



EXPLORE AND REFORM: TWO TRAVELLERS FROM ISTANBUL TO LATE OTTOMAN SYRIA

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ABSTRACT: The article examines the travel accounts of two representatives of Ottoman-Turkish elites, Şerafeddin Mağmumi and Halide Edib, describing their official missions in Syria in the 1890s and 1910s, respectively. Inspired by the works of Ussama Makdisi, Selim Deringil and Edhem Eldem, it analyses the two travelogues from the perspective of *Ottoman Orientalism*. It argues that a variety existed in the views of late Ottoman Turkish elites' attitudes towards the Arab peripheries, requiring a more nuanced approach to the concept of Orientalism.

KEYWORDS: Ottoman-Turkish Travellers – Halide Edib – Şerafeddin Mağmumi – Orientalism – late Ottoman Syria

At sunrise, we reached Başköy. All houses were made of mud and topped by a dome. We understood that we were in the Arab land.

Şerafeddin Mağmumi (2001: 223)

While the travels of European travellers to non-European parts of the world had long attracted the attention of both general readers and scholars (Melman 1995; Youngs 2006; Hulme and McDougall 2007), the travels of non-Europeans have only recently started to be studied. In the case of Ottoman travellers, researchers have concentrated mostly on journeys of Ottoman-Muslim subjects to Europe in order to illustrate the emergence of the logic of modernization and progress in the Ottoman context (Lewis 1982). Less space has been devoted to the study of encounters between 'metropolitan' Ottomans and their 'fellow citizens' on the peripheries of the Empire. Several important articles

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pointed out the Orientalization of the Eastern parts of Ottoman domains as a result of the gradual incorporation into Western modernity and the adoption of and reaction to Western notions of progress and backwardness that shaped this modernity (Herzog and Motika 2000; Makdisi 2002; Deringil 2003; Eldem 2011).

Ussama Makdisi (2002) has coined the term *Ottoman Orientalism* to denote the attitude of Ottoman-Turkish rulers to the peripheries of the Empire undergoing a process of modernization, based on the model of the West, to which the centre – Istanbul – was temporarily (by introducing reforms earlier than the rest) and spatially (in the case of the Southern/Eastern parts of the Empire) closer than the peripheries. Influenced by European Orientalism, Ottoman reformers distinguished between backward, pre-modern Orientals and modernized Muslim subjects, represented particularly (though not exclusively) by the Ottoman-Turkish ruling elites. Makdisi argued that this concept was most strongly expressed in the attitude towards the Arab provinces of the Empire, which, in the last decades of the Empire's existence, got closer to the centre's supervision, thus becoming an object of the modernizing reforms. This in turn justified Ottoman-Turkish rule over the so-far 'unmodernised' Arabs.²

Building on Makdisi's work, Selim Deringil (2003: esp. 312 and 341) sees the 'civilizing mission' mentality of the late Ottomans as a result of the conflation of the ideas of modernity and colonialism and as a strategy of borrowing the colonialists' concepts and methods in order not to become a colony themselves. This 'borrowed colonialism' led to a perception of their (predominantly Arab) peripheries as a 'colonial setting' and targeted especially those elements of the Empire which were considered unruly, savage, anti-modern and hard to subjugate – the nomads. The centralising policies closely tied to this Ottoman version of colonialism developed, according to Deringil, hand in hand with the rise of the nationalist notion of the Turks as the 'main element' (*unsur-u aslî*) of the Ottoman polity.

Using the example of the famous painter (as well as archaeologist and bureaucrat) Osman Hamdi (1842–1910), Edhem Eldem (2011: 183-195) suggested that an individual could hold different views of the Orient at different stages in his/her life and during different travels to the East of the Empire. Osman Hamdi moved from a Makdisi-style 'Ottoman Orientalist' during his trip to Baghdad "largely due to the political dimension that dominated his concerns at that point in his life and career" (193) to a more *ala franga* version of Orientalism when he became a 'real' Orientalist.

All these works have enriched our understanding of the ways in which the Ottoman centre sought to re-appropriate its peripheries in order to elevate them to the level of 'contemporary civilization'. However, first-hand experiences of late Ottoman Istanbulites in the form of travel narratives have still been drawn on only to a limited extent.

In this article, we examine the travels of two representatives of the Ottoman Turkish elites to the Eastern part of the Ottoman Empire in the last decades before the dissolution of the Empire. Both were in many ways exceptional and yet, in our understanding, exemplified two partially overlapping and partially diverging approaches to the Ottoman peripheries that were shared by others among their compatriots. Şerafeddin

² Makdisi makes the point that the Arabs on the peripheries of the Empire were cast in an ambivalent role. They were seen at once as "members of an inferior 'minority' who were to be civilized, disciplined, and (ultimately, perhaps) fully integrated, and at the same time as markers of a foreign Orient, above which the modern empire was struggling so hard to rise" (2002: 794).

Mağmumi (1869–1927) was a medical doctor and one of the founding members of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). He was part of a medical team sent to Anatolia and Syria to fight an epidemic of cholera in 1895. Halide Edib (1882–1964)³ was a famous Turkish writer and one of the leading figures of Turkish nationalism. In 1916, she was asked to go to Syria to study the situation of its schools in order to help reform the education system in Damascus, Beirut and Lebanon. Their journeys to Syria – in both cases with an official or semi-official mission – are separated by twenty years, allowing us to look at the changes in attitudes to the Ottoman East during the crucial decades divided by the Young Turk Revolution (1908) and the rise of political Turkish nationalism. We ask how these Ottoman Turkish travellers from Istanbul viewed an Arab periphery of their Empire and analyse the way/s they portrayed Ottoman-Turkish rule over Syria in relationship with their views of the Arabs.

Şerafeddin Mağmumi's and Halide Edib's travel writings could be considered against the backdrop of what Deringil calls 'borrowed colonialism' and Makdisi 'Ottoman Orientalism'. Without denying the presence – in the case of Halide Edib more or less pronounced – of this discourse in both texts under analysis, we argue that far from being unanimous, Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals presented a much more nuanced picture of the Arabs and Arab provinces, which was deeply coloured by their individual experiences, dispositions and world-views, and, last but not least, by the genre and focus of their texts and the historical contexts in which these texts were produced. These differences tend to be suppressed in accounts of Orientalization and alterization that focus on presenting a (unified) concept and theory.

We first briefly introduce the two travellers and the context of their travels. The core of the article analyses how both travellers positioned themselves in their travel accounts, how they portrayed (or did not portray) Ottoman rule and the Arab population and to what extent they viewed their surroundings through the prism of the East-West divide.

