

## **A Study on the Sociocultural Life of the Balkan Peoples as Depicted in Mary Adelaide Walker’s Travel Book *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*<sup>1</sup>**

*Seda Ağırbaş*

Ege University, Turkey

e-mail: [seda.agirbas@ege.edu.tr](mailto:seda.agirbas@ege.edu.tr)

ORCID: 0000-0002-2649-5078

### **Abstract**

Throughout history, the Balkans forming part of the Ottoman Empire have been the focus of attention of many Western travelers as a region inhabited by nations of different ethnic and sectarian backgrounds. In this study, based on Mary Adelaide Walker’s 19th-century book titled *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, the way of life and sociocultural structure of the societies living in the Balkans, as seen through the eyes of a female traveler, will be discussed. In the conclusion, apart from a general summary, the article will shed light on the changing sociocultural life in the Balkans during the time when the traveler was in Macedonia.

### **Keywords**

travelogue, Mary Adelaide Walker, Balkan peoples

### **Introduction**

The Balkans, which had been under the administration of the Ottoman Empire for nearly five hundred years and played an important role throughout their history,

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<sup>1</sup> This study is a comprehensive analysis of Mary Adelaide Walker’s travel book, which was included in the present author’s doctoral thesis titled *İngiliz Gezgin Mary Adelaide Walker’ın Eserlerinde Osmanlı Dünyası* [The Ottoman world in the works of British traveler Mary Adelaide Walker].

attracted the attention of many Western travelers, who visited them both due to their geographical location and the fact that they were a region inhabited by different ethnic and sectarian nations. These territories were perceived as having no clear borders and being intertwined both geographically and culturally. The travelers' observations led to the emergence of an image of the East.

In his book describing Western approaches to the Orient, Edward Said defines Orientalism as a "complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West."<sup>2</sup> He states that the knowledge produced by the West about the East was produced on a purely political, cultural, and religious basis as an indicator of the West's own power. Galip Çağ adds that the chaotic borders defined as the East in western-centered thought emerged with Orientalism.<sup>3</sup>

Maria Todorova explains that the geographical east of Europe and the part of the world lying to the east of it were perceived in the West as places characterized by economic backwardness, industrial underdevelopment, and lack of advanced social relations typical of the developed capitalist West.<sup>4</sup> She states that the Balkans became the East of the world for the West from the 18th century onward when Western travelers discovered the region as a new area, and it was then that the idea of Balkanism emerged, matching the perception of the East present in Orientalism.

Slovenian anthropologist Božidar Jezernik has written the most comprehensive study on the changing face of the Balkans as seen through travelers' eyes. In *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (2004), he shows how in the works of the Western travelers who visited the Balkans, geographical observations and even those about the natural environment, vegetation, and local elements were often conveyed in the form of prejudiced and subjective descriptions.<sup>5</sup> The point of view of these travelers was also described in the chapter in Todorova's book entitled "The Discovery of the Balkans,"<sup>6</sup> which was another source used in the present study.

## Travelogues as Sources of Information about Foreign Countries

This study deals with the social and cultural life of the Balkans described by a woman traveler rather than the political history of the region. Travel books, which help to understand history and envisage past events, are important sources of information

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Random House, 2014, 40 (first published 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Galip Çağ, "Batılı Seyyahların Gözünde Karanlık Bir Orman. Balkanlar [An obscure wilderness in the eyes of Western travelers. The Balkans]," *Türk Yurdu Dergisi* 102 (310) (2013), 1–21, <https://www.turkyurdu.com.tr/yazar-yazi.php?id=789> [accessed November 19, 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe. The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers*, London: Saqui, 2004, 30–9.

<sup>6</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 62–88.

about foreign countries. They are also valuable documents that present the visited places from different perspectives: their scenery and natural features from the geographical point of view; their wars and treaties from the historical point of view; their social life, religious beliefs, ethnic structure, and population from the sociological point of view; and their customs and traditions, archeological history, and monuments from the cultural point of view.

