II
Writing on Self and Other – A closer look

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Travelling within the Empire

Perceptions of the East in the historical narratives on Cairo by Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi[1]

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This paper comments on the "perceived" centre–periphery dichotomy in the Ottoman Empire by focusing on the examples of Istanbul and Cairo in the early modern period. For the study, the narratives of two Istanbulite literati, *Book of travels* (*Seyâhatnâme*) by Evliya Çelebi (b. 1611, d. after 1683) and *Description of Cairo* (*Hâlâtü'l-Kahire mine'l-âdâti'z-zâhire*) by Mustafa Âli (b. 1541, d. 1600), have been chosen. [2] The first part of this paper deals with the narratives on Cairo by Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi by giving a brief overview of their relevant works. Following that, the study briefly focuses on the question of *Rûmî* identity. Both Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi were *Rûmî*s, meaning that they were from the core lands of the Ottoman Empire. The way they perceived the Egyptians, as I will show, was shaped accordingly; their observations of the manners and customs of the Egyptian Others had an important place in their accounts, and reflected their *Rûmî*-centric worldview.

In the last part, I will refer to Edward Said's accounts of *Orientalism* to show the possible overlap between the early modern Ottoman context and the phenomenon of "Western" Orientalism. Thereby, my aim is to place Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi in the discussion of Ottoman Orientalism. I argue that the Ottoman Empire, considered in a way as the "Orient" itself by the Europeans, has similar tensions between its centre and peripheries. It would be misleading and anachronistic to label Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi as "Orientalists," but they certainly project the idea of the Other onto – and to some degree "orientalise" – Egypt and the Egyptians, as will be shown.

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1 For a more comprehensive discussion of the same questions, see Hüner (2011). I would like to sincerely thank Assoc. Prof. Tülay Artan, Prof. Metin Kunt and Assist Prof. Hülya Adak, who read several drafts of the thesis from which this article is derived and provided me with insightful comments that made this paper possible. I owe special thanks to Dr. Richard Wittmann, who read this paper and offered comments that helped me to improve it.

2 For the sake of consistency, the names and titles in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic in the text are transliterated as they appear in Evliya Çelebi (2007) and Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli (1975). Quotations from these works will be given accordingly.

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Evliya Çelebi[3] *on Istanbul and Cairo*

Evliya Çelebi, now famous for his curiosity and passion for travel, was known for speaking wittily and without reservation, even when he was a young man.[4] He is the famous narrator of the unique travelogue of the Ottoman world, the *Book of travels*. In his monograph, *An Ottoman mentality: the world of Evliya Çelebi,* Robert Dankoff explains the "Ottoman mentality" as the Ottomans' "special way of looking at the world," and in that respect considers Evliya Çelebi as the "archetypal" Ottoman intellectual (Dankoff 2006: 7). His travelogue opens a wide space for historians to trace various aspects of social, cultural and daily life in the multifaceted Ottoman world.

Although Evliya Çelebi's narrative has long been criticized for its historical inaccuracies, overstatements, and its blurred line between "fact" and "fiction", his rich account provides historians with a wide variety of topics ranging from accounts of specific historical events to his insightful perceptions about these events.[5] For the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing specifically on the last volume of the *Book of travels*, which covers Cairo and its surroundings. The importance of Evliya Çelebi's account on Cairo has also been noted by scholars both for the amount of information it yields on seventeenth-century Egypt and the ideological issues related to the Ottoman presence it brings forth (Behrens-Abouseif 1994: 13; Haarmann 1988: footnote 83).

Evliya Çelebi went on a pilgrimage in 1082 (1671/1672), and instead of returning to Istanbul went on to Cairo. His first impression of the city was positive, and he wrote that its worldwide reputation and fame was well deserved (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 94). He dedicated the last volume of his travelogue almost entirely to Cairo and Egypt, where he spent the last years of his life and compiled his notes into the multi-volume *Book of travels*. Although his portrait of Cairo bears obvious parallels to the description of the Ottoman capital Istanbul in the first volume of his work, the latter remained the "natural" centre of the world for him (cf. Dankoff 2006: 1, 6). Istanbul was his birthplace, hometown and more importantly, the primary point of reference for other places throughout his work. Another yardstick for comparison employed by the author was what he called the lands of *Rûm,* the core lands of the Ottoman Empire, as Suraiya Faroqhi

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3 Although Evliya Çelebi's visit to Cairo was later than Mustafa Âli's, I will treat him first, since his travelogue is at the center of my study.

4 It is important to keep in mind that apart from his own work, there are nearly no sources about him. There are a number of inscriptions by his hand and a few documents mentioning his name including a map "created under his supervision." Further research might bring more of his works to light. In *The documentary trail of Evliya Çelebi*, Nuran Tezcan provides a detailed list of sources about Evliya Çelebi (Tezcan 2011). See also Dankoff (2011: 1–2) and Kreiser (2005: 2). For the map, see Dankoff –Tezcan (2011). For his inscriptions, see Tütüncü (2009).

5 For Evliya Çelebi's assessment in the academic circles, see Tezcan, N. (2009).

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notes (Faroqhi *Tasty things* [unpubl.][6]). What *Rûm* meant to early modern Ottomans will be discussed in some detail below; however, may it suffice here to say that Istanbul was the centre of *Rûm* as well.

Mustafa Âli and the Description of Cairo

Shortly before Evliya Çelebi's birth in the year 1611, Mustafa Âli, who was also an Istanbulite, wrote his descriptions of Cairo. Many topics like the local customs, manners, and public visibility that Evliya Çelebi dealt with are also mentioned in Mustafa Âli's *Description of Cairo*, though more concisely. Mustafa Âli was a prominent figure in the early modern Ottoman historiography, best known as a "bureaucrat and intellectual" (Fleischer 1986). What distinguishes him from his peers is his courageous style and his outspoken way of addressing political, cultural, and historical issues. As a determined and demanding careerist, he followed a bureaucratic track rather than a scholarly path and in his twenties, served many men of important offices (Fleischer 1986: 8, 67). Unlike Evliya Çelebi, his life did not revolve around travel, but he ended up travelling a lot, mostly due to his appointments and patrons.

Mustafa Âli visited Egypt twice. During his first visit in 1578, he was delighted to be in Egypt. He appreciated its fertility, affluence and order, the decency of the cavalry and the good relations between people from the core lands of the Ottoman Empire (*Rûmî*s) and the inhabitants of Cairo. In 1599, while writing his world history, *Künhü'l-ahbar*, he requested a post in Egypt, thinking that Cairo would be the best place to finish his history, for he would have easy access to significant sources of reference.[7] Although he was unable to secure a post in Cairo, he was able to visit the city on his way to Jidda. Mustafa Âli stayed in Cairo for five months, and he wrote the *Description of Cairo*, also known as *Conditions of Cairo concerning her actual customs,* during his first three months in the city.[8] However, in comparison to his first visit, Mustafa Âli now found that the "good old times" were no more. Egypt had lost her prosperity, as well as her "honesty" and "chastity" (Tietze 1975: 25–27, 31–32). According to Mustafa Âli's narrative, it was the deterioration of social and political conditions in Cairo which led his friends to ask Mustafa Âli to write the *Description of Cairo*. Apparently, he liked the idea of compiling a critical book to fill this need (Tietze 1975: 28). However, another motive for the compilation of the *Description of Cairo* is equally possible: Mustafa Âli wished to become the governor general of Egypt. A successful display of his familiarity and concerns with the daily life and politics in Egypt could portray

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6 I am very grateful to Prof. Suraiya Faroqhi for allowing me to read and cite her unpublished article.

