which has been used by various disciplines of the social sciences as an important resource for understanding Ottoman societies, geography, history and politics. Second, in a quite idiosyncratic and subjective way, it represented an oriental other. The first aspect most recently has been the focus of an article by the author (Avci, 2020). This study claims that Sachau's narratives, although his journey was a scientific expedition, produced certain stereotypes, by describing the Orient as the 'other' through different ethnicities, religions and sects. It illustrates which perceptions, forms of expression and cultural patterns Sachau used to build a discourse about the Orient and Ottoman society. This study will proceed in three steps: first, it will be discussed the development of travel literature in the nineteenth century and the position of the Germans in the travel writing in this era. Second, it will be given a brief biography of Sachau. And third, it will be examined how and through which cultural patterns, values and beliefs Sachau represented the orient as a space and its people.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAVEL LITERATURE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the Victorian Era (1837–1931), Great Britain revolutionized travel technology with its inventions. In this age, the new railway transport became very sophisticated and trains carried people on the island and goods across boundaries at a higher speed than ever before in the history of the transportation. Therefore, the railroad transport can be considered as the symbol of the modern travel (Nesvet, 2017,

221). The rapid development of the transportation industry in the Europe enabled travellers to make safer and more comfortable journeys and provided a link with the colonies. As a result of this progress, the cultural transfer was intensified between West and East (Pordzik, 2005, 53–54; Brenner, 1990, 549–50). The development and institutionalization of colonialism gave the citizens of the colonial states a very free space to travel. It can be said that especially the journeys of the English citizens to the Orient are very remarkable. For British travellers the Orient had almost the same connotation as India and they perceived it as a British property. Therefore, the Orient-imagination of British travellers was in close parallel to the representation of their own political rule. In other words, their perceptions were dominated by the colonial-political discourse and atmosphere (Said, 1979, 169).

Despite doubts about their credibility and reliability, the travelogues constitute significant historical sources and contain quite rich and comprehensive material for anthropology, history, cultural studies and similar disciplines. Throughout history, people from different professions, such as merchants, geologists, missionaries, soldiers, adventurers, archaeologists and scientists, travelled to the Orient and then published their travel notes in different forms, representing the Orient in keeping with their cultural values. Travel notes or reports illustrate “heterogeneous textual genres” both in their structure and in their themes. As a kind of narrative, they can indicate even within the same travel book a structural difference (Soukah, 2016, 37).

#### EDUARD SACHAU (1845–1930) AND HIS TRAVEL TO THE ORIENT

In the early nineteenth century, Germans encountered the Orient as a mere text and the subject of literature, culture and academia. The discovery of the Orient by the German people and state was belated when compared to French and British, mediated through translations, poetries, novels and even operas. Direct contact began only in the later nineteenth century. The Orient was for the German travellers a backward, quite alien, eccentric place but also a place that must be known, mapped, explored, discovered again and imagined (Avci, 2018, 169). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the political rapprochement between the German and *Ottoman empires enabled the German travellers greater mobility* in their journeys through the Ottoman territory, and sometimes also the support of the German government. Thus, the Orient was transformed to a place, which could be touched, felt and stereotyped.

This resulted in a substantial corpus of travel literature on the Orient and on Africa, which was “inextricably intertwined with the creation and maintenance of European imperialism” and served to strengthen colonial rule (Iverson, 2003, 200). Furthermore, during this period many travel accounts were also written in order to produce the required knowledge that could provide the necessary infrastructure to consolidate the colonial order and could institutionalize formally the colonial authority. The financial and diplomatic support of several travels by official state institutions is an example of the relationship between travel and colonialism (Edwards & Graulund,