The travellers and the context of their travels

Şerafeddin Mağmumi was educated at the Military Medical School in Istanbul and, like many other Turkish materialists and positivists, he firmly believed in the superiority of scientific knowledge over any other form of wisdom. He published extensively on (popular) science and especially on physiology. Among his 14 books one finds a treatise on plants (1890), a book on organic chemistry (1891), the human body (1892) and a two-volume medical dictionary (1910 and 1912). Travelogues occupy an important place among his writings. His *Seyahat Hatıraları: Anadolu ve Suriye'de* (Travel Memoirs: In Anatolia and Syria)⁴ and a two-volume memoir from his journey to Europe that he undertook in the late 1890s, *Seyahat Hatıraları: Brüksel ve Londra'da* (Travel Memoirs: In Brussels and London) and *Seyahat Hatıraları: Fransa ve İtalya ve İsviçre'de* (Travel Memoirs: In France, Italy and Switzerland), are detailed testimonies of an enthusiastic Turkish globetrotter. An opponent of Sultan Abdülhamid's regime, Mağmumi went to a self-imposed exile in Paris shortly after his second tour around Western Europe and

³ While some studies give Halide Edib's birth date as 1883 or 1884, İnci Enginün (1995: 31) cites archival evidence to show that Halide Edib must have been born in 1882.

⁴ It was written in 1895, partially serialized in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* and published as a book in Cairo, 1909.

took part in Young Turk activities. Later, he joined other fellow unionists in Cairo (in 1901). A brief visit to Istanbul after the Young Turk revolution left him, an opponent to the ruling Committee of Union and Progress and adherent of a marginalized wing within the Young Turk movement, deeply disappointed. Embittered, he spent the remaining two decades of his life in the Egyptian capital, publishing the Young Turk newspaper *Türk Gazetesi*.⁵

In the introduction to his travel memoirs to Anatolia and Syria, Şerafeddin Mağmumi says that since his childhood, there has been a strong 'longing for travelling' deeply rooted in his mind. Almost of innate quality, this longing was so irresistible that the first thing he did after he had learned the script was to read *Robinson Crusoe* over and over again. When his father was appointed administrator to Baghdad (which more or less equalled being exiled), no one rejoiced in the family about going to the provinces but the young would-be traveller (Mağmumi 2001: 17). When his father's appointment was withdrawn, his son's disappointment could not be bigger. To make up for the loss, he started to read every travelogue that he could get his hands on (18). His passion for seeing, visiting and documenting foreign places never left him. As an adult professional, fortune enabled him to travel extensively both in Europe and in the Middle East. Be it for work, for political reasons or just for study purposes, one aspect of his travels persists in every piece of his writing: the enormous pleasure he took in travelling and the unflinching passion to see new, far-away places and learn about them. These days, he would have perhaps called himself an avid tourist.

Although he has dreamt about travelling all his life, he first left Istanbul only in 1894, when, on the instigation of the Extraordinary Inspector of General Health Affairs Bongowski Paşa, he was sent with a medical team to fight an epidemic of cholera in Anatolia (Bursa, Balıkesir, İzmir, Ayvalık) and shortly after that charged to carry out the same task in the provinces of Adana, Maraş, Aleppo, Beirut and Damascus (May-December 1895).⁶ In contrast to his first journey (to Anatolia), to which he was dispatched in a great hurry, he had three months left before going to the East, which enabled him to prepare accordingly. Like a real traveller into the unknown, he thoroughly equipped himself with several sets of clothes (military and civil), good walking boots, parasols, binoculars, a portable bed, a water filter, a flask, and maps of areas to be visited. And, notwithstanding his official mission, his behaviour was, in many aspects, close to what one would expect from a 19th-century European traveller in a foreign country. Despite his professional duties, he used every opportunity to visit interesting places and to make trips in the surroundings. He kept something of the sort of a diary, which he somewhat confusingly calls a travelogue (*seyahatname*); it includes entries on places he visited, noticeable events related to his journey and technical information connected to his inspectoral duties (health situation in a given region, the nature of the climate and the soil, state of medical care etc.). The text may be situated between a narrative document and an official report occasionally interspersed with incidents that happened to the author. The plain, unadorned, almost impersonal style makes the impression of

⁵ For Mağmumi's biography, see Polat 2002.

⁶ In the introduction to the second part of his travel-book, Mağmumi praises fortune to have enabled him to travel so much. He looks forward to strolling around "places where the bygone nations of Phoenicians, Israelites and Umayyads had successively been born, this living history which is a general exhibition of works of ancient civilizations" (164), and hopes that before getting there he will be able to visit many other interesting places.

an objective, distanced description, as if the author – although writing in the first person – recalled the story of someone else. We learn practically nothing about his life prior to the journey, his family, his beliefs, his history, and find very few reflections and comments in which he would reveal his world-view. Silence also surrounds the other members of his team – the almost only thing we learn about them are their names (Dr. Hüseyin Ali, Dr. Kohen, and assistants in charge of fumigation). Yet it is not an impersonal narrative: the author is, after all, the centre of the text; all events revolve around him and are shaped by his presence.

Halide Edib (Adıvar), daughter of the treasurer of Sultan Abdülhamid II, received private education from tutors before she graduated from the American College for Girls in Istanbul. After a dramatic divorce from her first husband Salih Zeki, she became an instructor at a training school for teachers. She started her writing career with translations and later articles for numerous journals and was an ardent fighter for women's rights, supporter of the Young Turk Revolution (in the early period) and one of the major proponents of Turkish nationalism (and for a certain period of pan-Turkism), which was also reflected in her early novels (*Yeni Turan* and *Handan*, 1912). After the occupation of the country by the Allies, she gave a number of public speeches in support of Turkish national independence, worked as a nurse and collaborated with Mustafa Kemal so that after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, she has become one of the symbols of the national liberation struggle. Her second husband, Dr. Adnan (Adıvar), whom she had married during her work in Syria, originally also belonged among close collaborators of Mustafa Kemal, but as a leader of an opposition party in the mid-1920s got into conflict with the Turkish president and consequently, the couple left Turkey. In the 1920s and 1930s, Halide Edib lectured in Paris, London and the United States and travelled to India. After Atatürk's death, the Adıvars returned to Turkey where Halide Edib became a professor of English literature at Istanbul University and between 1950 and 1954, a member of the Parliament. Apart from novels in Turkish and English, she wrote non-fiction on recent Turkish history and the place of the Turks in contemporary world.⁷

Halide Edib was asked to go to Syria in the summer of 1916, in charge of the investigation of its schools and orphanages, by one of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress Cemal Paşa (Lewis 2004: 39)⁸. She described her experience in Syria – her first travel to the East – in 1916-1917 in two extensive chapters of her *Memoirs*, the first part of her autobiography published in English during her self-imposed exile in

⁷ Given her importance in Turkish nationalism and modern Turkish literature as well as her complicated relationship with the Kemalist regime, Halide Edib has attracted the attention of a vast and often contradictory scholarly as well as popular literature. For detailed analysis of her life and work as well as a summary of different approaches to Halide Edib see Ayşe Durakbaşa (2002) and İnci Enginün (1995).

⁸ For the political background of her journey, see Enginün (1995: 56-59). First, Halide Edib's sister Nigar joined a group of volunteers who then opened an elementary school in Syria. Later on, Cemal Paşa invited Halide Edib, Nakiye (Elgün), an early Turkish female educator, and the writer Hamdullah Suphi, who was supposed to research old Islamic and Turkish architecture, to Syria. At the end of her mission, Halide Edib wrote a detailed report on the educative system in Syria and Lebanon and proposed several reforms. As one of the main purposes of the schools she proposes to open, she sees the need to imbue Arabs with a spirit friendly to Turks so that they would closely cooperate with the Turks once they gain independence. In September 1916, Halide Edib returned briefly to Istanbul to go back – again on Cemal Paşa's invitation – to Syria with a group of 50 women and a few men. She was present at the opening of new schools in Syria in January 1917.