7 For detailed information on *Künhü'l-ahbar*, see Schmidt 1991.

8 Fleischer (1986: 181–182). For information on the available manuscripts of the *Description of Cairo* see Tietze (1975).

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him as a fitting candidate for the post. Beyond that, this would legitimize his request, remind his superiors of his desires and assure his position in the eyes of Gazanfer Ağa, to whom he dedicated the *Description of Cairo*.[9]

The personal difficulties Mustafa Âli met during the several campaigns he attended, as well as the challenges and disappointments he faced, had turned him into an alienated and bitter observer who painted a gloomy picture of the course of events in the late sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire. As the first Ottoman "political commentator," Mustafa Âli expounded on economic, social, and political transitions extensively (Fleischer 1986: 90, 101). In the example of Egypt, Mustafa Âli attempted to display the serious defects (e.g. moral degeneration, corruption, disobedience to laws, deficient governance) that he perceived as decline – not only in Egypt but as also having an impact on the entire Empire. Fleischer describes Mustafa Âli's approach as the amalgamation of the "traveller's curiosity," the "moral critic's eye for fault" and the "historian's passion for causes and patterns" (Fleischer 1986: 182).

The *Description of Cairo* is divided into four parts. The introduction provides a brief overview of the legendary pre-Islamic Egyptian history. The first part deals with the notable and praiseworthy characteristics of Egypt. It then goes on to detail the blameworthy features Mustafa Âli saw as symptomatic of and contributing to its decline. The epilogue focuses on the history of Egypt during the Islamic Era. At last, the appendix assesses the mishaps of the Ottoman rule in Egypt, and depicts the class of eunuchs as responsible for the "decline." Andreas Tietze, who made the transliteration and English translation of *Description of Cairo*, describes Mustafa Âli's account of Egypt as "kaleidoscopic glimpses through the eyes of an observant and intelligent tourist" rather than being the outcome of a thorough exploration (Tietze 1975: 17). Still, the *Description of Cairo* provides a good point of comparison to the account of Evliya Çelebi. Also, the personal observations of contemporary literati are as important as their thorough explorations.

A Rûmî *identity*

To understand how Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi portrayed others, it is necessary to comprehend how they described themselves. Both Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi were proud of their *Rûmî* identity. Today, nationalistic narratives of historiography and popular accounts refer to them as *Turks*; they, however, called themselves *Rûmî*.[10] Trying to define *Rûmî* or the borders of the lands of *Rûm* is a diffi-

[9] Gazanfer Ağa was the chief white eunuch of the imperial palace and he was a prominent figure during the reigns of Murad III and Mehmed III (Tietze 1975: 28, footnote 10; Fleischer 1986: 183).

[10] Both Evliya Çelebi's and Mustafa Âli's short biographies are available from different series entitled as *Turkish Grandees (Türk Büyükleri)*. See, for example, İsen (1988). A search in Google using the keywords "Evliya Çelebi" and "Türk Büyükleri" returns approximately

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cult task, not only because of the porous boundaries and flexible identities of the early modern world, but also because of probable drawbacks of using ethnic and geographic identity markers.[11] However, since Evliya Çelebi's and Mustafa Âli's *Rûmî*-ness shaped their perception of Cairo, as I argue, it is necessary to define *Rûmî* provisionally.

Briefly, "*Rûmî* by ethnicity" is used to denote "someone from western Anatolia or the eastern Balkans, particularly the vicinity of the imperial capital" (Hathaway 1998: 53). Defining the lands of *Rûm* as "a region corresponding to the Eastern Roman domains, commonly designating Anatolia and the Balkans" is likewise possible, with a special reference to the root of the word, Rome or Romans (Necipoğlu – Bozdoğan 2007: 2; Kafadar 1995: 1–2). Many erudite (and lesser educated) people of Asia Minor had no problem with identifying themselves as *Rûmî*s or their lands as the lands of *Rûm* (Kafadar 2007: 7). This usage was accepted by Turkish-speaking people to address the lands where they lived, and over which they reigned. However, it is necessary to first note that the word *Rûm* had no static definition throughout the centuries. Sharing a similar fate with many loan words, the word *Rûmî* underwent a shift in its meaning in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[12] Besides, the lands of *Rûm* corresponded to not only a physical but also a cultural space (Kafadar 2007: 9–11). Fleischer analyzes Mustafa Âli's own use of the term *Rûm*. In the cultural context, *Rûm* meant roughly the Anatolian and Balkan regions of the Ottoman Empire where the Ottomans settled and expanded. Âli was apparently "proud of his *Rûmî* origins" and he was inspired and motivated by the Ottoman venture.[13]

Unlike Mustafa Âli, Evliya Çelebi did not introduce a definition for *Rûmî*s. Rather, he let his comparisons between Egypt and *Rûmî* lands speak for themselves. In most cases, the lands of *Rûm* and Egypt are presented in strong contrast.

6410 results, and in the case of "Mustafa Âli" and "Türk Büyükleri" it is around 943 results (date of retrieval: 05 August 2011).

11 The most comprehensive study on *Rûmî* identity between the 14th and 17th centuries is authored by Özbaran (2004). For a different example comparing the fluidity of identities in the early modern world in the cases of the French and Ottoman Empires, see Isom-Verhaaren (2004).

12 It is also important to recall the contemporary usage of the word. Over time, the meaning of *Rûmî* shifted and there occurred a distinction between *Rûmî* and *Rûm*; the latter started to be used to refer to Greeks or Greek Orthodox people (Kafadar 2007: 11).

13 In his world history, *Künhü'l-Ahbar*, Âli defined *Rûmî*-ness as follows: "Those varied peoples and different types of *Rûmî*s living in the glorious days of the Ottoman dynasty, who are not generically separate from those tribes of Turks and Tatars (…) are a select community and pure, pleasing people who, just as they are distinguished in the origins of their state, are singled out for their piety [diyanet], cleanliness [nezafet], and faith [akidet]. Apart from this, most inhabitants of *Rûm* are of confused ethnic origins. Among its notables there are few whose lineage does not go back to a convert to Islam (…) Either on their father or their mother's side, the genealogy is traced to a filthy infidel (…) The best qualities of the progenitors were then manifested and gave distinction, either in physical beauty or spiritual wisdom" (Fleischer 1986: 168).

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One of the strongest examples in that respect is the description of the *hamâsîn* days in Egypt.[14] In these "cursed" fifty days, Egyptian people faced several disasters and illnesses. People were exhausted and weak; many died of the plague and newborns suffered from diseases. The survival rate was very low. In stark contrast to the miserable experiences of the Egyptian people, these days were good days for the lands of *Rûm*. Because of the mass deaths and the dissolution of towns, the (*Rûmî*) governor of Egypt received all escheated property, bolstering his land values. Evliya adds: "As a mystery of God, these black *hamâsîn* days of Egypt correspond to the nice spring days of *Rûm*."[15] Likewise, while the lands of *Rûm* were suffering under harsh weather conditions, Egypt experienced fresh spring days.[16]

When Evliya referred to *Rûm*, most of these references praised its preeminent natural features. For example, during his visit to the city of Reşîd, Evliya stated that the water and the weather of the city were similar to those *Rûmî* cities enjoyed.[17] Because of this resemblance, the people in Reşîd were thus praised. The similarity to *Rûm* in its weather and the quality of the water meant the people of Reşid were deemed friendly and amicable.[18] Beyond showing a close comparison to *Rûm*, this example – among many others – exemplifies Evliya's ode to *Rûm*. In most of Evliya's odes to *Rûm*, similar inferences are possible. I believe that these repetitious references to *Rûm* were intended by Evliya Çelebi as compliments, in addition to providing a point of reference for *Rûmî* readers. In all things – be it the weather or the culture – Egypt was defined by what it was not: *Rûmî*.