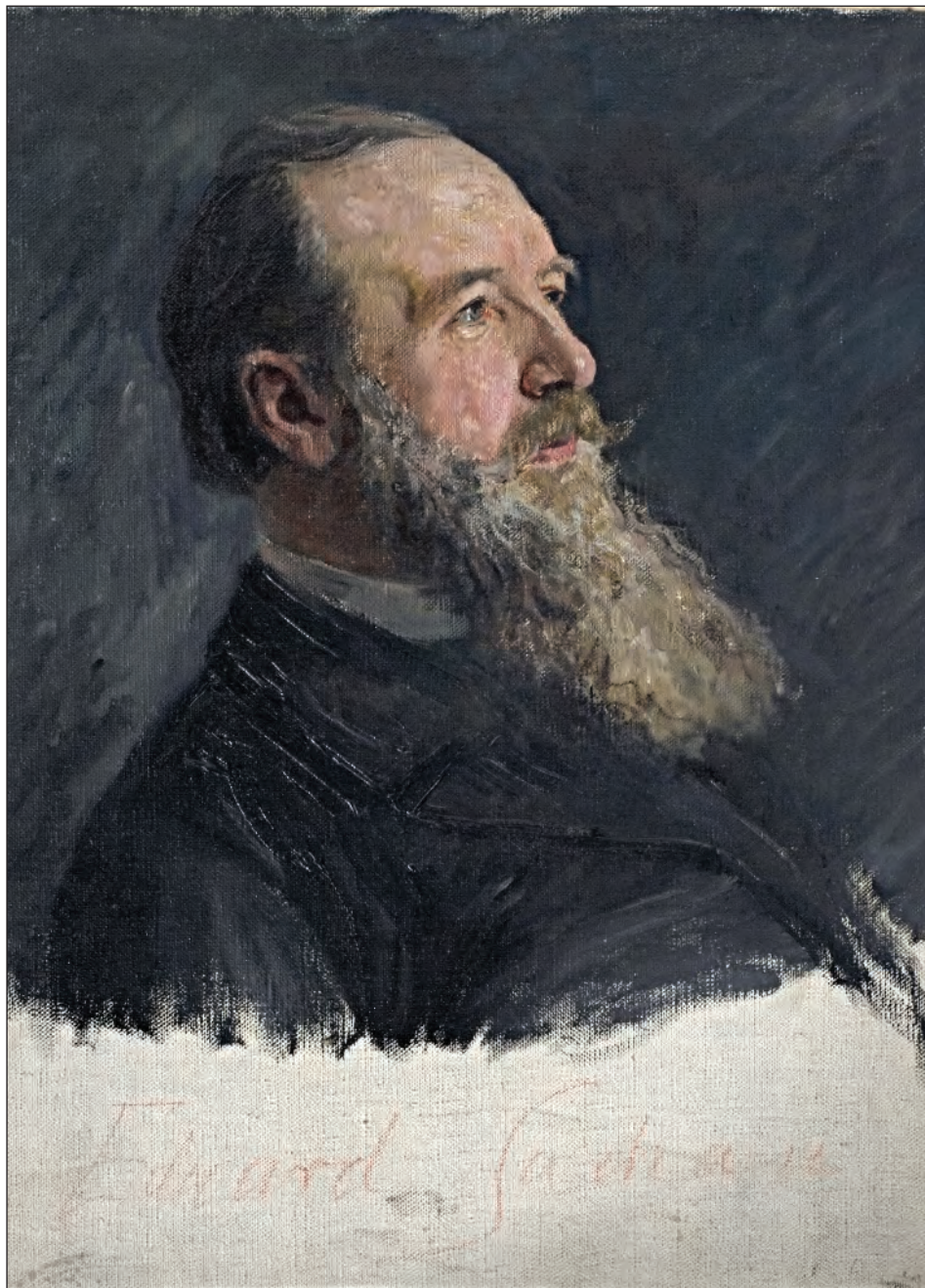


*Fig. 1: A map showing the route of Eduard Sachau in his travel, part I (Sachau, 1883, 478).*