Europe in 1926. One chapter has the form of a travel account dealing with her journey through Anatolia and Syria while the other focuses on her educational work in Syria. Halide Edib shared with Mağmumi a passion for learning about new places, but – much more than Mağmumi – she replicated the Romanticism of European travel books, looking for the exotic and spiritual and watching the objects and people she encountered with a more ‘anthropological’ gaze, drawing general conclusions and theorizing on the differences between the Turks and the Others. It is important to remember, however, that her travel account was a part of a larger narrative. Apart from recollections from her childhood, youth and early married life, the *Memoirs* contain Halide Edib’s interpretation of the last decades of the Empire’s existence as well as her own place in the politically relevant events and in the Turkish national struggle. The work constructed her identity as a female intellectual for the Western public, not necessarily familiar with the Middle East, the Turks and Arabs and possibly prejudiced against them. It was therefore conceived partly as an explanation and justification of her own deeds and Halide Edib chose a more apologetic and ethnocentric tone than Mağmumi, which is obvious in the chapters dealing with Syria.

Syria, together with Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Jordan called Greater Syria, was under Ottoman rule from 1516 to 1918. The Ottoman Turks governed Syria through pashas who connected administrative and military powers and held supreme control over the province, under the ultimate authority of the central government in Istanbul. The administrative divisions and character of the rule changed over the four centuries of Ottoman rule, but there was generally limited contact between the majority of the local population and the Ottoman administration. Although Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) recruited a number of Arabs to his personal service, many Arabs participated in the opposition against his rule and at the turn of the century, Syria became a major centre of the Young Turk organizations, which found adherents particularly among the increasing numbers of students. Şerafeddin Mağmumi, sent to Syria also due to his subversive activity, established a network of CUP branches there already in 1895 with the support of other government functionaries and officers stationed in Damascus (Kayalı 1998: 47-48).

During Halide Edib’s trip, Syria was under the rule of Cemal Paşa (1872–1922), one of the members of the Young Turk triumvirate. Appointed with emergency powers in the midst of World War I, Cemal Paşa introduced a reign of terror, executing leaders of the opposition and his own opponents and deporting whole families to Anatolia (from where Armenians were deported to Syria). Concurrently, he sent Arab troops to distant areas and forced Turkish language into public life and education. His measures included some improvements of communications and the infrastructure, but these did not prevent the alienation of the local population from the Ottoman administration. As Makdisi (2002: 794) emphasized, Halide Edib was sent to Syria partly to help improve the image of Ottoman rule – and the chapters of her *Memoirs* devoted to her journey through and work in Syria clearly show her attempt to defend Cemal Paşa and Ottoman rule.⁹

The travellers’ self-positioning

Both Halide Edib and Mağmumi travel as representatives of the Ottoman state charged with official tasks and duties, which is, to a varying degree, reflected in their

⁹ On Halide Edib’s stay in Syria and her attitude towards minorities see Enginün (1995: 56-58).

travel accounts. However, their primary identifications and points of reference are different.

Mağmumi creates an image of himself as essentially a detached scholar, observing and dispassionately registering the reality around him. Still, here and there, he cannot suppress his nature of a passionate traveller and reveals what a pleasure it is for him to be sent to faraway places. The main criteria Mağmumi uses for judgment and for positioning himself are progress, application of scientific methods, developed urban life and – mentioned rather tangentially throughout the text – social freedom of women (uncovered faces, unrestricted social contact, no gender separation). National/ethnic identity does not seem to play any role either in his self-identification or in his perception of others. One could, with caution, describe the image Mağmumi's travel narrative projects of his author as cosmopolitan. His Turkish identity is mostly linguistically determined: the author, quite logically, prefers the company of people who speak Turkish, while their ethnicity is irrelevant to him. There is, however, an indication that knowing Turkish is connected with progress and access to modern education. Visiting an *idadiye* (high school) in Aleppo, Mağmumi is saddened to hear that local elementary schools have not been reformed yet and are administered with 'old methods', thus creating the need to open an extra language class to teach Turkish to those poor students who do not know it (230).¹⁰

These characteristics indicate that Mağmumi would easily fit the category of 'Ottoman reformist'. However, it is Istanbul, not a vague 'Ottoman civilization' that remains his point of reference. Almost everything is measured against something we might call – to paraphrase A. Şinasi Hisar (2006) – the 'civilization of Istanbul'.¹¹ One of the very few emotional (or lyrical) passages in Mağmumi's narrative is a longish departing scene capturing the author on a steamboat heading from Istanbul to the Mediterranean Sea. Mağmumi follows Istanbul with his eyes until its panorama – and Mağmumi's whole world – vanishes; he is still in his homeland, yet at the same time entering a *terra incognita*. In every town he looks for Istanbul newspapers and inquires after latest news from the capital. Many buildings or natural features are compared to places in Istanbul (like the market in Aleppo to the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul). Obviously, Mağmumi writes for Istanbulite readers, not for a general Ottoman readership, and he orients his description of the 'periphery' to the 'centre', which is his textual benchmark.

Also Halide Edib's narrative is anchored in referentiality to the Ottoman capital, but less explicitly. Her primary identification is undoubtedly as a Turk and a Turkish nationalist, which she proudly emphasizes. Within this dominant frame of Turkishness, educated Istanbul elite identity can be discerned. When Halide Edib praises some of the interesting people or things she encountered, she mentions that they reminded her of something or somebody from Istanbul. ("...a wooden mosque, where a boyish voice called out for prayers. In no part of the world is the muezzin call so perfect and harmonious as in the mosques of Constantinople. So he must be from Constantinople, I said to myself..." 417). Although Halide Edib does not agree with every step the

¹⁰ The only instance when the reader can sense that Mağmumi might have perceived Muslim subjects of the sultan as 'more Ottoman' than others is when, while describing the health-care system in Beirut, he observes that whereas "foreigners and Greeks (*Rumlar*)" have their private hospitals, there is not a single clinic for "the destitute [citizens] of the country (*menleket garipleri*)" (245).

¹¹ Hisar actually speaks about a 'Bosphorus civilization' in his *Boğaziçi Mehtapları* (Bosphorus Moonshine, 1942).

Ottoman government has taken in Syria, in the context of the travel, when meeting 'the Other', Turks and things Turkish become synonyms of the most positive and highest qualities. Thus, if something is exceptionally clean, orderly, new, or somebody has an extraordinarily nice voice or possesses other talents, they must either be Turkish or somehow connected to the Turks (like a wife/lover of a Turkish pasha or a *muezzin* from Istanbul). Moreover, the Turks are implicitly put in contrast with Arabs, namely when emphasizing the Turks' courage, kindness, mildness, diligence, tidiness and pleasant appearance.¹²

While both Mağmumi and Halide Edib are culturally Sunni Muslims, religion does not enter their public personalities as presented in the travelogues. Mağmumi is an ardent materialist and secularist, critical of religious prejudices. He mentions mosques only as architectural structures alongside churches and other buildings. Describing the famous Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and its surroundings, he criticizes those 'bigots' who destroyed the nearby tomb of caliph Yazid I; to him, though, its historical value is important, not its spiritual or sectarian meaning. The now empty place is visited by Alawites who symbolically throw stones at Yazid's (obliterated) grave. Mağmumi cannot hide his surprise and contempt when he sees that even his *tebhir memuru* (medical assistant in charge of fumigation) Bektaş Efendi (a Turkish Alawite, judging by the name) joins this superstitious ritual (251). Halide Edib was known for her deep admiration for Sufism and her defence of Islam against Western prejudices, yet she did not dwell on religion either. It is referred to only in connection to people she met, whether Muslims, Christian Arabs or Christian nuns. Interestingly, when travelling through Palestine, it is Christian monuments and biblical scenes that catch her attention rather than symbols of Islam – perhaps as these might be things of more interest to Western readers.