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14 The *hamâsîn*, or khamsin, is a "hot, dry, dusty wind in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula that blows from the south or southeast in late winter and early spring" (Encyclopædia Britannica 2011: *khamsin*).

15 "Zîrâ Mısır'da hamâsîn günleri ta'bîr ederler elli gündür, Allâhümme âfinâ, aşağı şehr-i Mısır içre halka bir nühûset ü kesâfet ve emrâz-ı muhtelifeler ârız olup elli gün Mısır halkı bî-tâb ü bî-mecâl sersem ü serserî gezerler. Ve bu günlerde tâ'ûndan bezerler, hâl [ü] ahvâl-i pür-melâlleri perîşân-hâl olup dörd beş aylık ma'sûmlarının beynileri üstü çatlayup merhûm olur ve müsin âdemlerin dişine başına kaşına ve kuşuna inhidâr enüp kimi merhûm kimi halâs olur. Hazret-i Mûsâ'nın kavm-i Fir'avn'a bed-du'â edüp elli gün belâ nâzil olan hamâsîn günleridir kim Mısır halkının, 'Âh hannâk, hinnâm, hamâsîn' deyü havf etdikleri günlerdir. Ve bu günlerde Mısır paşasının yüzü güler, zîrâ çok köyler mahlûl olup niçe bin akçe dahi mahlûlât gelüp paşaya âyid olur. Ammâ hikmet-i Hudâ bu Mısır'da hamâsînin bed günleri Rûm'un bahâr mevsiminde letâfeti günleridir, aceb hikmetdir" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 160). All Evliya Çelebi translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

16 "Bu mahalde Rûm'da kış kıyâmet iken Mısır'da tâze bahâr olup atlar çayıra çıkar" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 186).

17 Reşîd was a city along the coastline; it is marked on Evliya Çelebi's map. See Tezcan – Dankoff (2011).

18 "Evsaf-ı şehr-i müzeyyen bender-i Reşîd: Ve bu şehrin âb [u] havâsı Rûm havâsına müşâbeheti vardır. Ve âb [u] havâsı Rûm havâsı olduğundan mahbûb u mahbûbesi memdûhdur (…) Âb [u] havâsının letâfetinden mâ'adâ Rûm bâğları gibi bâğlarında âbdâr üzümü olur. Ve halkı gâyet garîb-dostlardır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 374).

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Egypt, the geographical Other

The centrality, fertility, and uniqueness of Egypt stand out in both Evliya Çelebi's and Mustafa Âli's narratives. Although the lands of *Rûm* were the centre of the Ottoman intellectuals' world, Egypt was the mother and the centre of the earth as a consequence of its location, prosperity and distinctiveness. Evliya said that God gave the Earth a fertility of [the level of] ten; nine was given to Egypt, and the remaining one to the rest of the world.[19] Egypt was known to be a land where from a single wheat germ hundreds of ears of grain grew, and in each ear of grain there were 100 green seeds.[20]

Apart from being the "mother of the world," Egypt had an outstanding position among the Ottoman provinces as a result of its lands' immensity and resourcefulness. Egypt's significance to the Empire was both strategic and economic. Militarily, this province was a very important base for operations. In addition to the high agricultural revenues and taxes, these lands had a significant income from trade activities and customs. In addition to the monetary contributions, Egypt supplied various harvests and products like sugar, rice, lentils, and coffee to the imperial kitchens and shops (Winter 1998: 5). To understand the immensity of the province as well as its contributions to the Ottoman Empire, it should be sufficient to note that shortly after the Ottoman conquest, Egypt and Syria supplied one-third of the whole Empire's income (Behrens-Abouseif 1994: 49–50). Evliya recounted that each year Egypt provided to the Ottoman treasury the sum of 30 Egyptian *hazine*s, with each Egyptian *hazine* measuring 1,200 Egyptian purses, or *kîse-i Mısrî*.[21]

"Not disgraceful": People, manners, and customs in Egypt

Neither Evliya Çelebi's nor Mustafa Âli's descriptions of Egypt were limited to the geographical features or government of Egypt. Both Ottoman intellectuals shared a keen interest in practices, manners, customs, and public life – i.e. anything that constituted life in Egypt. To attract their readers' attention and spark their curios-

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19 "Cenâb-ı Bârî rûy-ı arza on berekât vermişdir, tokuzu Mısır'a, biri cümle dünyâya vermişdir, zîrâ iklîm-i âhardır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 17).

20 "Ve ol kadar zirâ'at edüp hubûbât-ı ganâyime mâlik oldular kim bir buğday dânesinden niçe yüz başak hâsıl olup her başakdan, âye[t]: "her başakda yüz dâne (habbe) bulunan" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 10).

21 "Hâsıl-ı kelâm cümle Mısır'ın iş erlerinin kavl-i sahîhleri üzre beher sene Mısır'dan otuz Mısır hazînesi mîrî içün hâsıl olur, deyü tahrîr olunmuşdur. Ve her hazînesi bin ikişer yüz kîse-i Mısrî olmak üzredir" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 81). – *Kîse-i Mısri*: "For large sums appearing in the Ottoman financial registers originating in Egypt, a new unit of account came into use in the seventeenth century, the *kese-i Mısri* ('Egyptian purse'), which equalled 25,000 *para*s. The *kese* was also used for *akçe*s elsewhere in the Empire, with the *kese-i Rûmî* equalling 50,000 *akçe*s. The *kese-i Mısri* of 25,000 *para*s equalled 60,000 *akçe*s regardless of the exchange rate between the two units" (Pamuk 2000: 97, footnote 21).

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ity, they usually emphasized the particularities of Egypt rather than its similarities to the lands of *Rûm*. I believe that besides using these comparisons as a stylistic device, they were motivated by the urge to document practices that were unknown at the imperial centre.

In *Evliya Çelebi's tales of Cairo's guildsmen,* Faroqhi elaborates on Evliya Çelebi's attentiveness to the "different practices" in Cairo (Faroqhi *Guildsmen* [unpubl.][22]). It can be inferred that Evliya Çelebi saw a lot before he settled in Cairo to write his *Book of travels*, as he had been travelling throughout his life. This lifestyle, spent among places, cultures, and different customs, made him more open-minded and multi-cultural. And yet, being a "worldly man" did not prevent him from pointing out each and every thing that deviated from the "norms" he had known in Istanbul.