2011, 1; Prass, 2019, 1). Sachau's travel cannot be associated directly with German colonialism. When he travelled to the Orient in 1879, Germany was still a young empire, which was founded in 1871 "with its capital in Berlin, dominated by ruling elites of the Kingdom of Prussia, and yet it still had no imperial, overseas presence". The German chancellor Otto von Bismarck who presented himself as "contemptuous of the German colonial dream" practiced a balance of power politics in Europe and only in 1884 allowed "the establishment of overseas German colonies" (Hodkinson, 2017, 264). As he also pointed out in his book, Sachau's journey was a scholarly research activity. Nevertheless, in his narratives one can clearly perceive a rivalry with the activities of the dominant French and English travellers and orientalists in the Ottoman Empire. This was also an important reason why his travel was supported by the German state institutions.

Born in 1845, Eduard Sachau was educated as an orientalist. He became a student of the Arabist Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer (1801–1888) in Kiel and Leipzig, considered the father of German orientalism (Becker, 1932, 458). However, he finally completed his doctorate on the Semitic languages under the supervision of the orientalist Richard Gosche (1824–1889) in Halle (Wokoëck, 2009, 291). He adopted Fleischer's text-critical method and began to work as a





*Fig. 2: A portrait of Eduard Sachau (Wikimedia Commons).*

professor of Semitic languages at the University of Vienna in 1869. Sachau was a member of the *Königlich-Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Royal Prussian Academy of Science) and since 1876 Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Berlin. In 1887, he became the director of the *Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* (Seminar of Oriental languages), which was founded for the future of the German colonial interest. He always stressed the practical relevance of teaching the oriental languages (Mangold, 2004, 165; Hanisch, 1992, XVIII; Marchand, 2009, 354–420) and worked in a variety of areas, including Semitic philology, Islamic jurisprudence and science, and Christian theology.

Sachau travelled to the Ottoman Empire in 1879, which was one of his journeys to the Middle East. He completed his travel in 1880 and published then in 1883 the travel accounts of this expedition, under the title *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (Travels in Syria and Mesopotamia). He began his expedition in Beirut and continued towards Damascus-Aleppo-Birecik-Urfa. From Urfa, he moved on and reached the city of Al-Raqqa and then to Deyr-i Zor and Mosul. After staying there, he entered the present territory of Turkey and continued his way to the direction of Midyat-Cizre-Mardin-Diyarbakır. Then he moved to Siverek-Birecik-Aleppo to Iskenderun via Hatay. He returned by ship from Iskenderun (Sachau, 1883, VII–X). During the travel, he collected several materials from different areas and produced orientalist knowledge. When he was back in Germany, he published then many philological and archaeological works that were based on his notes. Among them most important are the following: *Skizze des Fellichi-Dialekts von Mosul* (1895), *Über die Lage von Tigranokerta* (1881a), *Über die Poesie in der Volkssprache der Nestorianer* (1896), *Palmyrenische Inschriften* (1881b), *Eine dreisprachige Inschrift aus Zébed* (1881c), *Edessenische Inschriften* (1882).

## THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ORIENT IN HIS TRAVEL

As seen very often in travel writings, Sachau's travel was also a cultural encounter between East and West. On the one hand, he investigates the mystical aspects of the Orient through a complex set of stereotypes. On the other hand, he converts the Orient, as Said also states from something into something else (Said, 1979, 67), -geographical, topographic, anthropological, sociological, historical, sectarian, religious and tangible textual-. He builds a new geography, ignoring consciously the Arabic-Turkish equivalents of some region names. His preference for using pre-Islamic or pre-ottoman place names such as *Klein Asien*, *Mesopotamian*, *Armenien* (Sachau, 1883, 2) illustrate another expression of ownership by isolating the region from its existing Muslim-Ottoman inhabitants. In the 19th century, these similar expressions can often be seen in Europe, more specifically in German travel writing and historiography. He uses the term 'Ottoman Empire' when referring to the current ruling power as a political unity. However, neither





Fig. 3: A map showing the route of Eduard Sachau in his travel, part II (Sachau, 1883, 478).

in the eyes of Sachau nor other contemporary travellers from Europe these territories were culturally part of the Ottoman Empire.

