

## An Inquiry into the Ottomans' Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century

### 19. yüzyıl Sonlarında Osmanlıların Çingeneler Konusundaki Bilgileri ve Çingene Algısı Üzerine Bir Araştırma

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#### Özet

Bu çalışma 19. yüzyıl sonlarında Osmanlıların Çingeneler üzerine neler bildiklerini ve onları nasıl algıladıklarını/tanımladıklarını sorgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda üç farklı metin incelenecektir. İlk metin, kurgusal olup hem popüler hem de bilimsel bilgiler içeren çok yönlü yazar Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin *Çingene* (1887) isimli romanıdır. Mérimée'den esinlenen Ahmet Mithat romanında her ne kadar Çingenelere karşı toplumda var olan önyargıları geçersiz kılmayı hedeflese de, bunu yaparken Avrupalı yazarların metinlerinde aynı dönemlerde sıklıkla rastlanan stereotipleri yeniden üretmektedir. İkinci metin akademik olarak nitelendirilebilecek ve dolayısıyla bilimsel bir değeri olan Şemseddin Sami'nin *Kamûsü'l-a'lâm* adlı özel adlar sözlüğündeki (1891) "Çingâne" maddesidir. 19. yüzyıl Batılılaşma ruhuyla örtüşür bir biçimde Şemseddin Sami'nin "Çingâne" maddesini kaleme alırken kısmî olarak yararlandığı Avrupalı ansiklopedistlerin yarattıkları olumsuz Çingene imgesini kendi önyargılarıyla birleştirerek yeniden ürettiği görülmektedir. Üçüncü metin, yazarı tarafından da öne sürüldüğü üzere kişisel bilgi ve deneyimlerden yola çıkılarak üretilen bilginin bir ürünü olup, 1891'de Çingenelerin yaşam koşullarının iyileştirilmesi gerekliliğinin belirtilerek yerel yönetime sunulan Siroz mekteb-i idâdî-i mülkiyesi lisân-ı 'Osmânî ve Fârisî mu'allimi Sa'di Efendi'nin lâyihasıdır. Sa'di Efendi'nin metni tamamıyla kişisel deneyimlere dayandığından, diğer iki Batı esinli metinde ortaya konulan Çingene algısını Doğulu yerel olan ile karşılaştırma olanağı sağlayacaktır. Aynı dönemde kaleme alınan ve yazılış amaçları farklılık gösteren bu üç metnin karşılaştırılması sadece

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Çingene algısı ve bu topluluğun Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki yaşam koşullarına dair ek bilgiler vermekle kalmayacak, aynı zamanda Osmanlılar tarafından nasıl bilindikleri ve daha da önemlisi nasıl tanımlandıkları konularına ışık tutacaktır. Her üç metindeki benzerlikler aslında Osmanlı toplumunda Çingenelere karşı varolan önyargıların ne kadar derin olduklarının görülmesi sonucuna varılmasına olanak sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çingeneler, Önyargı, Stereotip, Osmanlı'da Çingene algısı, Çingenelik.

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to inquire the knowledge and the perception of the Ottomans on the Gypsy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Three different texts will be examined in order to shed light on what the Ottomans knew about Gypsies during the aforementioned period. The first one, a fictional one, embodying both popular and scholarly knowledge is the novel *Gypsy-Çingene* (1887) of the prolific Ottoman author Ahmet Mithat Efendi. Ahmet Mithat, inspired by *Mérimée*, attempts to refute the prejudices against the Gypsies in his novel, albeit through the reproduction of the conventional Gypsy image found in the European texts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The second text, representing scholarly knowledge reclaiming scientific value, belongs to Şemseddin Sami (Fraschery) Efendi and is the "Gypsy-Çingâne" entry in his famous encyclopaedia-*Kamûsü'l-a'lâm* (1891). As a result of modernization and westernization, the text of Şemseddin Sami reproduces the negative image of the Gypsies generated by his European counterparts on whose texts he partially bases his work and on which he transposes his own prejudices. The last text based on practical and personal knowledge as it is claimed by its author, is a lengthy and detailed report (1891) underlining the urgency of improving the living conditions of the Gypsy population, submitted to the authorities by Sa'di Efendi, an Ottoman-Turkish and Persian teacher at a secondary school in Serres-Greece. The report of Professor Sa'di, as the only text to be written based on the personal experience of its author, will provide an opportunity to compare the local-eastern perception of Gypsies to the two other western-oriented texts. The analysis of these texts bearing three different kinds of knowledge and having thus three different objectives, will not only offer complementary information on the perception of Gypsies and on their living conditions in the Ottoman Empire, but will also throw light on how they were known and more importantly defined by the Ottomans: a definition more or less common in all three texts which shows how deeply rooted the prejudices against the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire were.