It is worth noting that this prominent feminist does not emphasize her personality as a woman traveller. She does not mention the difficulties (or at least curiosity on the part of the local population) she must have encountered as a travelling woman in a conservative society, nor does she deal with the 'oppression' of local women. To be sure, she does pay attention to women during her travel, but does not reflect on their position or (lack of) rights. Her solidarity with women comes to the forefront mainly when she describes how they suffer because their husbands are away, in the army. In contrast to Mağmumi, she seems to have been more interested in presenting a highly positive picture of the 'Turkish race' to her readers in the West. Many occasions allow her to paint a picture of the noble Turk, obviously an almost ironic reversal of the Orientalist image of the lazy, cruel and lascivious Turk. Reflecting on the humble graves of unknown Turkish soldiers, she says: "The Turk never had a proper grave or a proper memorial for his brave deeds. He knows beforehand when he marches on that what he suffers, however sublime, what he gains, however grand, belongs to sultans and pasha commanders. He has no Perpetual Flame or Arch of Triumph to make him remembered. But the perpetual flame and the arch of triumph are within him, and it is he who constitutes the continuity, the vitality, and the higher meaning of his race. His sultans and his pashas will be but paltry effigies and his race will lose its higher meaning if that sacred fire ever leaves his soul!" (419)

¹² See e.g. "From the stairs leading down to the subterranean region a voice that was not Arab, a clear and low voice, was chanting the Koran. We found the owner... He had a pleasant and serious face." And he turned out to be a Turk, of course (Halide Edib 1926: 410).

In summary, the way both travellers see themselves and create their identity through their texts is a multi-layered cluster of identity positions, which is overlooked by the constant 'Ottoman reformist's gaze' and centred around a certain notion of an 'Istanbul civilization'. Whereas in Mağmumi's case, a scientific-positivist discourse dominates this cluster, Halide Edib's self-positioning is always framed by a pronounced sense of Turkishness.

Arabs

Following in the footsteps of his spiritual master Beşir Fuad¹³, Şerafeddin Mağmumi strongly opposed and criticized all 'unscientific literature', i.e. fiction, and particularly poetry. Objectivity and scientific knowledge were the true poetry for him; no wonder his travelogues implicitly aspire to these ideals. This might explain the austerity of his narrative and his extremely pragmatic and rational approach to the places and people(s) he saw during his travels in the Ottoman periphery.¹⁴ With his scientific attitude, Mağmumi very rarely embarks on general reflections or characterizations of cultures, peoples or minorities. He speaks rather about places and buildings than people, and when he does speak about people, there is very little in way of anthropological or sociological representation. No explicit image of 'the Arab' could be inferred from Mağmumi's text, as he rarely goes beyond a brief description of clothes and information on the local language(s) and ethnic composition. If there is any juxtaposition at all, it is not between Turks and Arabs, Westernized intellectuals and traditional sheiks, Muslims and non-Muslims (who were very visible in places like Beirut, Aleppo or Damascus), but rather between city dwellers and villagers. We might surmise that for Mağmumi there was a bigger difference between himself (an educated Turk from Istanbul) and a Turkish peasant in a remote part of Anatolia than between himself and an Arab city dweller.¹⁵ The overwhelmingly Greek-speaking population of Edremit is as 'foreign' and simultaneously 'Ottoman' to Mağmumi as, for instance, the inhabitants of Syrian Homs.

Notwithstanding the nationalist discourse that frames Halide Edib's memoirs and the idealization of Anatolia in her other writings, her personal experience with travelling into the predominantly rural and vastly underdeveloped territory of Anatolia translated into a description that is very close to Mağmumi's. When depicting a little village near Konya, the vocabulary and images she uses are almost the same as the ones she employs when talking about the life of Arab women: "(...) old women sat at the door of their

¹³ Beşir Fuad was known for his vulgar concept of the relationship between literature and science as an irreconcilable conflict between poetry and truth (see Beşir Fuad, 1999). Similarly, "[p]raising Abdullah Cevdet's work on the brain, Şerafeddin Mağmumî denounced poets for their crime against science in attributing the functions of brain to heart" (Hanioğlu 2005:43). He even – like Beşir Fuad had done before him – bequeathed his corpse to a medical school for scientific purposes.

¹⁴ Paradoxically, Mağmumi's travel books are, despite or perhaps because of their 'sternness' and lack of lyricism and flights of fantasy very readable, and – though the author would probably protest – some chapters are written in a superb prose and have an almost novel-like quality with dramatic twists and plots (see passages on sea storms!, esp. 259-262).

¹⁵ There is only one occasion when 'borders' between Anatolia and Syria are mentioned: "At sunrise, we reached Başköy. All houses were made of mud and topped by a dome. We understood that we were in the Arab land" (223). See also Mağmumi's description of Mer'aş (Maras): "It is on the Syrian continent (sic!), but when it comes to climate, it is absolutely Anatolian" (201).

huts, and little children played about, while a group of young women returned from the fields with their scythes on their shoulders. The heat, the dust, and the sadness of the lonely women were beyond description..." (392).

The context of Halide Edib's text and her overall nationalist leanings differ substantially from Mağmumi's self-perception and the circumstances under which he penned his narrative. The temporal and mental distance between Halide Edib and Mağmumi might make it difficult to parallel both texts. But surprisingly, one finds many overlaps between both travelogues. There is a shared sense of the positive effects of the 'high Ottoman civilization' radiating from the centre onto the peripheries, a view that the "Arab provinces [are] places to become Ottomanized but not yet Ottoman, (...) places whose spatial integration into an imperial Ottomanism (connected by telegraph, monuments, rail) from Istanbul laid the basis for a modernized empire" (Makdisi 2002: 770-1).