One of the important travelers who conveyed their impressions in a detailed and literary way was Evliya Çelebi. This 17th-century Ottoman explorer embodied all the characteristics of his era by living, traveling, and feeling; in his book *Seyahatname*, he shed light on the sociocultural life in the Balkans. Travel literature, which gradually developed in the centuries following his death, was continuously enriched by the accounts of travelers interested in different places and cultures. The culture of travel led to the publication of many works written in the 19th century by female travelers, one of whom was Mary Adelaide Walker. She traveled first to Istanbul, Bursa, İzmit, and Ankara in Anatolia; then to Lesvos and Crete; then to Albania via Macedonia in the Balkans; and finally to Romania, and she described the visited places in detail and even drew some of them.

### **The Image of the Balkans in Mary Adelaide Walker's Travelogue**

*Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, published by Chapman and Hall in London in 1864, was Walker's first travel book. It is a record of her journey to Thessaloniki with her brother, Rev. Charles George Curtis, and from there to the Albanian lakes on the Macedonian border with some friends. Her travelogue, which consists of 14 chapters, contains 12 drawings she made herself.<sup>7</sup> Although it is very comprehensive, also including descriptions of the natural environment, geographical features, and historical and monumental buildings in the cities, this study focuses only on Walker's comments about the social structure and social and cultural values of the Balkan peoples.

After briefly mentioning their departure from Istanbul aboard the *Argonaut*, Walker describes in detail the sunset view of the Bosphorus and the crowds of people on deck. She recounts their arrival in Çanakkale at sunrise and in Kavala in the afternoon, then writes about the architectural monuments of the city and the magnificent view of the coast from the ship sailing close to the shore, and finally about their departure from the city via the Plovdiv Road.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> These sketches were later colored by Hanhart using the lithography technique. Zeynep İnankur, Reina Lewis, Mary Roberts, *Mekanın Poetikası, Mekanın Politikası. Osmanlı İstanbulu ve Britanya Oryantalizmi* [Poetics of space, politics of space. Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism], İstanbul: Pera Müzesi Publishing, 2011, 202.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864, 2.

Having commented briefly on the appearance of various people speaking Turkish, Spanish, Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, and other languages, whom she saw while approaching the pier in Thessaloniki, she states that they left the dirty and smelly quarter and went to a much more airy place away from the city.<sup>9</sup>

Walker goes on to describe one of the important elements of Turkish domestic life, i.e., Ottoman women paying each other visits. During these gatherings, where the most rigorous rules of etiquette applied, guests were offered all kinds of treats and provided with entertainment so that they would feel comfortable and satisfied.<sup>10</sup> In Thessaloniki, Walker got an invitation to the mansion of Governor Hüsnü Pasha, where she had the chance to observe the customs and traditions as well as the social life of the Turks. She describes in detail the layout and furnishings of Turkish houses, the custom of entertaining guests, which was an integral part of daily life, and the conversations of Turkish women in the harem. She notes that in certain rooms, there were several windows very close to each other, the lower parts of which were screened with thick lattices, while the upper parts were tightly draped with thick curtains. Referring to a large sofa (*divan*), or rather, a wide mattress placed on a wooden bench, she explains



Fig. 1. *A Morning Call in Albania* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864, inner cover)

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, 32. Also see Meropi Anastassiadou, *Selanik, 1830–1912. Tanzimat Çağında Bir Osmanlı Şehri Selanik*, trans. Işık Ergüden, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2001 (original title: *Salonique, 1830–1912. Une ville ottomane à l'âge des Réformes*), 72–3.

<sup>10</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Aile* [Family in the Ottoman society], İstanbul: Timaş Publishing, 2009, 18–19.

that the lady of the house sat usually in the corner of the sofa, which was furnished with two or three softer, flat cushions (Fig. 1).<sup>11</sup>

The guests were served sweetmeats on trays and drank coffee from cups in ornamented holders called *zarfs*,<sup>12</sup> which were sometimes decorated with diamonds and precious stones. Walker emphasizes that the lady of the house personally offered the coffee to the visitors or assigned her maid to do it. She notes that the coffee tray held by the servant was covered from the front with a circular piece of sequined satin fabric fringed with silver and that another servant was carrying a silver vessel like the censer in churches, in which was a small coffee pot on embers of charcoal (Fig. 2).<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 2. Untitled (After Emelia Bithynia Hornby, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863, inner cover)

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 69. Also see Mary Adelaide Walker, *Eastern Life and Scenery with Excursions into Asia Minor, Mytilene, Crete and Roumania*, Vol. 2, London: Chapman and Hall, 1886, 50.