Although Evliya Çelebi had seen a lot and travelled extensively, he was also aware that he was an exception, and his audience was more attached to the *Rûmî* way of perceiving the world. Predicting his readers' reactions, Evliya added his famous phrase, "not disgraceful" *(ayıp değil),* when describing odd manners and customs. Dankoff analyzes the use of the concept "disgrace" in Evliya Çelebi's narrative in his eminent article, *Ayıp Değil* (Dankoff 2009). Dankoff asserts that Evliya used the preface "disgrace" in two different ways. First, it reflected Evliya Çelebi's (or the speaking person's) moral judgment, and the reference point was the culture of the Ottoman elite and Istanbul. In such instances, Evliya Çelebi assumed that his readers were of the same opinion and moral standard. Second, "disgrace" was mentioned to acknowledge the public opinion of a given region (Dankoff 2009: 109). Evliya used this phrase while mentioning the practices or traditions that were accepted in the relevant society but that may not have been accepted by his audience. In the first volume on Istanbul in the *Book of travels,* the phrase "not disgraceful" is not used. This is telling because it supports the argument that Istanbul was the point of reference for Evliya Çelebi; therefore there was no need for justification. However, "setting his foot out of Istanbul" in Egypt, Evliya Çelebi felt it necessary to use this explanatory phrase most frequently. This may well be because of Egypt's own peculiarities (Dankoff 2009: 114, 116–117). Evliya Çelebi's approach is described by Dankoff as a "guarded tolerance" that declares, "it is their custom, so we cannot censure it" (Dankoff 2006: 82). It is not clear if Evliya Çelebi was "bemused" or "sympathetic" toward the situation in each case; however, it is essential to recognize that Evliya Çelebi was respectful toward differences and he was consistently against any fanaticism (Dankoff 2006: 82).

Although Evliya Çelebi criticized zealous acts, he frequently voiced his support of despotic measures. One of the outstanding topics in Evliya Çelebi's narrative is the importance and necessity of the authority:

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22 I am very grateful to Prof. Suraiya Faroqhi for allowing me to read and cite her unpublished article.

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> "Without capital punishment, for the sake of the reform of this world, it would be impossible to maintain control over the *fellahın* of Egypt, where even the preachers – with kohl on their eyes, prayer-beads in their hands, and toothpicks in their turbans – provide aid and cover to bandits and thieves" (Dankoff 2006: 84).

Evliya connected the janissaries' actions in Egypt to the old despotic rule of the Pharaohs (Dankoff 2006: 114). However, he pointed to the need of killing people to restrain the Egyptian *fellâhîn*, because without strong measures it would be impossible to suppress them.[23] This emphasis on oppressive rule stemmed from Evliya's opinions of the *fellâhîn*, which he believed were wilful, hostile, and tyrannical by nature.[24] If there were no officials around, the *urbân* (Bedouins) and *fellâhîn* would have killed each other.[25] Evliya Çelebi accepted and supported the necessity of authority, but he also criticized the government in Egypt for their affluence derived from over-taxation and exploitation of the poor. Likewise, Mustafa Âli chastises the provincial governors for their tyrannical and ruthless rule (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 56).

Both authors argued that drinking from the Nile River was another cause for the inherent despotism. Evliya Çelebi explained that the tyranny in Egyptian lands was the consequence of the Egyptian climate and environment. He emphasizes that even people from the lands of *Rûm* would turn into tyrants if they drank from the Nile for three years. The water from the Nile turned women into impudent and immoral humans, and made the horses evil-natured.[26] Similarly, Mustafa Âli explained that the "Pharaonization" was caused by the water of the Nile, and as a consequence, the governors of Egypt became autocratic. This "Pharaonization" was inherited from the pre-Islamic history of Egypt (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 45).[27]

The climate of Egypt not only turned people into potential despots, but also drew Egyptians to melancholy. Evliya further argued that because of women's de-

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23 "Islâh-ı âlem içün böyle âdem katl etmese Mısır fellâhının zabtı rabtı mümkin değildir (...) Hemân Mısır'a bir hâkim-i cebbâr lâzımdır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 43).

24 "Allâhümme âfinâ, Mısır fellâhları kavm-i Fir'avnî bir alay kavm-i cebbârîn ve anûd, hasûd, fessâk kavimdir, görmeğe muhtâc kavimdirler" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 185).

25 "Yohsa hâkim tarafından âdem olmasa urbân ve fellâhîn birbirlerini katl ederlerdi" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 184).

26 "Âb [u] havâsının hükmü üzre cebbârlardır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 24). "Ve bu Nîl suyunun ve baklasının hâssasındandır ki suyundan üç sene içen eğer Rûm âdemi dahi olursa bî-rahim ve cebbâr olur. Ve zenânesi gâyet mahbûb olup kalîlü'l-edeb ve kalîlü'l-hayâ olur. Ve atları Nîl suyun nûş edüp olup Katıyye ve Ümmü'l-Hasan çölün çıkup değme hâliyle bir gayrı diyâra varmaz" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 185). "Zîrâ âb-ı Nîl'i nûş edenin hükmü cebbâr ve mütekebbir olmakdır, zîrâ Ferâ'ine tahtıdır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 219).

27 The discussion of Oriental despotism and hydraulic civilization is one of the important issues in historiography. In his well-known book *Oriental Despotism* Karl Wittfogel argued that civilizations in need of large-scale irrigation tended to become more authoritative (Wittfogel 1957). For critiques of Wittfogel, see for example Mitchell 1973. In his most recent study on Egypt, Alan Mikhail elaborates on irrigation in detail. He criticizes the thesis of Wittfogel as the historical facts did not support the argument empirically. For further analysis, see Mikhail 2011.

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ception and tricks, the whole society was under their enchantment. The men who were prone to melancholy were sent to lunatic asylums for healing. However, this was only possible due to a decree from the Ottoman governor.[28] Besides the lunatics, both our *Rûmî* observers seem to have paid great attention to the eyes of the people. It becomes clear that in seventeenth-century Egypt many people had eye and vision problems. Both Evliya Çelebi and Mustafa Âli referred to the abundance of blind people. According to Evliya, there was a discrepancy between southern Egypt and the rest of the country, which he – again – blamed on the weather. The beautiful weather turned the eyes of the people into the beautiful eyes of gazelles, but people from the south of Egypt had *cimloz*/*cimroz* eyes.[29] The references to *cimloz* eyes are very common in Evliya Çelebi's narrative.[30] Likewise, Mustafa Âli mentioned that "one rarely meets a person whose eyes are bright and round" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 42). Instead of blaming the climate, however, Âli argued that the cheap, heavy, and indigestible food (fried cheese) they consumed on a daily basis caused blindness, and Âli criticized Egyptians with the following pun: "[I]t causes a weakening of vision and leads to blindness; they still stretch out their hands for it in blind greed" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 84). Beyond pointing out the illnesses and blindness rampant in the society, they emphasized the inefficiency of the society in dealing with these problems. For example it is repeatedly mentioned that although so many people had such eye problems, there were no oculists in Egypt.[31]

According to Evliya Çelebi's narrative, having problems but not having the necessary professions and tools to cope with them went beyond the problem of eye diseases. Egypt was a land:

> "where there were many horses but no horseshoers; many sick people but no physicians; many ruptured people, but no surgeons; many men but no rulers, they don't allow themselves to be ruled; many qadis but no one in the courts telling the truth; and many false witnesses; and many obdurate people but no one talking because of [?] the apathy;

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28 "Ammâ bu Mısır'ın âb [u] havâsı yübûset üzre olduğundan cümle halkı sevdâyîdir. Ve mekr-i zenânı çok olmağile ekseriyyâ halkı meshûr ve memkûrdur. Hemân ol âdemi ahâlî-i mahalle paşaya arz edüp buyurdı-yı şerîf ile bîmârhâneye koyup tîmâr ederler. Buyurdı olmasa bîmârhâneye komazlar" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 144).