In fact, the East was perceived as another place in the West and “judged it by a standard it never applied to itself” (Laisram, 2006, 1). While Sachau sometimes conveys, plainly, his impression as he sees it, sometimes he perceives it directly through certain cultural patterns such as laziness, pride, stubbornness and bigotry and, above all, degrading prejudices that are strongly Eurocentric that he takes over as a product of collective imagination, based on what he had seen and read before. One can say that for him, the East means a distant, imaginary geography outside of Europe, but also a historically and philologically quite close and a real world. Because, as an orientalist, he studied and taught for many years its languages, religions and cultures.

Sachau believes that it is not possible to carry out a planned itinerary in detail in the Orient. Because, according to him, the Orient *contains a mystery* that takes travellers “incidentally” out of the program (Sachau, 1883, 3). These can sometimes be a geography waiting to be discovered, untouched books, ancient settlements etc. During his travel, he touches the space, feels it and depicts the ‘other’ in their everyday life. As he often points out, the Orient is never a safe place for anyone because it is absolutely unpredictable what would happen to a person who wants to move from one city to another in the Orient. Having internalized this fear, he never dares to walk around without weapons, servants, and unarmed, such as other European travellers (Sachau, 1883, 20–211). According to him, a stranger, who is afraid of being robbed or attacked by local inhabitants often reaches out to his gun at nights. Thus, he shows that he would turn a weapon against the enemy lurking in front of him and that he wants to prove that he is not afraid to use it (Sachau, 1883, 120).

In the nineteenth or early twentieth century, the majority of the European travellers showed authoritarian behaviors when dealing with the peoples of the Orient during their journeys. This is even more the case with British travellers, as citizens of a colonial Empire, which occupied one-fifth of the whole world. It is not difficult to notice that Sachau brims with self-confidence: he sees himself as superior to the oriental people. He experiences a dilemma between fear and trust during the journey. Although he believes that there is almost no place safe and in the Orient one faces the danger of being attacked, he always moved quite comfortably. Because, being a European gave him confidence that he would not be so easily attacked, except by “Circassians and Kurds living on the Ottoman-Turkish border”. According to him, when there would be an attack, it would be done for the purpose of robbery (Sachau, 1883, 385, 437). He believes that there is a significant difference between the Bedouins and Kurds in the tendency to violence. The Kurds can rob travellers but never kill them. On the other hand, the Bedouins can burgle and kill a traveller (Sachau, 1883, 356).

The “unsafe” Ottoman country is not clean either. He observes the society, culture as a European by generalizing the geography and subconsciously compar-

ing it to where he comes from (Europe). The method by which he describes the city of Homs is a product of the stereotypes of the collective memory that he took over without question as quoted; "...the city is dirty, tortuous and stinky like any oriental city..." (Sachau, 1883, 62). When he arrives in a village called en-Nahla in today's Syria, the order, wealth, size and grandeur of the houses reminds him of Europe. While he enters the oriental market, "with its wild crowds, screams and clamor" (Sachau, 1883, 100), this feeling disappears almost completely and he finds himself again, like waking up from a dream, in the dirty, narrow, winding and uneven streets of the Orient. While Europe is depicted as peaceful, safe, moderate, beautiful and orderly place in his writing, the Orient appears as an inexhaustible source of problems, as the opposite of the western culture. One can see this antagonism in different parts of his narratives.