<sup>12</sup> “‘Zarfs’ are elegant containers, with carved patterns made of gold or silver, enameled or jewel inlaid, in which handle-less coffee cups are placed so as not to burn the hand.” Abdülaziz Bey, *Osmanlı Adet, Merasim ve Tabirleri* [Ottoman customs, ceremonies, and traditions], ed. Kazım Arısan, Duygu Arısan Günay, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 1995, 211.

<sup>13</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 71–3.

The traveler also presents the women of the harem, their appearance, clothes, and the topics of conversation they discussed.<sup>14</sup> Referring to the fact that the customs were governed by rules, she says that the degree of respect shown to the guests demonstrated how much they were valued (Fig. 3).<sup>15</sup>



Fig. 3. Untitled (After Emelia Bithynia Hornby, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863, 320–1)

On her way to Monastir, Walker met a Bulgarian bride and groom whom she persuaded to let her draw them. The bride, wearing elaborate clothes, carried on her head many coins tightly strung together, which formed a kind of crown; long strings made of the same material, interspersed with colored glass beads and other ornaments, hung in loose festoons under her chin (Fig. 4). The groom also had very colorful flowers on his head and resembled, from a distance, American Indians with their plumes.<sup>16</sup>

Walker also describes other people she saw on the road and strings of camels carrying loads that she passed.<sup>17</sup> Upon reaching Monastir, she was received at the bishop's house and encountered women who wore skull caps that looked like inverted cups. Made of embossed silver, they had painted handkerchiefs wrapped around the edge and were decorated with gold and silver coins; a large gold coin often dangled in

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 74.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, 73. See also Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Kültürü ve Gündelik Yaşam Ortaçağdan Yirminci Yüzyıla*, trans. Elif Kılıç, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publishing, 2011 (original title: *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich*), 136–7.

<sup>16</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 80–2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, 88–9.

the middle of the forehead. Walker notes that they were hosted in a friendly manner and that the service was conducted by priests, who wore long black robes with wide sleeves and brimless hats made of black cloth.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 4. *A Bulgarian Bride* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

Later, she had the opportunity to draw a picture of a group of *cavasses* (Turkish police officers) and servants chatting in the courtyard. They were very colorfully dressed, e.g., one Albanian wore a pink jacket, light blue sleeves, a scarlet fez and sash, and a white fustanelle (pleated skirt), while a Gypsy was dressed in a brown jacket braided with black and sleeves hanging loose behind and a rose-colored cotton shirt

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, 103. See also Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, comp. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Vol. V.8, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Publishing, 2011, 633.

underneath. He also had an old Bedouin-style headscarf fastened on with a string and smoked a long pipe while chatting with a young Albanian, who wore a bright yellow waistcoat and a pink cap with blue tassels. Two others wore gold-embroidered lilac and scarlet jackets with blue and yellow silk sleeves, red caps, blue tassels, and shiny cartouche boxes of embossed silver attached to the belt at the back.<sup>19</sup>

During her stay in Vodena (Edessa), Walker observed that local women wore similar silver skull caps as those of Yenice. She recalls crossing a stone bridge just outside the city and enjoying a feast in the shade of nice plane and chestnut trees by a clear, fast-flowing stream (Fig. 5). Apart from the food eaten by her and her friends, she also describes the people scattered in groups on the grass. The coffeemakers served those sitting on the ground by running around with hookah hoses, small coffee cups, and pieces of coal held with small tongs. The gaily-dressed grooms walked the horses up and down, and local musicians entertained the audience. The Turks, on the other hand, who looked much more serious, sat in the shade lazily smoking their hookahs while cheerful children played around. Large mats with carpets and padded quilts on them had been spread on the ground, and a lamb that had been turning slowly on a large spit under the trees was brought forward by two men and cut into small pieces. Walker notes that stuffed and roasted lamb is a common “gala dish” all around Albania and that part of Turkey and proceeds to inform her readers about the preparation of the food. First,