Even in Mağmumi's otherwise sober, technical account, there is a certain opposition between two discourses or mindsets: the progressive, scientific, urban and educated (though never formulated like this) contrasts with the backward, unscientific and superstitious – or the metropolitan with the provincial. It would be wrong, though, to overemphasize the juxtapositions: there is nothing even remotely reminiscent of binary pairs like civilization – barbarity or Turks – Arabs. Mağmumi does not – in the name of his scientific 'objectivity' – superimpose his ideas on others to criticize or judge them. This has, of course, to do with the fact that his account is descriptive rather than evaluative. There is very little in terms of an analysis: the description of a geological composition of a certain landscape occupies the same place in his text as the description of an important mosque. If there is beauty in religious buildings, it is always in the architectural features of a temple, not in its spiritual impact. The negative things he notices in Syria have less to do with local people or their habits and more with the lack of functional government and development (i.e. with the lack of signs of modern urban civilization) for which the Ottoman administration is to blame. It is not the Arabs' (or Anatolians', for that matter) fault that the streets in their towns are narrow, dark, humid, dirty and stinky and that many of them are infested with malaria and other diseases – this is caused by the lack of a proper sewage system, unsatisfactory urban planning, outdated health-care system, dysfunctional hospitals and unscientific drying of swamps, economic underdevelopment and insufficient communications, all to be blamed on the inactivity or inability of local Ottoman (Turkish) administration.¹⁶

Some twenty years later, Halide Edib found herself in a similar, semi-official position representing the now more 'Turkified' centre in the Arab provinces. Although she did not paint a single, homogeneous picture of the Arab inhabitants of Syria and wrote about the people she saw and met with sympathy, her comments were not free from the patronizing attitude of a reformed Self in an environment of the to-be reformed Other. She seems to have interiorized some of the stereotypical narrative devices used for the

¹⁶ One interesting feature of Mağmumi's text are subchapters on medical topography attached to every description of a town or region: here, the author notices the quality of air, water, common diseases, climate etc. It is only from this point of view that he draws a negative picture of, for instance, Aleppo: with disgust, he lists all the things that go against the modern notion of health protection – narrow streets and humid houses with small windows allowing too little sunshine inside, semi-open sewers spreading terrible stench, improper toilets, burning of wet trash in public baths and bakeries, unhygienic butcher shops, lack of a hospital and an inhuman treatment of the mentally ill "like in the Middle Ages" (231-232).

description of subject peoples by travellers from colonial states, a mixture of admiration for the 'noble savages' and disdain for their pre-modern habits and practices: "No people own their land as the Arabs do; they make you feel it instantly. The life substance of the Arab is much warmer and of more aggressive kind than of any other nation I know" (405).¹⁷

When Halide Edib comments on the actions of a Turkish officer in charge of supervising Arab soldiers transported to the front, who uses a wipe on the recruits, one has the feeling that while defending the poor soldiers on the surface, she secretly accepts the officers explanation¹⁸ and makes it clear to the readers that this act of violence has rather to do with the selfless and tiring efforts of a well-meaning Ottoman-Turkish commander to improve the lot of all subjects of the Empire than with the brutality of a colonial power.

Yet, Halide Edib is well aware of the diversity of the land in which she travels and on occasion offers a sympathetic picture of this diversity, including the rich Beirut Christian nobility ("an Arab imitation of the Parisian world"), the Muslims and Druze elites as well as the poor suffering from famine (450).¹⁹ One might only surmise to what extent Halide Edib's choice of vocabulary and imagery was shaped by the fact that she wrote her memoirs in English for the Western audience. We might assume that to some extent she was – consciously or unconsciously – drawing on the virtual encyclopaedia of pre-fabricated conceptions, notions and descriptions on the 'Arab mind' that she must have encountered during her extensive reading of literature in English of that time.

What a careful reader of Halide Edib and Mağmumi's accounts of their journey to Syria should not overlook is a sense of admiration of some things in the provinces, which could be a source of inspiration even for the 'reformed centre'. A good example is Mağmumi's highly favourable description of (new) Beirut²⁰ which, on the one hand, is to him a proof of an effective Ottoman administration and Ottoman order: broad paved roads lit with gas lamps, sidewalks and squares, elegant houses made of stone (among them, of course, stands out the government mansion), a beautiful municipal park, "perfect restaurants and pharmacies", modern barracks and a superb military hospital administered with modern methods and applying modern standards of hygiene and treatment that not even the best hospital in Istanbul can match (242) –

¹⁷ See also her description of Syrian Arabs: "If the Arab likes you in Syria, you receive poems and flowers, and you also receive his confidence unconditionally over a cup of coffee. If you are an official they bribe, flatter, and corrupt you, and so subtle are their ways that it is very difficult to resist them..." (458).

¹⁸ "I start with two hundred, and by the time they reach the next station they become less than forty. They have no endurance, and they give one no end of trouble. I do not like it. They are always after their women; they would rather be shot as deserters than fight; and I would rather go to the firing-line than transport Arabs" (411).

¹⁹ Mağmumi seldom mentions ethnographic peculiarities of the Arabs or local differences in customs, social relations and fashion. He does notice that in Aleppo, men wear "entari [a loose robe], blue şalvar [baggy trousers], a shapeless fez with a blue tassel", whereas the Arabs from Aleppo's hinterland wear *maşlahs* [long, open-fronted coats] and carry a sword, and that local women, including Christians and Jews, are all covered with *çarşafs*, but leaves this uncommented. In one sentence, he shortly notices that "in Aleppo, polygamy is very widespread" (232), yet the reader does not learn anything about Mağmumi's opinion on this practice.

²⁰ The old town of Beirut with its dirty, humid, narrow streets, however, resembles Aleppo.

these are, quite obviously, signs of modern Ottoman reformism.²¹ On the other hand, however, this development was achieved also due to the fact that “the local population is intelligent, hard-working and quite rich” (243). Beirut, in Mağmumi’s eyes, had reached a standard in many instances higher than that of Istanbul. The Ottoman administration alone cannot be credited with creating the excellent educative system (including – besides the classical Ottoman *idadiye* and *rüşdiye* – two foreign medical schools and two Christian lycées), running excellent restaurants, initiating the surprisingly high number of printing offices, libraries, local newspapers and journals, or having a share in the widespread knowledge of French and English (one of which, as Mağmumi adds with respect, even the boatmen and shoeblocks speak).²²

Halide Edib, not surprisingly, was particularly attracted by local women, about whom she wrote with a mixture of exoticism and curiosity and who, to her, were quite heterogeneous. She described women rich and poor, artists and common women desperately looking for their husbands who were in the Ottoman army.²³ Often, her rendering shows admiration (albeit not free from Orientalist imagery), e.g. for a famous singer called Hedio, the great Arab artist whose “gaunt thin silhouette had that force and life which no amount of European clothes or lack of paint could disguise, and she had the typical Arabian swing of the body” (408). Although Halide Edib noticed this heterogeneity, the passion of Arab women for colours and painting their faces excessively belonged, according to her, among the common characteristics of ‘Arab women’ (of the city). Concurrently, despite Halide Edib’s admiration for Arab women, there is a marked contrast between Turkish women and Arab women, and Turkish customs and manners have the power to transform or even override local patterns: “A tall gaunt Arab woman dressed in Turkish fashion entered our compartment. She had a dark face with unusually light brown eyes for an Arab woman (...) her manner contrasted strangely with her height and bearing... She must be the wife of a Turkish officer, I thought” (404-405). Quite interestingly for such a prominent early Turkish feminist as Halide Edib, there is no discussion of the Arab women’s position in society, of polygamy, or of gender separation; rather, positive things are highlighted and women described with a certain fascination and appreciation.