Sachau emphasizes that the peasants who guided him in accomplishing his research in Urfa bathed in the Belih Stream only once during the journey and based on this impressions, he describes them by generalizing as the dirty steppe people who "don't use water just for cleaning themselves". According to him, the drinking water is too valuable in this region to be wasted just for cleaning (Sachau, 1883, 213). As a Western traveller, he describes the Orient, by othering it ontologically and epistemologically as well as highly generalizing from a western standpoint. In order to define the superiority and perfection of European civilization in relation to the Orient, he emphasizes the backwardness, disorder and dirtiness of the Orient and compares it with Europe. Thereby, he actually seeks to identify himself as an European. As Thompson points out travel is to record an "encounter between self and the other and a "negotiation between similarity and difference" (Thompson, 2011, 10).

In order to keep the oriental servants under the control and discipline during the travel, Sachau threatens them to lower their salary because he believes that the most characteristic feature of the oriental people are "greed and covetous, no matter whether they live in city or village and in desert" (Sachau, 1883, 213). Furthermore, he claims that the people in the Orient have a tendency to choose always a way out of difficulties and to escape from responsibility. According to him, this character prevented them from acting practically and rendered them incapable of hard work and intellectual reasoning (Sachau, 1883, 299–300). In the nineteenth century, it became nearly a tradition in a wide range of writing genres (literature, politic, academic and art) in Europe to represent the Orient through certain stereotypes such as indolent, fatalist, despotic and uneducated. The travel narratives also played an important role in the emergence and spread of these negative imaginations.

As seen in Sachau's narratives, an orientalist-traveller perceives the "civilization he had studied before, with unshakable abstract maxims" (Said, 1979, 52). Sardar points out that "The traveller saw what he expected to see and reported what his audience at home were conditioned to expect" (Sardar, 1999, 24). That means, the encounter with the other has almost no significance in the

elimination of stereotyped powerful ethnic prejudices. In this context, it can be said that an orientalist-traveller chooses/searches the kinds of people who are suited to the stereotypes he has created before. Finally, two different kinds of orientalist-knowledge forms emerge from travel impressions. Said formulates this as follow:

*[...] the very power and scope of Orientalism produced not only a fair amount of exact positive knowledge about the Orient but also a kind of second-order knowledge-lurking in such places as the 'oriental' tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability-with a life of its own, what V. G. Kiernan has aptly called 'Europe's collective day-dream of the Orient' (Said, 1979, 52).*

In travel narratives, one can see “gender, racial identity, national identity, economic status and host of other interrelated markers of status and privilege” (Iverson, 2003, 201). Seen from this angle, travel is the process of knowledge production. During his travel, Sachau produced a wealth of knowledge in different fields, ranging from anthropology to politics, philology, religion and geography. As Said points out, amount of “exact positive knowledge about the Orient” (Said, 2016, 52). However, he uses this knowledge also as a way, as a vehicle to ‘otherise’ the people and observes the multinational Ottoman society very carefully in their daily lives, up to the most ordinary religious practices and beliefs and describes them by separating each other from their religion and sectarian. A concrete example of this method is his emphasis on the deep ‘hatred’ between the Ansarians (Al-Nuşayriyya Shiite minority sect) and “Muslims”:

*In Antaki [today Hatay], I met the elements of another nation that I first met in Rible in the Bekaa, the Arabic-speaking Ansarians, the inhabitants of the mountains between Orontes and the Eleuthero [...] The most cordial hatred exists between them and the Mohammedans. Since they are not allowed to enter the mosques they hold their worship in their own Sanctuary.*

*[In Antaki traf ich wieder ein Volkselement, das mir zuerst in Rible in der Bekaa begegnet war, die Arabisch redenden Ansarije, die Bewohner der Gebirge zwischen Orontes und dem Eleutheros [...] Zwischen ihnen und Mohammedanern besteht der cordialeste Hass; da man ihnen nicht gestattet die Moscheen zu betreten, halten sie ihren Gottesdienst in einem eigenen Gotthaus.] (Sachau, 1883, 463)*

As seen in this quotation, he builds a generalized narrative form from a small, insignificant incident in different parts of text. From his description of Ansarians and Muslim can be understood that he does not classify the Ansarians as Muslims or explain what he means by the expression that Muslims are Sunnis.

