



Dico ego, tu dicis, sed denique dixit et ille:

dictaque post toties, nil nisi

dicta vides.

Department of History

Mustafa, Metin: PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTHER:

EUROCENTRISM IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ISLAM AND THE OTTOMAN TURKS

THESIS SYNOPSIS

European observations of the Mediterranean Orient has been a continuous process since it came into contact with Islam in the eighth century and these observations have culminated in the birth of Orientalism and the distorted image of not only the Middle East but the whole Islamic world! Why should people study other peoples' history? Can we study the history of the 'Other' objectively? What if *their* history is not written in the western traditional sense? Whatever the questions maybe, since the latter part of the Middle Ages some in the western world became interested with non-Western history. Is there such thing as the history of the 'Other'? And, if so, from whose perspective is it being written - that of the European or of the Other? Then, what is European history? Has it evolved independently of itself or has it been influenced by the history of the 'Other'? If that could be the case then can the West observe and study the 'Other' objectively?

Chapter 1 examines the rise of Islam and the conception of the Other in the Middle Ages. It looks at the "possible" emergence of a barrier or a dichotomy between western Christendom and Islam. If a barrier had existed at all during this time then how and when did it arise?

Chapter 2 looks at the emergence of the Turks from Central Asia and the part they played in the

division of the Mediterranean during the 16th century. With this role the Ottoman Turks thus established for the European the *stereotypical* image of a Muslim - that of a *despot, warlike, barbarian* etc.

During the 17th century Europe begins to become conscious of its neighbouring civilisation - Islam. Europeans begin to travel the Ottoman lands: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria etc. With these travels Europeans begin to create the Orient of the Classicists. These observations will be expanded in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 examines the Orient during the period of Enlightenment. This is the period when Europe begins or attempts to reach an understanding of the Other. However, with this understanding emerges "Islam and the myth of exoticism" in western art, music and literature.

The next chapter looks at the era of imperialism and how Europe and the west began to make the Other its subservient. This culminated in the birth of Orientalism and when mixed with the political upheavals of the era simultaneously helped create *the decadent Orient and the Terrible Turk*.

With the demise of the West at the end of the First World War there emerged challenges to Orientalism and this culminated in the Islamic resurgence in the 1980s - 1990s. This resurgence has been interpreted as Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic re-awakening, Islamic fanaticism etc. What it shows, however, is that Islam has become since the collapse of Communism the only ideology that is challenging the West. These will be discussed in **Chapter 7**.

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