

Europe and Turkey in the 18th Century (Bonn, 9-11 Oct 08)

Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp

Call for papers

Europe and Turkey in the Eighteenth Century

Annual Conference of the German Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (DGEJ)

October 9-11, 2008, Bonn

Against the background of the current transformations of Europe's identity structures and the debate surrounding Turkey's accession to the European Union the conference is pursuing questions encompassing the intercultural contacts and the reciprocal perceptions between Turkey and Western Europe in the eighteenth century.

'The dangerous Turk', one of the most antagonistic narratives in early modern times, loses impact after the Ottoman defeat in the second siege of Vienna 1683. The image of the Turk changes from the menacing, invincible terror of Christendom to that of a quaint and exotic neighbour. Fashion, music and architecture, as well as the expanding trade with the Ottoman Empire, which brings fabrics, perfume and spices to Europe, express an increasingly positive reception of Turkey. The general curiosity towards the Ottoman Empire is manifested in a variety of travelogues and surveys. Conversely, the European impact on the socio-political and cultural life of the Ottoman Empire increases at the beginning of the eighteenth century, although the Ottoman interest in Europe remains considerably weaker.

The broad, partly euphoric acceptance and blending of Ottoman culture into the political, scientific, economic and aesthetic discourses of the eighteenth century is a form of imaginative world acquisition, which should not obscure the fact that it often lacked the proper knowledge of the other. Critical attention needs to be devoted to the argument occasionally advanced by scholars that the eighteenth century was marked by a relative openness towards other ways of life, compared to the seventeenth century which, in the case of the Ottoman Empire, seldom goes beyond a negative stereotyped apprehension, or, compared to the nineteenth century, which due to European imperialism and a more exclusive eurocentrism reverts to a more limited perception. What possibilities were there to gain an idea of the "other" and

to what extent was this idea founded on autistic self-assertion on the one hand, on curiosity and creative appropriation on the other? What forms of intercultural contacts existed and how have they been documented?

Contributions are invited on the following topics:

1. Constructions of Otherness: Encounters with the Turks as the fundamentally "other" in visual arts, music, literature; orientalism/exoticism
2. Basic antagonisms: Turcophobia - Philhellenism; Christianity - Islam; Antiquity - the eighteenth-century present; Greece - the Ottoman Empire
3. Media of information transfer: diplomats, interpreters, traders, pilgrims, prisoners of war; travelogues and letters, journals, dictionaries, libraries
4. History of the academic field: Ottoman Studies in the eighteenth century from d'Herbelot and Rycaut to Hammer-Purgstall; asymmetry of scholarly perception
5. Cultural transfer, intellectual and material: from studies abroad and architecture to merchandise and military technique; 'Turquerie'

Abstracts should be sent to schmidt-haberkamp@uni-bonn.de before 15 September 2007.

Convenor:

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