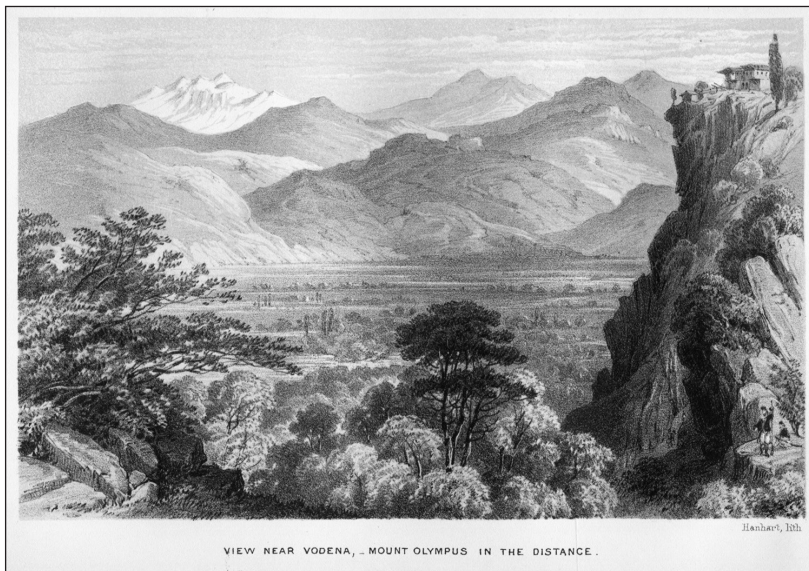


Fig. 5. *View near Vodena [Edessa]. Mount Olympus in the Distance* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

<sup>19</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 104–5.

the entrails were removed, then twisted around long sticks and slightly roasted – it was called *kokoreç* in that region and considered a delicious food by the local people.<sup>20</sup>

Upon arriving in Vodena, Walker was received by the Archbishop of the Greek Church. She states that the clergyman's demeanor was easy, dignified, and courteous and refers to his personal appearance by saying that he had a stately figure set off by his flowing violet robe, which was an indication of his position, and that he had strongly-marked, regular Grecian features and a long black beard as well as bright black eyes. A sumptuous supper had been prepared for them, consisting of fresh fish caught in nearby streams, fowls cooked in different ways, all kinds of stewed and roasted lamb, vegetables, creamy milk with rice, and yogurt, which was widely consumed in the East. Walker informs the reader about other Greek traditions by stating that the best wines of the country and delicious bread, as well as peaches from the archbishop's garden and grapes from the slopes of the surrounding mountains, were on the table.<sup>21</sup>

Later, the author gives a lot of detailed information about the cultural significance of Monastir. She notes that it is famous for its filigree work in silver and gold, like many other cities in Albania, and produces such items as *zarfs* for coffee cups, the backs of round hand mirrors, dagger and knife handles, and cigarette holders. As she explains, large clasps and other ornaments made of base silver that are worn by Bulgarian women are sold in a different part of the bazaar or in shops located on a bridge over the river Drachor (Fig. 6).<sup>22</sup>

Walker's travelogue is also a rich source of information about the social life of the Christians and their traditions. She describes the wedding ceremony in the family of a wealthy Wallachian merchant in Monastir, the customs observed during the festivities, the clothing of the bride and groom, the musical entertainment, and the bride's dowry. Three days before the wedding, at ten o'clock at night, the bride-to-be was led by her friends, accompanied by music, to visit three fountains in the vicinity and drink water from them. And on the day before the ceremony, the guests gathered at the bride's house and were served sweetmeats and sherbet.<sup>23</sup> Walker notes that the dark-colored silk dress in an old-fashioned French style did not look like a wedding dress.<sup>24</sup> Then she describes the bride's departure to the groom's house. According to Wallachian customs, the solemn procession consisted of the bride's friends carrying paper lanterns and was accompanied by melancholy music. Upon arriving at their destination, the groom's mother first came forward and said something to the sad bride, kissing her and putting two lighted candles in her hands. A white sheet had been spread at the doorway for the bride to cross, and the mother brought forward a flat cake (a symbol of abundance),

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, 118–9.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, 110–1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, 140.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, 141.