29 Cimroz /cimloz: *gözleri çapaklı* (having crust round the eyes). Dankoff 2004: s.v. "cimroz".

30 "Havâsının letâfetinden evlâdlarının gözleri mükehhal merâlî ve gazâlî gözlü olur. Ammâ aşağı Mısırlı gözleri cimloz ve koncoloz gözlü olur. Aceb hikmetullâhdır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 105). "Ammâ Mısır şehrinde hâsıl olan evlâdların bi-emrillâh gözleri kuloğlu [Kuloğlu?] gözlerine döner. Mısır'ın bu kelâm darb-ı meselidir, ya'nî gözleri cimroz olur" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 164). "Bu darb-ı mesel gâyet sahîh kelâmdır. İki âdemin biri bi-emri Hudâ alîl olup gözleri cimroz olur. Bu dahi darb-ı meseldir kim bir âdem bir şey'e bir hoş nazar edemese, 'Senin gözlerin Mısır kuloğlusu gözüne benzer' derler" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 206–207).

31 "İki âdemin biri bi-emri Hudâ alîl olup gözleri cimroz olur(…) alîl a'mâ çokdur, kehhâl yokdur" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 207). "Evvelâ Mısır'da çeşmi alîl ve müşevveşü'l-uyûn âdemin hisâbını Cenâb-ı Bârî bilür. Ma'a hâzâ yine böyle iken üstâd-ı kâmil kehhâlı yokdur" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 272).

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> many soldiers but no officers – they treat soldiers as companions –; they have a great treasury but no honest bookkeepers. These sayings are still being told in Egypt."[32]

By stating this, Evliya Çelebi drew a very pessimistic portrayal of the life in Cairo. Although these were just sayings, Evliya stated that these proverbs were still mentioned in the Egyptian society.

Women, beauty, and public life

Regarding the common man's public behaviour, Mustafa Âli noted that men were not ashamed of riding donkeys: he writes that more than one man could be seen on a donkey, though Âli is critical of this action, as it was a burden for donkeys (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 42). Of course, it is impossible to think that Evliya Çelebi, the curious traveller, would not refer to the donkeys.[33] Evliya Çelebi reported that all the donkeys, mules, camels, and sheep went around the bazaar in herds. The extensive amount of donkeys throughout Egypt was remarkable. The donkey riders were all yelling on the streets. Interestingly, Evliya Çelebi added that some donkey riders intentionally drove the mules among half-witted *Rûmî* men.[34] This fact may signify that *Rûmî*s in Egypt were identifiable; at least their "half-witted ones" could be identified by sight on the crowded streets of Cairo.

Women were frequently referred to in both Mustafa Âli's and Evliya Çelebi's narratives. Both authors felt compelled to inform their readers about the plenitude and recurrent public visibility of women in Egypt. Evliya was surprised to see that the Egyptian elites and women were donkey riders, too. It was "not disgraceful" for them to ride donkeys, and go to the promenades and public places

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32 "[K]im Mısır'da at çokdur, üstâd-ı kâmil na'lband yokdur, cümle hımâr na'lbandıdır; ve marîz çokdur ve hekîm ü hâkim yokdur" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 206–207). "Atı çok, na'lbandı yok; marîzi çok, hekîmi yok; debesi çok, kat'-ı fıtk eder cerrâhı yok; âdemi çok, hâkimi yok, hükm etdirmezler; kadısı çok, mahkemelerinde doğru söyler yok; ve yalan şâhidi çok ve lecûc ve lecûc kavmi çok, meskenet ile kelimât eder yok; ve askerî tâ'ifesi çok, zâbitleri yok, askere müdârâ ederler; ve tahsîl hazînesi çok, müstakîm muhâsebecisi yok. Bu kelimâtlar hâlâ Mısır içinde darb-ı mesel olmuşdur, efvâh-ı nâsda söylenir" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 272).

33 Donkeys attracted the attention of not only the Ottoman travellers, but also the Westerners, as Derek Gregory has shown for the American traveller Bayard Taylor, whose *Journey to Central Africa* appeared in 1854: "'Donkey riding is universal,' Taylor remarked, and 'no one thinks of going beyond the Frank quarter on foot.' Careering through the streets on these 'long-eared cabs,' the tourist gaze was acutely physical. 'There is no use in attempting to guide the donkey,' Taylor advised, 'for he won't be guided. The driver shouts behind; and you are dashed at full speed into a confusion of other donkeys, camels, horses, carts, water-carriers and footmen'" (Gregory 2005: 86).

34 "Ve bu Mısır'da olan devâbât makûlesi ya'nî at ve katır ve cemâl ve sığır ve câmûs ve koyun ve keçi çârsû-yı bâzârda sürü sürü gezerler. Ve eşek çokluğu şehr-i Mısır'ı dutmuşdur. Sokaklarda zahrek ve cenbek ve vechek ve yemînek ve yesârek deyü hammârların feryâdından geçilmez. Ve ba'zı hammârlar, "Tarîk yâ seydî, tarîk" diyerek kasden Rûm âdemlerinin eblehlerin eşeğe çiğnedirler" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 81).

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on them. Referring to Istanbul, Evliya Çelebi added that donkeys in Egypt replaced the boats used in Istanbul to go to such places.[35]

In a more judgmental approach, Mustafa Âli was astonished that the women in Egypt rode donkeys:

> "[The fact that] their women, all of them, ride donkeys! Even the spouses of some notables ride on donkeys to the Bulak promenade. Week after week they mount their donkeys and dismount like soldiers. Moreover, when they marry a daughter off they let her ride on a donkey and seventy or eighty women ride [with her], while the only things visible in terms of weapons are their shields. People of intelligence find that this unbecoming behaviour constitutes a serious defect for the city of Cairo, because in other lands they put prostitutes on a donkey as punishment. In Cairo, the women mount donkeys by their own free will and expose themselves [to the eyes of the public]; therefore it appears appropriate that for punishment they be put on camels" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 41).

It was reported that the first Ottoman military judge (*kazasker*) in Egypt was not welcome, especially by women, because he took some measures to limit the women's rights. One of these rights regarded donkeys; according to the new rules, women were not allowed to leave their houses or ride donkeys. Such actions resulted in serious sanctions like being "beaten" and "dragged through the streets with their hair tied to a mule's tail" (Behrens-Abouseif 1994: 75). Ibn Iyas reported that women were now expected to ride mules instead of donkeys – just like in Istanbul. Furthermore, donkey drivers were not allowed to let the women ride, and if they did, they could face capital punishment. The Ottoman *kazasker* claimed that the Egyptian women were demoralizing the soldiers by such improper actions. The Egyptian men were "rather pleased" by these new measures, but the female opposition secured the abolishment of some of these attempts. At the end, women were allowed to leave their houses to visit their relatives, and to go to bathhouses or cemeteries. All in all, referring to the quote above by Mustafa Âli, it is assumed that these new regulations did not have a real impact on the daily life and manners of Egyptians. Mustafa Âli reported that the women continued to ride donkeys (Behrens-Abouseif 1994: 75).[36]

The manners of women were widely discussed by Ottoman authors, not necessarily in relation to donkeys but also regarding other forms of behaviour in public and domestic services, beauty and sensuality. The attitude of both Evliya Çelebi and Mustafa Âli toward beauty and sensuality – especially with regard to

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35 "Zîrâ Mısır'ın a'yân [u] eşrâfı ve cümle nisvân-ı sâhib-isyânları har-süvârdırlar. Eyle fârisü'l-hımârdırlar kim Özbekiyye ve Salîbiyye ve Eski Mısır ve Bulak'a ve Kayıtbay'a varınca avretler zahrek hüşşek diyerek cirid oynayarak gümüş rahtlı ve katîfe abâyili alaca hınnâlı eşeklerle gezmek ayıb değildir. Zîrâ Mısır'ın kayığı ve peremeleri cümle eşekdir" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 81).