Both Halide Edib and Mağmumi use not only spatial (distance from Istanbul, the centre of Ottoman modernity), but also temporal criteria to judge things as admirable or outdated and to be reformed. Beauty for Halide Edib can rest, as she reveals at several occasions in her memoirs, in things that derive their charm from an almost mythical (Arab) past. When writing that “[no] woman can wring her hands like an Arab woman; there is the same life and beauty in it which one sees in the inspired art of days gone by” (399), she clearly connects her admiration with something safely located in an undefined

²¹ As in his memoirs from Anatolia, he notices what impact an able Ottoman(-Turkish) administrator can have on a rapid development of provinces: in this case, the hospital is the work of Hayri Bey, son of the exiled Rifat Paşa (Prince Reşat’s former personal doctor).

²² Yet he adds with sadness that Muslim schools “unfortunately still teach according to the old system”. Damascus, too, is described as “a beautiful and thriving (*mamur*) country (*memleket*) that people had compared to [a place] with the smell of paradise”, “the cradle of Arab civilization”, a town full of buildings with admirable interiors, beautiful ceilings and mosaics (248).

²³ It is clear that the Bedouins had a certain exotic attraction for Halide Edib, too. See her description of a musical evening in Damascus, where she raves about “an old Bedouin dance performed by two girls, covered in loose and long mashlaks, only their eyes showing, and their bodies undulating under the silk draperies, moving with the agility and grace of the desert people...” (407).

past. Or, on the other hand, praiseworthy social practices or spatial arrangements are to be found in every place or action that emanates 'signs of the future' (i.e., modernity). Thus, Mağmumi compares some Istanbul manners and customs unfavourably to practices particular to the hinterland of Syrian Homs, since despite being provincial and probably not consciously introduced, these practices are ahead of time (measured by the Westernized Istanbul).²⁴

Edhem Eldem rightly pointed out that "while it is true that this binomial construct of 'Turks vs. Arabs' feeds into the most evident, most powerful, and most convincing argument of an Ottoman version of Orientalism, it may be problematic to exclude, albeit implicitly, from the larger picture non-Turks – be they Muslims or non-Muslims – as producers, and non-Arabs – including Turks – as objects, of this new discourse" (2011: 183). The examples of Halide Edib and Şerafeddin Mağmumi show that there was a broad spectrum of attitudes to which these two Istanbulites resorted when describing the people in the provinces, including both provincial Turks (or Greeks) in Ottoman Anatolia and provincial Arabs. Moreover, urbanized, educated Syrians are considered part of (and not the 'Other' of) the Ottoman Muslim modernized community and thus at the same temporal – and spatial, as the example of Beirut shows – level as their metropolitan counterparts. The one thing that clearly indicates the shift in the historical and ideological context over the twenty years that divide both narratives is the way Halide Edib frames her story with Turkish nationalism. Even this, however, does not prevent her from drawing a complex picture of Arabs that is a proof of curiosity and admiration as much as contempt and superiority.

Ottoman rule

Given that both Mağmumi and Halide Edib went to Syria on an official mission, it is hardly surprising that their accounts occasionally sound like administrators' inspections of their estates. When arriving at a new place, they first paid attention to evidences of Ottoman rule and signs of Ottoman presence, particularly administrative buildings, and pondered upon the results of or need for reforms, the construction of new buildings or the state of the infrastructure.

Mağmumi never failed to notice the visible symbols of Ottoman power. He praised the beauty and solid architecture of the seats of local Ottoman administration (*hükümet konağı*) and described, often, but not always, with admiration, other buildings constructed by Ottoman authorities: telegraph offices, lycées, hospitals and military barracks. As he looked at Syria through the eyes of an Ottoman reformist, he emphasized what could be improved, reflected on how to develop commerce and manage natural resources and observed what was missing – namely schools, hospitals, the sewage system or water pipes. This stemmed both from his official mission and his intentionally 'scientific' approach. Yet, the value judgments in his narration are mostly reserved for the representatives of Ottoman power itself, whether praise for energetic *kaymakams* (district governors) and other officials for modernizing cities and introducing social

²⁴ On the road to Homs, Mağmumi and his company stay overnight in a village in the house of a local sheikh. Mağmumi notices with great pleasure how simply, 'modernly' dressed local women are and how unrestrictedly they behave in contact with men, freely talking to them and even shaking hands. One cannot help but be sad, concludes Mağmumi, when he compares this to "the made-up crest-like veiling or the one that covers [women's] faces as [if they were] ogres and the gender segregation in our country which is absolutely an obstacle for progress" (254).

and health services or harsh criticism of the same officials for their lack of willpower or diligence.

Halide Edib seems to have found few such deficiencies of Ottoman power, instead, she repeatedly praised the development and progress the province had made particularly under the 'beneficial' rule of Cemal Paşa: "In fact in every station which came under the authority of Djemal Pasha there were new buildings, good hospitals, a guest-house, a military casino, and all over the country good roads either finished or in the making" (393).²⁵

Both travel accounts bear witness to the fact that their authors were representatives of educated Ottoman-Turkish elites who were in a privileged position compared to most people they encountered and who travelled from the Empire's centre to its periphery. To be sure, this was not necessarily translated into explicit expressions of superiority, but undoubtedly gave the travellers a feeling of security and self-confidence. They had no doubts about the correctness of their views and judgments and expressed no humbleness when encountering things previously unknown. Mağmumi did not raise the question of how he, as a representative of the Ottoman state that sought tighter control and centralisation of the Empire and in the late 19th century embarked on a 'civilizing mission', could be perceived by the local population. He never questioned his dominant position as an Ottoman-Turkish officer endowed with certain privileges over subject Arabs on the periphery. Halide Edib was obviously more aware of this problem and addressed it repeatedly when pointing out how the local population appreciated or liked some acts or representatives of the Ottoman administration, though she did not extend these reflections to her own position as a representative of the central authority. Both Mağmumi and Halide Edib were parts of the Ottoman imperial system that more and more resembled the system of a European imperial power and that was interpenetrated with a similar logic of order and progress. There is a silent acceptance of Istanbul as the 'centre of the new civilization': if it was otherwise, why would Mağmumi or Halide Edib be sent to the provinces in the first place? Why could not local doctors deal with the epidemic, or local bureaucrats look after schools and orphanages?

Endowed with the power entrusted to him by his official status, Mağmumi was clearly recognizable as a representative of the Ottoman rule with a certain authority over the places he explored. He was in a position where he could – and indeed did – give advice, recommend changes, prohibit certain habits or behaviours (e.g. in order to stop the epidemic of cholera) and impose measures for medical reasons. His education and the respect he received as a doctor and officially sanctified authority gave him a clear advantage over the inhabitants of less-developed peripheries, perhaps less so in big cities like Aleppo, Damascus or Beirut, but certainly in rural areas and provincial centres. Given these privileges, it is worth noting that his account hardly contains any explicit expressions of a feeling of superiority, contempt or exotization of 'Others'. Even his modernizing rhetoric of backwardness versus progress, superstition versus science or belatedness versus modernity is rather implicit.