<sup>24</sup> See also Angela Jianu, "Women, Fashion, and Europeanization. The Romanian Principalities, 1750–1830," in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans. Gender, Culture and History*, ed. Amila Buturović, Irvin Cemil Schick, London: I. B. Tauris, 2007, 205.

which she held on the bride's head for a moment while she fed her some sugar from a saucer. Walker describes that as soon as the bride entered her room, she drew a cross on the wall with honey and tapped her head slightly against it three times. The bride then stayed in her new home all night, guarded by two old women, and the wedding ceremony was held the next day.<sup>25</sup>

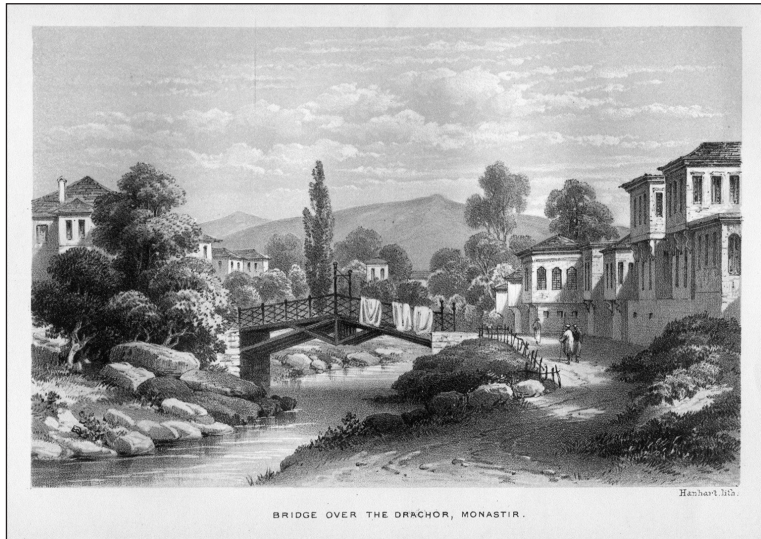


Fig. 6. *Bridge over the Drachor, Monastir* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

Afterward, Walker describes the market day in Monastir, which fell on Mondays. The bazaars were spacious and always crowded and well stocked. The women from the surrounding villages brought their products to sell in two big goat's-hair sacks, carried on a strap, one hanging in front and the other behind. Walker depicts the behavior, clothing, and appearance of the Bulgarian women she met in the bazaar in a remarkably detailed way. Their clothes were made of strong and very elegant fabric but lacked style. They consisted of an undergarment of thick white wool or cotton embroidered with red and black patterns; the same patterns appeared on the wide, open sleeves, around the border, and up the back. Over this, the women wore a slightly shorter petticoat embroidered with a similar ornament and a very large, half-a-meter-wide belt made of goat hair around the waist. An apron made of red and black material woven like a carpet worn over this wrap and a sleeveless pelisse of thick dark fabric completed this costume. Walker mentions that the women also wore a white turban embroidered like the rest of their clothes, with one end wound around the head and the other end hanging from the back to the heels (Fig. 7). In contrast, the Turkish women in Monastir

<sup>25</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 143–4.

covered their heads with white veils called *yaşmak*, and their cloaks were more like the coats worn by the Jews of Hamburg than the long chador used in Istanbul. Jewish women, on the other hand, wore very complicated turbans on their heads.<sup>26</sup>

