
*Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient* is an exciting reader of critical texts by Turkish intellectuals about the encounter of East and West. Translated from the original Turkish, the selections in multiple genres appear in English for the first time since their publication from the late nineteenth century into the early decades of the twentieth century. The central theme of the collection is a rehabilitation of sorts of European misperceptions about the Orient, though there is no unifying factor in the writing as a whole. The book also includes many beautiful illustrations, which enhance the writing. Zeynep Çelik’s decision to include these extra features brings the text to life, immersing the reader in the time period. The images, reproductions of original photographs of writers and others, art and architectural works, clips from newspapers, and figures from film and drama, support the organizational framework of the written texts. The book is thematically organized into five sections: Grand Battles, Art as Measure of Civilization, Oriental Women and Life at Home, The Unique Case of Pierre Loti, and Sarcasm as Vengeance. Çelik’s introduction is a valuable critical analysis of Turkish intellectual endeavors during this time period.

Çelik’s introduction to the volume is definitive. It provides much insight regarding the historical context and culture of the period under consideration. For one thing, the turmoil of the many wars in which the Ottoman Empire was involved caused major changes in the domains of history, geography, ideology, and culture. The small and larger wars were consequential for the Empire. In addition to the loss of many territories, the ultimate result was the demise of the Ottoman Empire (1918) and the birth of the modern Republic of Turkey as we know it (1923). Ideologically, the period was marked by stormy isms—Ottomanism and Turkism; Islamism and secularism; nationalism and statism; and modernism and liberalism (p. 14). Equally dynamic was the cultural domain, as evidenced by the newly translated selections. Writing in their native language of Turkish and voicing their objections, questions, and corrections, the selected
intellectuals respond, interrogate, and satirize European orientalist errors about the Orient and Islam. Not only are the writers expressing ideas from the “native” perspective; they are actually situated in their local spaces, with their gaze toward Europe, hence the significant contribution of this book to the scholarship. Çelik suggests that the writers’ search for self-identity remains fragmentary and loose. Nonetheless, although no coherent collective identity is articulated, this early writing anticipates Edward Said’s encyclopedic text *Orientalism*.¹ Hardly comparable to Said’s coherent, rigorous, and methodical theorization of the construction of the Orient by the Occident, Çelik admits that Said’s “dynamic discourse” was inspirational (p. 15).

The title of the reader is from an article published in 1872, in the periodical *İhret* by Ottoman intellectual Namik Kemal. This short article exemplifies the passionate tenor, and sometimes anger, of Ottoman discourse against Europe’s “misrepresentations, distortions, and factual errors” about the Ottomans and Islam (p. 13). To counter this misrepresentation, Kemal recommends a progressive idea akin to suggestions made by comparatists in the twenty-first century, that being for Ottoman scholars to begin writing about their history and religion in European languages. The publications, he proposes, should be written in a style that would be accessible to the general public. Kemal’s article concludes by his commendation of the Ottoman state for protecting the rights, languages, and cultures of all the communities living within its realm. His exultation should not be taken as political correctness. It is actually consonant with the recent scholarly findings of Ussama Makdisi’s book about the Ottoman Empire.²

Kemal’s ironic and satirical tone regarding the ignorance of eminent nations is striking. European writers investigate the truth without the right resources, he says. The only sources they depend on are the tour guides and two popular writers: D’Ohsson and Hammer.³ Both writers, in Kemal’s view, stereotype Muslims as “zealots” and Islam as “ignorant fables” (p. 60). He emphatically states that these sources are filled with wrong, exaggerated, and confused misinformation that is unreliable: wars were always presented as sectarian; rituals misunderstood; and words mistranslated.

Çelik says that Kemal’s article ignited several fiery reactions for the next 50 years, in imaginative writing, political commentary, literary criticism, and essays; but the writing did not take the late Ottoman period by storm. Each section of the book, however, contains rich and complex gems that are enlightening about religion and identity, race and ethnic differences, women and family, and art and civilization. Not only is this early critique of the European gaze toward the Orient an endorsement of Said’s erudite scholarship, Çelik adds. It is also testimony that the intellectual and cultural milieu of the period was hardly oblivious to Europe’s cultural hegemony.
The publication of *Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient* is a timely challenge to the state of the world in the twenty-first century. This book would appeal to students and scholars of Middle East studies, history, art and cultural studies, the core curriculum, and the general reader.

**Mitchell, Jolyon, and Joshua Rey. War and Religion: A Very Short Introduction.**

The late decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed several wars in which religion and war are imbricated. This concise Oxford edition, titled *War and Religion*, is a good introduction to this old phenomenon that seems to remain historically relevant to humans. The book is in six chapters with two lists: one for further reading and another of 16 historic and artistic visual illustrations. Chapter 1 explores the question of remembrance and memorialization in Muslim, Western, and Native American cultures, to explain the significance of religious rituals and symbolism to human life. Mitchell and Rey state that humans employ such acts to mourn and remember the horrors of war; commemorate loss and death; and promote a sense of duty, sacrifice, and connections with the dead. Rituals and shrines signify the multi-faceted and ambiguous relationship between war and religion (p. 14).

The authors launch the subject by plunging into the discussion of *The Martyr*. This video representation of Karbala, the Shi’a ritual of Ashura, memorializes the Karbala battle over the rightful caliph-successor to the Prophet in 632. The battle ended in the defeat of the Shi’a (the followers of the Prophet’s cousin Ali) and the victory of the Sunni (the followers of Abu-Bakr). Since 680, the Sunni Muslims have dominated the Muslim world, marginalizing the Shi’a. The Iranian-produced video links the recent sectarian war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) with the historical, political past of the battle that had initiated the schism within the Muslim community. Since the 1979 rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Shi’a Republic has been vying for recognition by (and domination of?) the Muslim world. The invocation of the battle of Karbala, which seems to have had a domino effect, appropriately signifies the current entanglement of war and religion in this part of the world.

Chapters 2-5 explore the larger links between war and religion, beginning with the ancient and classical worlds, and moving into the modern and contemporary periods. In the ancient and classical worlds and across the continents, the gods played direct roles in everyday life and partook in the wars among humans. Since the rise of Islam after 610, and with the Islamic Age of