Halide Edib's account makes it obvious that she was constantly aware of the problematic position of Ottoman administration in Syria. She emphasized the

²⁵ It is worth noting that regardless of other aspects of Cemal Paşa's rule over Syria, his administration did in fact bring a number of reform projects, some related to the war efforts, while others corresponding to the aim of improving the integration of various parts of the Empire (cf. Kayalı 1998).

government's (and implicitly the Turks') responsibility for the well-being of the province, but concurrently, subtly – or not so subtly – defended Turkish rule. The foremost place in her defence was reserved to Cemal Paşa to whom she showed respect and admiration. She noted that although (or rather because) he was unable to conquer Egypt, Cemal Paşa focused on public works in Syria of which he was really proud. She did not criticize his harsh treatment of the Arab insurgents in 1916, but referred to these "extreme measures" (400) as a reason why he was so eager to improve his image by creating a good government and public education.

Judging from his travelogue, Mağmumi had very few 'non-medical' contacts with the local population, or at least few worth noting, and spent time only with the representatives of Ottoman administration. His connection with the Ottoman ruling elite and his privileged position is evident in the fact that he always met local Ottoman-Turkish officials (mayors, government representatives, doctors, officers or directors of telegraph offices) and often visited both places of interest and places of inspection with them. They shared a feeling of solitude, being away from home and bereft of the advantages of sophisticated urban (Istanbul) life, in a foreign environment with a different language and different customs.²⁶ This reveals a network of a rather thin layer of Ottoman bureaucrats and professionals in the peripheral areas of the Empire, quite isolated from the local population; many of them did not speak Arabic and their lives revolved around governmental buildings and the company of other Turkish administrators or professionals.²⁷

This is in contrast with Halide Edib, who on purpose searched the opinion of local (elite) men on education and on local administration ("I wanted to talk with enough Arabs to understand the needs of the country", 400) and met diverse representatives of the Arab population, including a sheikh (420). To be sure, she also mentioned the former (Turkish) governor of Aleppo, who had "undertaken to organize and help the Armenian refugees to settle in Syria with real humanity and capacity... knew Arabic well and had broad ideas about the treatment of the Arabs and the other minorities. A convinced Moslem, he cited the Koran and prophesied that all rule based on tyranny was doomed to fail" (400-401). Yet, she was clearly involved in a rich social life with the local population in the cities; she described various visits of the houses of Beirut or Damascus elite Arab women and performances (of dancers and poets) they had organized.

Another difference among the two travellers concerns the perception of Ottoman rule. Mağmumi never doubts that the Arab provinces belong firmly to the Ottoman Empire. For him, Ottoman rule over the Arab provinces (specifically Syria) is taken for granted; he clearly does not feel any need to defend it. It is positive because it is rational. Yet, not any rational rule would have been similarly desirable: speaking about the insufficient infrastructure for "sick compatriots" in Beirut compared to the many hospitals founded by foreigners, Mağmumi adds that it is a political necessity to open a medical faculty in Damascus to counterweight the foreign-dominated health centres in Beirut (246).

²⁶ Curiously, Mağmumi often unexpectedly met friends, former teachers or colleagues he knew from Istanbul. The director of an *idadiye* in Aleppo, Faik Bey, was his former teacher from Kuleli; two of his ex-schoolmates, now pharmacists in Beirut, took him to trips in the area etc.

²⁷ We might assume that many of them have been exiled to the provinces, which made it difficult for them to feel bound to a place they had not chosen to stay in.

Twenty years later, Halide Edib did not consider Ottoman rule over Syria self-obvious; she was aware of the possibility that it might be reaching its end. Although she mentioned that “it would be far safer for Turkey to work with the idea of a future cooperation with the Arabs in their minds rather than with the idea of ruling them always” (402-403), she believed that Ottoman rule was not only right, but it was the best possible solution – for the Arabs. They might not be aware of it now, but they would soon learn how beneficial the just and progressive Ottoman rule – and the related *pax ottomanica* – was. She viewed Arab nationalism in Syria as a tool of foreign political interests. The Turks (the Ottoman government) should help the Arabs develop a real nationalism (“teach them to love their own national culture more than any foreign one”) and when the Arabs get independence they will understand that they have “more common ties and interests with the Turks than with the foreigners”(402).²⁸

The attempt to justify and glorify Ottoman rule runs like a red line through the whole travel account. A particularly telling example of Halide Edib’s views of Ottoman Turkish rule over the Arabs is her description of the situation in Bethlehem with its multiple creeds and peoples ready to jump at each other’s throats at any moment (428). Turkish rule alone promises and symbolizes strength and holds peace and equilibrium in the troubled region: “The Turk alone had a calm, impartial, and quiet look. He divided these spots justly among them all, and stood calmly watching, stopping bloody quarrels and preventing bloody riots in the holy places” (426-427). The way Halide Edib defended Turkish rule thus very much resembles the colonial language of British travellers in India, probably both due to her own belief in the Turks’ mission and the reference to the colonial English-language travel literature the knowledge of which the author and her target audience shared.

The Orient and the West

As representatives of educated elites with extensive knowledge of Western culture, Halide Edib and Mağmumi are imminently aware of the East-West distinctions. It is therefore worth noting that neither of them makes this division a major point of reference in their travels to Syria: they occasionally compare what they see with what they know from Istanbul (Mağmumi more than Halide Edib and not always to the detriment of Syria), but they do not explicitly compare Syria/the Ottoman Empire with Western standards, or explicitly attribute to it ‘Oriental’ features.

For Mağmumi, the Orient starts in Anatolia. Seeing Bursa from a distance, he exclaims: “The domes and minarets of glorious (*şerefli*) mosques, which are a great decoration and the only determinant of Oriental cities, caught our eyes” (24). However, this is probably the only overt hint at the East-West divide. In the rest of the text, not a single comparison is drawn between East and West, no references are made to Europe or the Western civilization.

The authors’ attitude towards the East and the West is not unequivocal. Although generally critical of the Europeans’ role in Syria, particularly the French impact on the

²⁸ When describing the Arabs’ political inclinations, Halide Edib makes it clear that she believes that the Arabs are misled by the French with whom they (mistakenly) connect their future. An ardent nationalist, Halide Edib had respect for Arabs’ nationalism, but most Arabs, according to her, were not real nationalists. She quotes Colonel Fuad Bey who, “[s]peaking about the Arab nationalists, he believed that some were genuine patriots” (403), suggesting that others (i.e. the majority of Arabs) were mere French pawns.

Arabs, Halide Edib had also positive things to say about Westerners, e.g. the American missionaries in Lebanon (the Dodge family) or the English doctor Smith who ran a mental asylum (455). Speaking of Omar's mosque, she shows one of the rare instances of identification with Islamic history: "How rare in history is a man like Omar! I simply gloated over the entry of his army, and his wonderful justice and simplicity – a man of the street, a rare democrat and idealist who had given to the inhabitants such free and happy moments as they had seldom known" (424).

Whereas his European journey can be described as an implicit dialogue with, response to and appropriation of European texts (guidebooks, travelogues, history books etc.), Mağmumi's travels in Anatolia and Syria do not have such an intertextual nature: here, the author is most of the time on his own, not following a route 'prescribed' by Western guidebooks. He creates the text from a dominant position of the Ottoman administrator in provinces, whereas in Europe he is in a subservient situation. As a Westernized, modernist intellectual, well versed in Western scientific literature and, as he claims, having read dozens of travelogues and devoured *Robinson Crusoe*, he must have been influenced by the Western idea of travelling, the Romantic Orient or journeys into exotic countries – yet, this is not reflected or explicitly referred to in his travelogue.