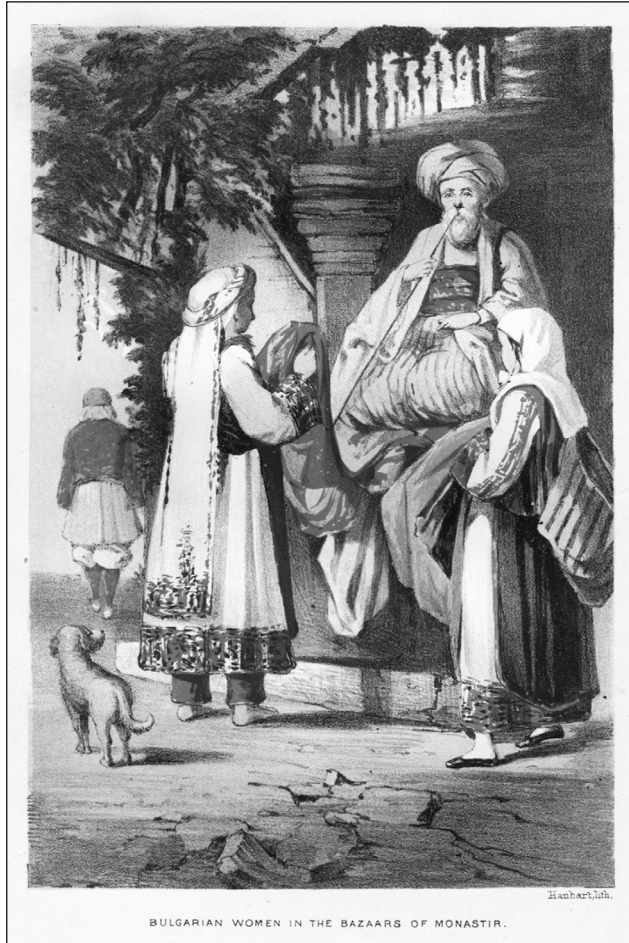


Fig. 7. *Bulgarian Women in the Bazaars of Monastir* (After Mary Adelaide Walker, *Through Macedonia to the Albanian Lakes*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1864)

While staying at a priest's house in the village of Bukovo, Walker had the opportunity to sketch the Bulgarian peasants that she saw from the large balcony of the cottage. Apart from drawing an impressive portrait of a young Bulgarian girl, she also writes that her apron and socks were red, as was the embroidery of her petticoat, and the belt on her waist was decorated with two buckles made of wrought metal. She wore

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, 144–6. See also Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Kültürü*, 136–7.

a broad crown 15–20 cm high, made of coins tightly strung together, and ornaments made of such coins falling to her breasts.<sup>27</sup>

Walker gives a very interesting account of the customs and traditions of the Albanians, which she learned before leaving Monastir.<sup>28</sup> She also describes the Albanians whom she saw in Ohrid:

The town seemed filled with Albanians, many in the splendid Ghegue costume, which, in addition to the brilliant gold-embroidered jacket, and leggings worn by most of the other Albanian tribes, displays a long pelisse of carmine-coloured cloth, reaching nearly to the feet behind, and open in front to exhibit the white fustanelle common to the whole race.<sup>29</sup>

After mentioning the historical and cultural buildings of the city of Struga, Walker focuses on a school there and conveys her impressions of it in detail. The school building stood next to the church, and there were two hundred students in total, thirty of whom were girls. She mentions that older girls came to school wearing veils that covered their mouths and half of their faces, that the children sang a hymn in praise of the Sultan after marching around the classroom, and then made a low bow and crossed themselves, guided by a ringing bell. She notes that almost all the students were Albanians dressed in dirty white linen clothes.<sup>30</sup>

Two-handed water jars resembling Etruscan vases that were made in the potteries on the banks of the river in Struga drew Walker's attention. She states that those ceramic products and filigree craftsmanship constituted the main industry of this small Albanian village. The principal source of income for the inhabitants of Ohrid, on the other hand, was dressing furs for the caftans that were commonly worn by both men and women all over Turkey. The skins came from Leipzig, and the coats made of heavy fabrics and lined with fur were worn on official occasions in all seasons regardless of the temperature.<sup>31</sup>

In Ohrid, Walker was invited to the mansion of the pasha, the top official in the city, and she relates the visit to the harem and the sincerity shown to her by the hosts, as well as their customs. She describes the lady of the house as beautiful but old, with a fair complexion, blue eyes, and light brown hair cut short in front. She had a long plaited tress hanging down her shoulders, and her brow was covered with little rosebuds attached to a muslin handkerchief on her head. She wore a pearl necklace as well as a few strings of coins, and her fingertips were hennaed. Her wide *shalvar* (trousers) and *entari* (robe) were made of light-colored silk fabric with gold stripes (Fig. 8).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 154–6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 161.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, 188. See also Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, 717.

<sup>30</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 197–8. See also Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, 715.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 199.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 201–3. See also Sevgi Gürtuna, *Osmanlı Kadın Giysisi* [Ottoman women's clothing], Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999, 4–5.