Sachau often observes Muslims’ perception of non-Muslims in their everyday life as follow:

*When talking about Christians particularly European Christians, an average Muslim who uses labels like giaour (unbeliever), dog or pig feels himself indescribably superior in such cases and would send him [...] to hell with pleasure.*

*[Der Durchschnittsmuslim, der von dem Christen und besonders dem europäischen Christen mit seinem fremdländischen Manieren nie anders mit solchen Titeln wie Giaur (Ungläubiger) Kelb (Hund), Khanzir (Schwein) fühl sich bei solchen Gelegenheiten unendlich weit über ihn erhaben würde ihn am liebsten [...] in die Hölle expedieren.] (Sachau, 1883, 15)*

By watching an opening ceremonies during the parade of Muslim pilgrims in Hama, he claims that similar rituals provoke the “fanaticism of the Muslims”. Therefore, he emphasises that the Europeans in the vicinity prefer to stay away from the crowd in this situations. He states that he was also attacked by Muslims (Sachau, 1883, 15). One can say that he tends to understand the Ottoman society based on class and religious conflict and antagonism. He believes that the anti-Christian rhetoric of Ottoman Muslims arose in fact not only from religious fanaticism but also from envy of their wealth. According to him, the religious conflict has indeed become a vehicle for Muslims that allows them to seize Christians’ possessions. The silence of the Ottoman government in the face of the attacks encourages the Muslims to commit further harassments against Christians (Sachau, 1883, 15). From the text it is clear that he is quite prejudiced in his views on Islam and never believes that Islam and Christianity can be reconciled, as seen in the following quotation: “Islam is more likely to be swept away from Syria, like once from Spain” (Sachau, 1883, 16). His emphasis on the contrast between Islam and Christianity is often seen in different parts of the text.

While Sachau perceives the Muslims with blatantly negative eyes in their daily lives, his attitude towards Christians who embraced modernity, education and the European lifestyle in Aleppo is quite sympathetic. “On all the streets of the Christian neighborhood, on Sunday and other celebration days, men and women of the hardworking church community appear in elegant and precious clothes while they were going to church” (Sachau, 1883, 106). Although the Christians are not exposed to generalized, negative prejudice and hatred their neighbors, Turks and Arabs, are often represented by clichés and stereotypes such as lazy dirty and irregular. In other words, it can be said that the religion occupies an important place in his stereotype production.

His itinerary enabled Sachau to enquire into the condition of the Kurdish people, whom he had classified as an Indian-European tribe. This contact led him to build a memory, cultural design and stereotype about the Kurds. He visited the house of a Kurdish chieftain, a white-painted solid built house that lay outside the village, named Hasan Shamdin (Şemdin) in Gercüş a provincial town located in the east of Mardin. According to him, these houses are “very reminiscent of the castles of the German Middle Ages and the behaviors of their owners (chieftains)



to the saddest times of mediaeval Europe” (Sachau, 1883, 414). The feudal structure and the banditry of the Kurds occupy an important place in his narratives. As he did before in Bedouin society, he frequently visited and watched these tribal leaders, which led him to build many negative stereotypes about them. In addition, he layered sometimes existing stereotypes onto his observation.

Sachau claims that the Syriac and Nestorian Christians were persecuted by the Kurds in the Ottoman provinces. He believes that their skills in using weapons, their tendency to violence and the silence of the Ottoman government served to increase the oppression against them (Sachau, 1883, 410). During travel, he visited many Christian families whose narratives play a significant role in shaping his Kurdish perception. He often uses some negative certain stereotypes such as savage and bandit to describe the Kurdish people. Wandering with fear and suspicion can be a sign that he set off on a journey with some prejudices about them (Sachau, 1883, 385–420). In his narrative, one can see a complex pattern: the Ottoman government keeps up its pressure on the Kurds, the Kurds on the Christians, the Ottoman government on the Kurds and Christians, and the Kurds, Arabs and the government together on the Yezidis.