36 The place and impact of the Ottoman *kazasker* in Egypt was also a topic of discussion. Winter argues that the *kazasker*'s impact on both religion and society was barely existent and Egyptians did not think that he was on their side (Winter 2005: 193, 196).

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women – is especially useful in tracing their mentality toward the Other. In that respect, Cairene women were the Others not only because they were natives to Egypt but also because they were women.

In *Description of Cairo*, a fairly large part of the work was about women. Women and their behaviour were described both in the sections on "praiseworthy" and "blameworthy" features. Âli noted that one of the praiseworthy features in Egypt is the clean white covers of women, thus Âli likened women to angels. The *Rûmî* women publicly demonstrated their *Rûmî* character and exceptional manners by carrying black veils that made them visually recognizable among Egyptians. The headscarves of the Cairene women were less neat than their *Rûmî* counterparts, but when they were unveiled, they had beautiful and fresh faces. Mustafa Âli added that he *heard* that these women were sensually attractive during sexual intercourse. The virgins in Cairo veiled their faces with a red cloth to depict that "their maidenhood has not been soiled with blood" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 35).[37]

Âli continued his comments on women in the section of "blameworthy features." He repeated that the Egyptian women were not exceptionally charming in their looks but they were praised for their sensuality. He even gets graphic as he describes Cairene women as making "all sorts of movements during intercourse (...) [and] motions like an Arabian horse that has slipped out from under its rider, thereby enchanting sexual enjoyment," and they had lips "delicious as the cane sugar of Egypt."[38] The Ethiopian slave girls were especially held out as their "coital organs are narrow and hot" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 51).

Âli's remarks on physical beauty need special attention. Âli argued that a good-looking person was often a *Rûmî*, or at least descended from one. Those with *Rûmî* ancestors in the first, second, and third generation looked better than the "pure" Arabs, although their beauty deteriorated with each generation. From the fourth generation onwards, they looked like *Tat* (other Arabs) "like those unbecoming, ugly ones, namely [pure] Arabs both on the father's and mother's side" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 40). Mustafa Âli used similar genetic explanations for illnesses that are common among Egyptians. The children of *Rûmî* people in Egypt were expected to face similar health problems, and in further mixed generations these diseases were certain to occur.

The beauty and public visibility of women were among the outstanding topics in *Book of travels*, too. Referring to women, Evliya Çelebi used disparaging phrases like *nisvân-ı/bintân-ı/zenân-ı sâhib-isyân* ('women of rebellious nature'). Dankoff argues that the rhymed phrases Evliya used when referring to women should not be

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37 On women's clothing, see Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli (1975: 42). In Orhan Şaik Gökyay's version of the book, the explicit manner of Mustafa Âli is criticized and Şaik states without explanation that he leaves out these parts (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1984: 37, footnote 113).

38 The source of Mustafa Âli is claimed to be "the experienced womanizers and men of culture" (Gelibolulu Mustafa Âli 1975: 40).

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taken too seriously (Dankoff 2006: 110). Being loyal to his encyclopaedic tendency, Evliya listed the names of women in Egypt: "Meryem, Havvâ, Azrâ, Safâ, Varka, Verdî, Ümmühân, Külsûm, Râbi'a, Rukıyye, Zeyneb, Sitiyye, Züleyhâ, Zaliha, Sâliha, Dümerye, Acîbe, Şinâs, Tâhire, Sâmi'a and Mâhiye" – and as expected, he acknowledged that there were still more names. It is noteworthy that Evliya differentiated between the names of Egyptians and the Ethiopian concubines whose sexual abilities were praised by Mustafa Âli. According to Evliya, the names of Ethiopian concubines were especially fascinating.[39] It appears that the names of women were markers of their social status, thus gender as a category was not homogenous. Women were from different social strata and moral status and they should be considered accordingly.

Like Mustafa Âli, Evliya Çelebi wrote that in Egyptian lands there were no men or women who were praised as being beautiful. Some powerful men took virgins from Behce, Hınadi, or from the Khazar Bedouins, or they brought distinguished and exceptional females from the lands of *Rûm* each worth an Egyptian treasury; among them, Evliya especially praised the women from Khazar.[40] Beautiful young men and women were conveyed from outside as there were no "charmers" in Egypt.[41]

Writing his observations on Dimyat (Damietta), a port city at the Nile Delta, Evliya pointed out that women were not allowed to go out there. They only left their houses at night with lamps. To go out, for women, was "disgraceful" here, consequently Dimyat was portrayed as an upright and virtuous (*ehl-i ırz*) town.[42] A very stark contrast to the city of Dimyat was the old city of Zeyla'. Sexual intercourse in this city was common and available; especially because of the excep-

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39 "Esmâ'-i nisvân:Meryem ve Havvâ ve Azrâ ve Safâ ve Varka ve Verdî ve Ümmühân ve Külsûm ve Râbi'a ve Rukıyye ve Zeyneb ve Sitiyye ve Züleyhâ ve Zaliha ve Sâliha ve Dümerye ve Acîbe ve Şinâs ve Tâhire ve Sâmi'a ve Mâhiye ve niçe turfe esmâları var, ammâ bu kadar tahrîr etdik. Ve Habeşe cevâríler esmâları var kim âdem hayrân olur. Meselâ Hasîse ve Fesîse ve Kasîse ve Nefîse ve Fitne ve Eşmîne ve Şemsiyye ve Şemmûne ve Reyhâne ve Hediyye ve Verdiyye ve Hamrâ ve Kamrâ ve Amberiyye ve Cemîle ve bunun emsâli niçe nâmları vardır kim tahrîrinde melâlet vardır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 275).

40 "Ammâ Hazarî kızları var kim serâmed ve serbülend, kaddi bülend, kıyâfeti şeh-levend, balaban kızlar olur" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 275).

41 "Ammâ cemî'i diyârın mahbûb [u] mahbûbeleri memdûh-ı âlemdir, ammâ bi-emrillâh Mısır'ın merd [ü] zenânında mahbûb u mahbûbe olmaz, aceb hikmetdir. Meğer ba'zı devletmend âdemler Behce ve Hınâdî ve Hazarî Urbânından kızlar alırlar, ve Rûm'dan mümtâz [u] müstesnâ mahbûbe duhter-i pâkîze-ahter nâ-şüküfte gonca-fem bâkireler getürürler kim herbiri birer Mısır hazînesi değer (...) Ve mahbûb gulâmları yine taşra diyârlardan gelmişdir. Yohsa Mısır'da dilber olmaz, olursa mu'ammer olmaz" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 274–275), and: "Ammâ şehr-i Mısır'ın hâricinde kurâ ve kasabâtlarda Sa'îdî ve Bedevî mahbûbeleri olur kim merâlî ve gazâlî Hoten âhûsu gibi mukehhal gözlü, şîrîn sözlü ve münevver yüzlü perî peykerleri olur kim medhinde lisân kâsırdır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 275).

42 "Ve bu şehirde [Dimyat] şeyhü'l-beled defteriyle üç kerre yüz bin âdem vardır. Hamd-ı Hudâ bu kadar ecnâs-ı mahlûkât olup bâbullûk nâmında fâhişehâne bi'l-ittifâk yokdur. Gâyet ehl-i ırz vilâyetdir. Bu şehrin dahi nisvân-ı sâhib-isyânları çârsû-yı bâzâra çıkmak ayıbdır, gece fânûslarla gezerler" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 389).