Fig. 8. Untitled (After Emelia Bithynia Hornby, *Constantinople During the Crimean War*, London: Richard Bentley, 1863, 244–5)

Walker then describes in great detail the other ladies who were guests in the harem. An Albanian Muslim woman entered the room in a black cloak, under which she wore a chemisette of striped gauze and a black velvet waistcoat embroidered with gold galloon and with a row of gold buttons hanging down the sides. She also had a jacket of purple silk with sleeves of peculiar shape, again embroidered with gold, that tapered towards the wrist. The lady's *shalvar* of white striped muslin was also embroidered in gold, and her attire included as well a sleeveless fur coat of red velvet that reached to the feet. She had with her a little girl, who wore a red velvet jacket with hanging sleeves. Walker comments that it complemented her mother's magnificent costume and that the style of children's clothing was no different from that of adults.<sup>33</sup>

Later on, the traveler recounts what she has learned about local marriage customs. According to a well-established tradition, especially among Greeks, after the death of the father, the eldest son had to take over the management and responsibility of the entire family. He had to provide for the livelihood of his mother and sisters, pay his sisters' dowry, and sometimes even take care of his younger brothers.<sup>34</sup>

Having reached the densely-populated Korçë Plain, which was full of villages, Walker focuses on describing the goods sold in the bazaars she visited and those who produced them. She mentions that the only things worthy of note were red sandals, rough slippers, and splendid dresses of Albanian ladies with arabesque patterns braided with gold.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 203–5. See also Walker, *Eastern Life*, Vol. 1, 102.

<sup>34</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 231.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 244.

She moves on to give her impressions of Bilisht, considered by some to be the border village of Albania, which was mostly inhabited by Bulgarians. Walker recounts in detail the dinner in the manager's mansion where she stayed. The guests were served soup, fish, chicken, and many stewed vegetables, as well as pancakes with clotted cream, baklava, milk pudding, halva, yogurt, and, finally, according to invariable Turkish tradition, rice and a fruit compote. The food was placed, one at a time, on a round plate in the middle of the table, and the guests, with the help of a piece of tough bread, ate in the Oriental style with two fingers and the thumb of their right hand, never using the left one.<sup>36</sup>

During her stay in Kastoria, Walker was hosted by a Greek fur trader. She describes the social and family life of the Greeks, paying close attention to the women's clothing and appearance. Their costumes consisted of an open, high-waisted silk skirt with a huge buckle, a short woolen jacket with gold embroidery, and a red fez with a very long blue silk tassel falling over one shoulder.<sup>37</sup>

As is clear from the narration, the author has a positive opinion of the Turks, despite the conflict between Muslims and Christians. Even though it was impossible to travel in the Balkans without hearing about many acts of unlawful and unpunished outrage, Walker emphasizes that she has seen more kindness in Turkish homes than she expected. She was often welcomed with great hospitality and received close attention. According to her, nothing in the customs and traditions of the harem that she has observed would shock even the most timid and sensitive people. She points out that the domestic relations between husband and wife and parents and children, both in the family of a prominent person that she was acquainted with and especially in middle-class families whose daily lives seemed simple and flawless, would be admirable anywhere.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

Most of the 19th-century Western travelogues describing Balkan history, geography, culture, and social life are dominated by negative prejudices. The travelers' distorted perception of the region, which was under Ottoman rule at the time, was mostly the result of an Orientalist frame of reference and the phenomenon of marginalization. This approach goes much further back, even to the 14th century. Pierre Béhar writes in his article "Türkenbilder, Italienerbilder: Antithesen des Deutschen" that the Turks were called "barbarians" for the first time in the 16th century. He emphasizes that the expression was still used in the 19th century because of the underlying fear of the Turks.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 251–3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, 256–7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, 270–1. See also Walker, *Eastern Life*, Vol. 2, 49.

<sup>39</sup> After Gustave Rasch, *XIX. Yüzyılda Avrupa'da Türkler*, trans. Hüseyin Salihoğlu, İstanbul: Yeditepe Publishing, 2004 (original title: *Die Türken in Europa*), 7.