Halide Edib does not mention Western works in connection with her trip to Syria either. However, the impact of the Orientalist travel literature on her own travel description is quite obvious – and much more pronounced than in Mağmumi's text. This is hardly surprising, given the form of her work and the fact that it was intended for a Western audience. Just like Mağmumi's, also Halide Edib's description of her journey through Syria resembles her impressions from Anatolia. It was her first trip to the region East of Izmit and she watched her surroundings with curiosity. Yet, she seemed more aware of the 'Arabness' and emphasized the 'authenticity' of the Arab country: "In a few hours the real Arabic villages rose in the twilight" (397), ... "we were in Homs, a real Arab town" (398). On the train entering the Arab lands, she wrote, "I woke up to a state of things which seemed a dream, so different in sound and feeling from what I have known all my life" (398). This was the case of nature – represented particularly by the desert with its almost mystical qualities – as well as the inhabited areas. "No wonder that whether you enter Arabia as their ruler or as a traveller you are soon completely enveloped in its atmosphere. You not only speak their language and live their life, but you actually acquire their looks!" (404).

There is a certain contrast between the way Halide Edib described the province's nature, particularly the desert, and its inhabited areas. The desert is grand and impressive, inspiring religious connotations,²⁹ while the inhabited areas seemed poor, somewhat crude and exotic. Interestingly, however, at least in one instance she referred to the Arab cities (compared to the desert), as "civilization" (418).

The attitude to the exotic belongs among the most striking differences between Halide Edib's and Mağmumi's accounts of their Syrian travels. For Mağmumi, the exotic narrow streets or picturesque neighbourhoods were signs of backwardness that had to be overcome and modernized. Almost in every Syrian (and Anatolian) city he visited, he noticed with displeasure the narrowness of the dirty streets, the lack of a proper sewage system and unhygienic distribution of clean water. Mağmumi also

²⁹ "The moon rose late, but the luster of those near stars, ever so much larger and brighter than the stars I had so far known, illumined the desert with a soft and clear light. The camels and the men stood out in full outline, colorless, but mysteriously and softly enveloped in light" (417).

noted that most places he visited in Syria (and Anatolia) were ‘cheap’ or ‘extremely cheap’ compared to his reference point (Istanbul). This might indirectly allude to economic underdevelopment: the closer to the centre, the more expensive, but also more advanced. The places as he describes them definitively have a different outlook than Western cities: crooked and narrow streets with heavily loaded donkeys running through them at high speed and the general lack of hygiene and cleanness (Aleppo), terrible shanties and swamplands infested with malaria and sick people with swollen bellies (borderland Anatolia-Syria) (237) are a far cry from the wide tree-lined and well lit boulevards of European cities.³⁰ Yet that Mağmumi himself perceived the contrast is only conjectural: he never makes the comparison.

For Halide Edib, the traditional architecture or habits had an exotic charm. When the towns or settlements were more modern, Halide Edib mentioned either that it was due to the new constructions of the Ottoman administration or found it strange – as if not sufficiently exotic (or Oriental?): “It was almost uncanny to go through the streets of Beer-Sheba, so well lighted, and all the roads arranged on a plan, with new white houses and the mass of military buildings...” (413).

Although Halide Edib did not attribute the Arabs ‘Oriental’ (and the Turks ‘Western’) characteristics, implicitly, or through casual remarks, she showed a condescending attitude towards the Arabs’ imitation of the West. Thus, she wrote about the “cheap European imitation costume” and “cheap and badly made European dress” (409) or about members of the rich Beirut Christian nobility as “an Arab imitation of the Parisian world”, who were ashamed of their own traditions and tried hard to hide them (450). Albeit travelling with a serious mission, not as a tourist, the way she described her journey resembled European travelogues, which, even in the 20th century, continued to “be popularly understood as the immersion into picturesque, distinct, colourful cultures” (Duncan – Gregory 2002: 8). The form of her writing, addressing a Western audience and replicating the model of earlier (Western) travelogues, thus may have influenced also its content, particularly in the emphasis on the exotic.

In their travels to the Syrian periphery of the Ottoman Empire, both Mağmumi and Halide Edib can arguably be identified as ‘Orientalists’. Mağmumi, with his stark belief in the (Ottoman) modernizing mission and benefits of this modernization for the provinces, appears closer to what Edhem Eldem identifies in Osman Hamdi as ‘Ottoman Orientalism’ (less than Makdisi’s Ottoman Orientalism, due to his attitude towards the Arabs). Halide Edib travelled somewhat more like a ‘European Orientalist’, though she certainly shared Mağmumi’s belief in the benefit of Ottoman modernization for the peripheries.

Conclusion

Şerafeddin Mağmumi and Halide Edib were divided by two decades with all the changes they had brought, as well as the differences resulting from the authors’ personalities. Nevertheless, their travelogues show certain similarities, particularly the identification of both intellectuals with the Ottoman administration and the way they both saw Istanbul as a centre of reference. Ottoman rule in the peripheries had in their

³⁰ Also his rare metaphorical description of “desert trains” (*çöl katarları*) whose “wagons” comprised of donkeys and camels (238) could be seen as a contrast to his – albeit later! – description of French high-speed trains and modern means of communication in the West.

understanding primarily a modernizing mission and was clearly beneficial for the local population.

The two travellers differed in their attitudes to the Arabs – Mağmumi did not show any contempt towards them, but also seems to have had very little contact and virtually no relationship to the Arab population that he deemed worth speaking of. Halide Edib viewed the Arabs as a diverse group, not fitting one stereotypical image; she clearly respected, liked or admired some Arabs she met. On the other hand, her travel description occasionally shows a condescending attitude towards the Arabs, which comes to the fore particularly in comparison with the Turks, most markedly in connection with Arabs as soldiers.

The attitude of both Halide Edib and Mağmumi to the periphery clearly shows ‘Orientalist’ elements. It also reveals, however, that there were different types of ‘Orientalism’ or a whole spectrum of attitudes that can only with a lot of generalization be labelled by the same term. Although Mağmumi’s attitude fits better the concept of ‘Ottoman Orientalism’ (emphasizing the civilizing mission of the Ottoman administration), it is far less imbued with the colonialist mindset of a master in his faraway domain than in Makdisi’s understanding of the concept. And while Halide Edib in some parts of her travel account could arguably be labelled Orientalist *ala franga* (with the attitude of a colonial master as well as an interest in the exotic), the perceived superiority of the Turks in her case resulted from her strong nationalism, rather than a disdain of the civilized for the yet-to-be civilized, which was characteristic of European-style Orientalism.

As Mağmumi’s and Halide Edib’s cases so nicely show Ottoman metropolitan attitudes to the peripheries were a mixture of inclusive and exclusive discursive practices that shifted towards a more essentialist and ethnic understanding of the Ottoman community in the post-1908 period. These entailed both an imperial rhetoric of the superiority of the Ottoman Istanbulite centre radiating progress and modernity to less fortunate regions of the Empire (with ethnic overtones in Halide Edib’s case) and an understanding of the basic equality or complementarity of the Turkish and Arabic (or other) elements of the Empire, provided they did not oppose the idea of modernization.

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