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tionality and abundance of 'perpetual' virgins, whose virginity regenerated itself.[43] It is astonishing that Evliya Çelebi did not adopt a judgmental approach in these cases; but rather, he just mentioned the virtuous nature of Dimyat.

An Ottoman Orientalism?

A geographically distant land, prosperous and exotic, with an unattractive population whose women were highly sensual. A chaotic city with a lot of donkeys. Mustafa Âli's and Evliya Çelebi's reflections on the various topics discussed inevitably reminds readers of Edward Said's eminent book, *Orientalism*. I argue that the authors' attitudes toward Egypt and Egyptians strongly echo the discourse of Orientalism. However, for the early modern Ottoman world, instead of the binary oppositions of the East and the West, talking about an imperial centre as a point of reference in relation to its peripheries would be more appropriate.[44]

In the light of the *Rûmî* narratives on Egypt, would it be appropriate to talk about an invented "Ottoman Orient"? While keeping in mind that the "Orient is not an inert fact of nature," it would be an interesting mental exercise to re-write some of Said's statements for an Ottoman context, as seen below (Said 2003: 4):

> "The [Ottoman] Orient was almost an [Ottoman] invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences."
>
> "The [Ottoman] Orient is not only adjacent to [the core lands of the Ottoman Empire]; it is also the place of [the Ottomans'] greatest and richest and oldest [provinces], the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the *Other*. In addition, the [Ottoman] Orient has helped to define [Ottoman identity] as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of [Ottoman] *material* civilization and culture."

Of course, the aim of this exercise is not to make a broad generalization for the Ottoman context and fall into the same trap as Said did. Rather, my aim is to draw attention to the fact that it is possible to replace Said's "Europe" with Mustafa Âli's

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43 "Ve cimâ'ı bu şehrin gâyet lezîzdir. Ve Hıtâyî dedikleri zenânelerinden küsâm-ı hâsıl-ı kâm masdar-ı insân-ı kân bu diyâra mahsûsdur. Her cem'iyyetde bâkire bulunur mahbûbeleri vardır" (Evliya Çelebi 2007: 490). In his *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi Okuma Sözlüğü*, Dankoff explains that Evliya Çelebi sarcastically made *küsam* look like an Arabic word, although it is a made-up word by Evliya Çelebi as a combination of a Persian (*küs*) and a Turkish word for female genitalia (Dankoff 2004, s.v. "küsam"). *Hıtayi* is used for young girls whose virginity rejuvenated. Dankoff adds that the word may be related to Hıtay, meaning Turkistan, China (Dankoff 2004, s.v. "Hıtayi").

44 The discussion of core lands and peripheries has been introduced by Immanuel Wallerstein in his world-system theory. This theoretical framework has been utilized by many social scientists also in relation with the Ottoman Empire. See for example Heper (1980).

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and Evliya Çelebi's "core lands of the Ottoman Empire" when considering narratives as primary sources.

In sharing their extraordinary observations, both Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi emphasized the "romantic" experiences of the Egyptian people, their different manners and customs. Cairo was, as Said said of the Orient, a "place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences." Egypt was located next to the lands of *Rûm*, it was the most lucrative province, and a centre of civilization and of languages. In the narratives about Egypt, the images of Others are defined along geographic, ethnic, economic, and educational lines. It is evident that the Ottomans shaped their identities as *Rûmî*s in contrast with the local Egyptians Others. Thus, Egypt was certainly an "integral part of the Ottoman material civilization and culture."

The historical contexts of Said's *Orientalism* and the early modern Ottoman Empire are substantially different. Said refers to a period of an imperialist domination by colonial powers. But, in more general terms, the relationship between the East and the West relies on uneven power relations, domination, and hegemony. As a consequence of these power relations, "the Orient was created or, as I [Said] call it, 'Orientalised'" (Said 2003: 5). In that context, the West had a flexible "positional superiority" and Orientalism helped justify the colonial rule (Said 2003: 7, 39).

In the Ottoman case, there is a powerful imperial centre with positional superiority, as revealed by the centrality of *Rûm* and Istanbul in the examples. To those in the centre, Egypt was a distant province, both physically and mentally. The relationship was not the one between the colonizer and the colonized; however, there is no question that the Ottoman imperial centre was powerful and claimed moral superiority over the lands it ruled. This claim of moral superiority was very clear in Evliya Çelebi's and Mustafa Âli's narratives, as both authors internalized and praised the norms of the centre without ever questioning them. Then, did the Ottoman intellectuals "orientalise" their Eastern provinces or peripheries?[45] And, did the Ottomans try to legitimize their conquest of Muslim lands? These questions are not simple enough to answer in a few sentences; however it will be helpful to keep them in mind while discussing further questions of Ottoman Orientalism.

Said argues that the Western visitors who travelled to the Orient went there first as Europeans and Americans, then as individuals; and being European or American was not an "inert" condition (Said 2003: 11). Similarly, "an Oriental man was first an Oriental and only second a man" (Said 2003: 231). Thereafter, I would like to argue that both Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi in Egypt were *Rûmî*s

[45] A further question would be the Ottoman center's perspective towards its non-Eastern peripheries. This discussion is beyond the physical limits of this study, however it may contribute significantly to the subject, as it will help to clarify if this Ottoman perception was applied towards the Eastern peripheries only or to the peripheries in general.

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and Ottoman intellectuals first, and individuals second. Another point of resemblance is close to modern Orientalists who wrote about the Orient: Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi were well aware of the older sources on Egypt. Then we can ask if the Ottoman intellectuals were only confirming existing beliefs prevalent among their addressees, thus supporting Said's claim that the Orientalist "confirm[ed] the Orient in his readers eyes" rather than challenging the existing assumptions and perceptions (Said 2003: 65). As an inevitable consequence of this view, Said criticizes the Orientalist tendency of the "detachment from history" and isolation of their Oriental subjects as essential beings. He argues, "we will have a homo Sinicus, a homo Arabicus (and why not a homo Aegypticus, etc.), a homo Africanus, the man – the 'normal man,' it is understood – being the European man of the historical period, that is, since Greek antiquity" (Said 2003: 97). Again, if we compare this to the Ottoman situation, "the normal man" would be the *Rûmî* from Istanbul, who internalized the moral norms of the imperial centre. Did Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi describe the homo Aegypticus as well? Especially Âli's category, "the blameworthy features of Egyptians from ancient times," would lead us to believe that they did. However, it is necessary to underline that both Ottoman intellectuals were aware of different levels of "otherness" like ethnicity, class, gender, and mode of living, and they classified people accordingly. Besides their "pro-Istanbul biases" and sweeping generalizations, their narratives are multifaceted. However, it is evident that they considered themselves the "normal men" as *Rûmî*s.