In terms of the difference between what the travelers who visited the Balkans looked at and what they saw, one of the most remarkable examples is Gustave Rasch, author of *Die Türken in Europa*, written in 1873. He is known to have been influenced by Orientalist thought in his work, which contains very rich descriptions of Bulgaria, Istanbul, and the lands of Greece.<sup>40</sup>

Another Western traveler who was a prisoner of distorted perception and placed “the other,” Turkishness, and Islam at the center of his assessments is François-René de Chateaubriand. Reflecting on his journey from Paris to Jerusalem between 1806 and 1807, which led through the Peloponnese, Greece, the Aegean Islands, Izmir, Istanbul, and finally the East (Jerusalem), he noted: “These barbarian Muslims and Turks from the East, devoid of Christian virtue, have harmed civilization.”<sup>41</sup>

Historian Galip Çağ points out that the manifestations of the Ottoman urban civilization in the Balkans and the investments made by the Ottomans in the conquered region – although they still exist today – were ignored and disregarded by the travelers, but these prejudiced views of the Balkan cities are easy to refute. It is clearly seen that the travelogues and travel notes, one of the biggest sources of information about the region in civilized Europe at the time, were written from a distance. The researcher also quotes, after Jezernik, the opinion of Sir Edwin Pears confirming this:

Under the Turkish rule, Constantinople has become the most retrograde capital in Europe. Under such rule, Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia, eighty years ago, were mere collections of mud huts, occupied by dejected and poverty-stricken people. Since their inhabitants got rid of Turkish oppression these villages have rapidly grown into towns, have adopted the appliances of civilization [...].<sup>42</sup>

After spending many years in harems, mostly in the Ottoman capital, Mary Adelaide Walker briefly visited Macedonian lands. During her stay there, as in Istanbul, she attracted attention with her moderate approach that differed from the views of other Western travelers. Her narrative makes it clear that diverse peoples such as Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, Wallachians, Albanians, and other communities of different religions and beliefs lived together harmoniously in the Balkans from the 17th century to the mid-19th century. Despite the unpleasant incidents between Muslims and Christians, Walker shows a positive attitude toward the Turks:

Such acts of lawless and unpunished outrage are of common occurrence. It is impossible to travel at all in the provinces without hearing of them continually, and justice compels the mention of them [...]. In several families I have been welcomed with hospitality, and have received many a gentle kindness and delicate attention [...].<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 10–1.

<sup>41</sup> Çağ, “Batılı Seyyahların,” 10.

<sup>42</sup> Jezernik, *Wild Europe*, 206–7.

<sup>43</sup> Walker, *Through Macedonia*, 270.

As she states in her other travel book, *Eastern Life and Scenery with Excursions in Asia Minor, Mytilene, Crete and Roumania* (1886), misinformation about Turkey and the Turks was widespread in Europe, which is why she devotes so much attention to describing the daily life of Turkish families and the beauty and sanctity of family ties. She also mentions that it was impossible to form an unbiased and accurate view of family life in a Muslim country, especially in the Balkans with their diverse ethnic identities and religious beliefs. “There are good and bad everywhere, and you may chance to come in contact with a household which is not respectable, in Stamboul, as in London or Paris, or where not? But such exceptions ought not to form an invariable rule.”<sup>44</sup> It is clear from her words that she partially or almost completely got rid of Western prejudices about the Turks and the harem and took a more prudent approach to events. We also see that she regretted the changes in society, e.g., Turkish ladies wanting to adopt a European style and copying the Christian women they most often came in contact with, who were usually Greek and Armenian peddlers, going from house to house and selling dyed headscarves, trimmings, and embroidery at exorbitant prices. Some of the ladies were also given vulgar French novels to read in order to imitate “Frank” life.<sup>45</sup>

In general, as Çağ has pointed out, the Balkans were also affected by the confusion resulting from the complicated relationship between European, Balkan, and Turkish/Ottoman/Muslim elements. The fact that the travelers were for a long time the only source of information about this eastern part of Europe, which had been a foreign land to them for centuries, and that their interpretations of it were far from reality seriously impacted this geographical region. Although the travelogues written about it reflect general impressions, more in-depth research on the sociocultural structure of the Balkans should be conducted.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 272.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, 272–3.

<sup>46</sup> Galip Çağ, *Balkanlar: Öteki Avrupa'nın Kökleri ve İnşası* [The Balkans. Roots and construction of the other Europe], Ankara: Otorite Publishing, 2022, 307–8.

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