By describing them as a “mysterious and completely closed” society in Sinjar, he cannot communicate with the Yezidis which were largely unknown to him. While he describes the Muslim Kurds by the non-Muslim narrative, he depicts the Yezidis by narrative of their Muslim neighbors.

*Nobody among my men, including Christians and Muslims, feels secure among them. There is always the danger that the word devil or expressions that are rightly or wrongly related to the devil may be used innocently in conversation. In this case, a Yezidi is unpredictable and prefers to pull the knife immediately. [Meine Leute, sowohl Christen wie Muslims, fühlten sich sehr unheimlich unter ihnen; es ist immer die Gefahr, dass man in der Unterhaltung arglos einmal das Wort Teufel oder Ausdrücke, die mit Recht oder Unrecht auf den Teufel bezogen werden, gebraucht, und in dem Fall ein Jezide unbrechenbar und zieht am liebsten sofort das Messer.] (Sachau, 1883, 331)*

Rather than relying on the narratives of their Muslim neighbours he made his own observations about the Yezidis in Midyat, focusing particularly on banditry.

*We have repeatedly met with some of the gangs of these bandits [Yezidi] who were armed with their long rifles, knives and pistols. These weird men with the pointed gray wool hood, white mantle and Bundshuh [type of shoe] walked away from us without giving a salute according to the custom of the country and undoubtedly estimated the number of our rifles and the value of our belongings.*

*[Wir begegneten mehrfach Abtheilungen dieser Banditen, die mit langen Flinten, Messern und Pistolen bewaffnet finster und ohne nach landessitte*



Fig. 4: *The Bedouins of the Syrian Desert on the route of Eduard Sachau (Sachau, 1883, 32–33).*

*zu grüssen an uns vorüberschritten zweifellos die Zahl unserer Flinten und den Werth unserer Habe abschätzten, unheimlichen Gesellen im Bundschuh, weissen Mänteln und spitzen, grauen Filzhüten.] (Sachau, 1883, 385)*

Rather than negative Yezidi perception, his thoughts about the Bedouins are generally quite positive. As a linguist of the Semitic languages, he spent much time in Bedouin tents without the need for an interpreter to converse with them. Among all Muslim societies, the Bedouins have a privileged position in his writing.

*The free Bedouins are the most decent ethnic element in the whole of the Orient. All of their facilities and customs are consistently humane [...] The pure, unalloyed Semite of the desert, is superior as a human being when compared to the urban Arabs and their neighbours, Kurds and Turks.*

*[Die freien Beduinen sind das anständigste Volkselement im ganzen Orient. Ihre sämtlichen Einrichtungen und Gebräuche sind durchweg human [...]] Der reine, unvermischte Semit der Wüste steht als Mensch hoch über dem städtischen Araber und über den Nachbarvölkern, den Türken und Kurden.] (Sachau, 1883, 312)*

As seen in the above quote, he makes openly a rigid cultural categorization between peoples. This can be considered a continuation of the orientalist tradition.

In the nineteenth century, the travellers were very curious about what an oriental woman in the Ottoman provinces looked like. In the Islamic society, the oriental woman was not very visible in the public sphere. Even though the travellers had almost no direct or close contact with the female world of the Orient, nevertheless, they depicted the oriental woman, by generalizing, at a lower level compared to the European woman. This description provided an entirely to the “Orientalized” image in nineteenth century Europe, which depicts women as a “miserable, powerless creature suffering from the violence and oppression of the ruling oriental man”. As Soukah points out when speaking the German Traveller Fürst von Pückler-Muskau the traveller could only watch the woman in her daily life from a distance (Soukah, 2016, 82) yet, portrayed her in great detail. The parallel with Sachau is striking. As part of everyday life in the Orient, the woman is an entity that Sachau observes and depicts from a distance with her mystery. For example, the peasant woman carrying a bucket of water on her head to the house of her husband from the Orontes River reflects the typology of women in the Orient, that is, an oriental woman in the service of her husband and isolated from a social world. According to him, this event, which is the routine of everyday life, shows what the natural duties of the oriental woman are (Sachau, 1883, 57).