Placing the early modern Ottoman world in the discourse of Orientalism as the power centre, as I have done, can be problematic. First, it can be viewed as anachronistic, because the discussion is closely associated with the modern era and colonialism. Second, the Ottoman Empire was itself considered "the Orient," and Said's *Orientalism* offered no exception. However, as Albert Hourani nicely put it, the Ottomans were the "Romans of the Muslim world" (Hourani 1991: 130). It is remarkable that Said does not refer to any sources from within the Empire, nor does he look closer at the Empire, even though Egypt, a former Ottoman province, was at the centre of most of his primary sources.[46]

The Saidian definition of Orientalism is criticized because of its "neglect of what the 'Orient' did with Orientalism" (Tezcan, B. 2009: 499). In the discussion of Orientalism, the Ottoman Empire is "dismissed as a sort of epiphenomenal (and dare one say it, quintessentially 'Oriental') creature." Said's overlook of the Ottoman Empire is interpreted as "fall[ing] into much the same trap as the writers he criticizes in his epic *Orientalism*" (Deringil 2003: 313). Esin Akalın argues that

[46] In the introduction, Said excuses himself, saying that due to practical reasons he had to leave out many sources. Rather than relying upon a set of books, he follows "historical generalizations" (Said 2003: 4). However, to trace these generalizations Said selects the "best suited" ones for his study (Said 2003: 16). This may well be the reason why the Ottoman Empire is almost non-existent in *Orientalism*.

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Said intentionally omits the Ottoman Empire so that it would be easier to describe a more homogeneous East without considering the mixed, complex, and changing relations of the Ottoman Empire with the West (Akalın 2007: 112).[47] If he included the Ottoman Empire in his discourse, Said would challenge the Western representations of the East as weak and inferior (Akalın 2007: 118). Critiques of *Orientalism* find fault with Said's "model of fixity" and "historical and theoretical simplifications" because his generalizations turn out to be "ahistorical" and "ageographical", and his portrayal turns out to be "static" and "monolithic" (Akalın 2007: 112, 119; see also Yeğenoğlu 1998: 79; Gregory 1995: 30). Neither the Western subjects nor the texts on the Orient were homogeneous and monolithic. However, in the discourse of Orientalism the West is perceived as the "universal norm" (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 6, 71). In short, it is necessary to recognize that "each of these Orientalisms is internally complex and unstable" (Akalın 2007: 121). Different variables like class, race, gender, and sexuality, as well as their interactions and contradictions should be included in the discussion (Gregory 1995: 31). In both *Book of travels* and *Description of Cairo*, class, ethnic differences (not necessarily race), gender, and sexuality were important markers in defining the Other. Broader and multilayered perspectives of Orientalism would help place the Ottoman Empire and its complex relations in the discourse of Orientalism.

Another important facet of the discussion is the question of Ottoman Orientalism. Ussama Makdisi used the phrase 'Ottoman Orientalism' as the heading of his eminent article, the starting point of which is the claim that in the modern period, every emerging nation "creates its own Orient" (Makdisi 2002: 786). Makdisi extends the scope of Said's Orientalism by introducing the Ottomans' representations of their Arab peripheries, arguing that the existing discourse of "religious subordination" was replaced by a notion of "temporal subordination." In this system, the centre had the desire and power to "reform" and "discipline" the "backward peripheries." Accordingly, Makdisi affirms that Ottoman Orientalism was a prevalent and characteristic feature of Ottoman modernization which helped shape a modern Ottoman Turkish nation. Similar to the Western colonialist agenda, this discourse of Orientalism served to legitimize the imperial centre's rule over the ethnic or religious Others (Makdisi 2002: 768–770).

Makdisi places the concept of time at the centre of Ottoman Orientalism. Istanbul was not only the capital and the centre of the Empire, but it was also the "temporally highest point," making the "gaze" from the centre to the provinces not only looking at a physical distance, but also at a temporal one. This, again, served as justification of colonial rule (Makdisi 2002: 771; see also Ze'evi 2004: 74). This perspective of time denotes the complex character of the Orient, as it

[47] The critiques of Said's *Orientalism* are of course not limited to the discussion of the Ottoman Empire or to the fixity of Said's model. However, to discuss all the critiques here would be impossible. As an example of several points of critique, see Irwin (2006: 6–8).

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shows that the East, in this case the Ottoman Empire, was not stagnant. In fact, it moved toward modernity at different paces (Makdisi 2002: 771–772).

Although Makdisi is attentive enough to draw attention to Evliya Çelebi's narrative, he does not make a theoretical attempt to explain these ethnic stereotypes and prejudices in the seventeenth century, or to look for continuities. He just mentions the deep ethnic and religious differences in the Empire, as well as the "Ottoman monopoly over the metaphors of Islam" (Makdisi 2002: 774). I argue that an extensive approach to a so-called Ottoman Orientalism should not disregard the pre-19th century period and dismiss the tensions between the centre and its peripheries at that time.

Likewise, Deringil focuses on the Late Ottoman period and in analysing the relationship between the Ottoman modernization and colonialism, argues that the Ottomans adapted colonialism as "a means of survival" during the modernization process. In other words, modernization necessitated the homogenization of the core lands of the Ottoman Empire, the lands of *Rûm*. In this process, the Arab provinces were degraded to colonial status; this is described as "borrowed colonialism," in imitation of Western colonialism, although because colonialism was a way of survival for the Ottomans, they were not oppressive like their European counterparts (Deringil 2003: 312–313). Like Makdisi, Deringil does not extend the question of Ottoman Orientalism to the early modern period. The break, according to Deringil, is "at the point that the stance of *moral superiority* leads to a position of *moral distance*, this perceived sense of 'them' and 'us'" (Deringil 2003: 341, emphasis in the original).[48] In light of the prior arguments, it would be necessary to ask: Could we not talk about a moral superiority and a moral distance as early as the early modern period, when it is not yet possible to speak of a colonialism to borrow?

Conclusion

Taking all this into account, it is still too much of a stretch to claim that Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi, two early modern Ottoman intellectuals, were Orientalists. As noted throughout this paper, "Orientalism" has many modern connotations, and it is closely linked to industrialism, colonialism, and the rise of the West.

[48] Hala Fattah's article on two Iraqi travelogues by provincial ulama, al-Suwaidi and al-Alusi, might be interesting as a point of comparison. These two intellectuals on the way establish a firm belief in the superiority of their own traditions through comparison with different cultures, and thereby they help to shape a more localized identity. As Fattah states, "travel gave the journeying scholar the opportunity to distance himself from the more 'venal' and 'corrupt' practices undertaken in neighboring Muslim societies and to compare these practices with the more 'upright' and 'equitable' moral code of his home region" (Fattah 1998: 52). In a similar perspective, Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi never questioned the uprightness of the moral codes in Istanbul; rather they recorded that the Egyptians' manners diverged from the normal into the realm of "venal" and "corrupt."

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However, the echoes of Orientalism in these narratives beg for some kind of explanation. Following Fattah's arguments regarding "localized identities" (Fattah 1998: 52), I argue that the central position of the lands of *Rûm* plays an important role in the identity formation of the two authors treated here. In *Ottoman Orientalism*, Makdisi's emphasis was mostly on nation-state formation. Instead, according to Karateke, Ottoman Orientalism was shaped by a "regionalistic referential system," one centre being the reference point; and different parts of the Empire were attributed "'oriental' statuses" according to their physical and cultural remoteness to this point of reference (Karateke *Gurbet* [unpubl.]). In the case of Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi, the reference point was definitively Istanbul. Its physical, cultural, and perceived distance from the lands of *Rûm*, especially from the capital of Istanbul, defined the "oriental" status of Egypt.

Although it would still be misleading and anachronistic to label Mustafa Âli and Evliya Çelebi as "Orientalists," they certainly emphasize the "other" characteristics of – and to some degree "orientalise" – Egypt and the Egyptians. Specifically, the examples that were touched upon here – the beauty and sensuality of women, Egyptians' daily experiences, and despotic measures – closely echo the tales of the Orient. Though, as exemplified by the Egyptians' view of *Rûmî*s, "otherness" was really determined by the position and norms of the authors.

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