The depiction of women in travel writing was sometimes shaped through certain sexual stereotypes and sometimes made with imaginary female figures, which did not actually exist. It is possible to see the physical depiction of oriental women and their sexuality in Sachau’s narrative. According to him, the Bedouin women, whether as wives or daughters, are “terribly ugly without exception”. While moving on the mountain of Sinjar, he encounters a group of Yezidi women who wash clothes and depicts a 13-year-old girl among them as follows: “[...] This girl seemed to have appeared to us from another world because of the elegance of her outer appearance and the beauty of her face” (Sachau, 1883, 327). The physical-sexual depiction of a child in this way in travel notes constitutes a striking example for how authors bequeath motifs to each other.

## CONCLUSION

The travellers, who encounter different communities on their travels, are an important vehicle for the political and socio-cultural exploration of the Orient. Their hegemonic-colonial discourse played a very important role in shaping the perception of the Orient, of Islam and of the Ottomans in nineteenth-century Europe. With his Eurocentric approach to geography and culture, Sachau produced not only orientalist knowledge but also certain stereotypes about the Ottoman people and depicted them according to certain cultural patterns. Therefore, he also became a part of the formation of a collective Orient-perception, such as

the previous and subsequent travellers. Even though he made close contact with Ottoman people, he sometimes perceived the Ottoman communities through their neighbors (enemies) or mostly influenced by the narratives of the travellers before him. In other words, it can be said that he often built his thoughts on the highly generalised orientalist epistemology of his time. This means that he took over some knowledge, stereotypes and cultural approaches without questioning. While he reconstructed the Orient in his narrative, he actually brought forward his European identity without realizing it. One can say that his travel, in a way, was a journey he made to himself.

## PISANJA O ORIENTU: UPODOBITEV OTOMANSKE DRUŽBE V POTOPISU EDUARDA SACHAU (1845–1930)

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### IZVLEČEK

V 19. stoletju so literarna dela evropskih popotnikov postala besedilna sredstva, s pomočjo katerih je Zahod poskušal spoznati in razumeti Vzhod. Sloneč na neposredno pridobljenih, a zelo subjektivnih podatkih, so potopisi izpeljevali primerjave med Vzhodom in Zahodom ter izpostavljali razlike med obema regijama. S tem so močno vplivali na predstavo o Vzhodu, ki se je izoblikovala med zahodnjaki. Avtor se v prispevku osredotoča na nemškega orientalista in filologa Eduarda Sachaua (1845–1930), profesorja z Univerze Friderika Viljema (danes Humboldtove univerze) v Berlinu in predstojnika tamkajšnjega Inštituta za orientalske jezike. Sachau se je na popotovanje po Vzhodu, ki je trajalo približno šest mesecev, odpravil leta 1879, zapiske s potovanja pa objavil leta 1883 pod naslovom *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (Potovanje po Siriji in Mezopotamiji). V 19. stoletju so ne samo britanski in francoski, temveč tudi nemški popotniki pomembno vplivali na zahodnjaški pogled na Vzhod. Naslanjajoč se na pionirsko delo *Orientalizem* (1979) Edwarda Saida, avtor v raziskavi dokazuje, da Sachauove zgodbe ustvarjajo določene stereotipe. To prikaže z analizo načinov izražanja, mnenj in kulturnih vzorcev, ki jih je Sachau izbral za gradnjo orientalističnega diskurza, ko je opisoval različne etnične skupine, verstva in ločine.

*Ključne besede:* popotovanja, orientalistika, Eduard Sachau, Vzhod, Zahod, otomanski



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