**Keywords:** Gypsies, Prejudices, Stereotypes, Ottoman Gypsy Perception, Gypsiness.

By the arrival of the Turks at Anatolia, Gypsies had already been dwelling for a considerable time in the realms of the Byzantine Empire which was going to progressively leave its place to the Ottomans. From its establishment to its disappearance, the Gypsies lived among the various ethnic groups under Ottoman rule. Named as *Çingâne* or *Çingene*, after the Greek *Ατσιγγανοί* [Atsinkani]<sup>1</sup> or as *Kibtî* since they were considered, as it was in other countries, to have come from Egypt<sup>2</sup>, the Ottomans' knowledge on Gypsies seems to be limited generally to legal issues and mostly regarding taxation. Thus by the study of the tax registers, one can establish statistical and geographical data about the members of the Gypsy communities and can find information on Gypsies who lived in the Ottoman Empire only regarding their perception as tax payers. This information without doubt enables the historian to understand how the Ottoman state viewed the Gypsies and based on such data, we are well informed about the principal occupations of the Gypsies, as they were paying their taxes on their income, and their locations where they were found in big numbers. However, when it comes to the Ottomans' knowledge concerning the origins of the Gypsies, their life style, etc. the official documents are generally lacking information.

The first text written in Ottoman Turkish giving information on Gypsies regarding their origins or on their characteristics, for instance, dates back to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a date almost more than two centuries after the first mention of the Gypsies in official documents<sup>3</sup>. It is Evliya Çelebi, the well-known Ottoman traveller who informs us on Gypsies in his monumental

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<sup>1</sup> George C. Soulis, "The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans in the Late Middle Age", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vol. 15, 1961, pp. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Angus M. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, Oxford, UK/Cambridge, Mass. USA, Blackwell, 1992, 48; Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roms en Europe*, Strasbourg, Editions du Conseil de l'Europe, janvier 2007, p. 18; Michael Jan de Goeje, *Mémoire sur les migrations des Tsiganes à travers l'Asie*, Leide, E. J. Brill (coll. « Mémoires d'histoire et de géographie orientales par M. J. de Goeje, n°3), 1903, pp. 74-75.

<sup>3</sup> The first mention of the Gypsies dates back to the reign of Mehmet II (1453-81) and it is found in a regulation on the number of the sheep of the Rumelian Turkish tribes (and a law on Gypsies). The transcription and English and French versions of the said regulation (and law) in question are largely reproduced, see: Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tablâlleri: Osmanlı Hukukuna Giriş ve Fatih Devri Kanunnâmeleri*, İstanbul, Fey Vakfı Yayınları, 1990, vol. I, pp. 397-400 (in facsimile and transcription); Nicoară Beldiceanu, *Les actes des premiers sultans conservés dans les manuscrits turcs de la Bibliothèque nationale à Paris*, Paris/La Haye, Mouton, vol. I, 1960, pp. 102-104 (French version); Robert Anhegger, Halil İnalcık (eds.), *Kanunname-i Sultânî ber Muceb-i 'Örf-i 'Osmanî : II. Mehmed ve II. Bayezîd Devirlerine ait Yasaknâme ve Kanunnâmeler*, Ankara, TTK, 1956, pp. 39-40 (transcription) ; Faika Çelik, "Gypsies (Roma) in the orbit of Islam: the Ottoman experience (1450-1600)" (unpublished MA thesis), Montreal, McGill University, August 2003, pp. 94-100 (in facsimile, transcription and English version) ; Oral Onur, « Çingeneler », *Tarih ve Toplum*, 137, May 1995, pp. 16-22 (transcription).

*Seyahatname* – Book of Travels. Here we find information on Gypsies which can be qualified as common knowledge full of clichés. In accordance with the common belief at the time in Europe, the Gypsies of Evliya are originally from Egypt. As for their general characteristics, Gypsies speak the “languages of the countries where they are settled”<sup>4</sup>, they are cursed people who had to leave Egypt and “were scattered abroad, condemned to wander from clime to clime and from town to town, hungry and homeless, dwelling in the mountains and valleys, and raiding and thieving”<sup>5</sup>. They are described as “tyrannical, good-for-nothing, thieving, irreligious people – they pretend to be Muslims, but are not even infidels!”<sup>6</sup>.

Considering Evliya’s personal position as a servant of the central authority, who would identify himself as a good Sunni Muslim, his discriminatory description of the Gypsies is not at all surprising, especially since the traveller’s attitude towards other ethnic groups of the Empire, such as Kurds, Jews, Greeks, Laz, etc., can easily be defined as ethnic stereotyping as Robert Dankoff demonstrates in his work on Evliya Çelebi<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, it would be rather too optimistic to consider that Evliya’s perception of the Gypsies was limited to the man himself. As a matter of fact, as Demetrius Cantemir, the Prince of the Ottoman vassal state of Moldavia in his *System or the Structure of the Muhammadan Religion* describes, Evliya’s perception of the Gypsies as irreligious or unreliable people could be considered quite common among the Ottoman Turks. According to Cantemir:

*The Turks and together with them the other Muslims say that people of the Gypsies are related with Pharaohs, [...] having no knowledge of letters, books and any other divine human law, [they are] spread all over the world, by the mercy and the commandment of God. The Gypsies who believe in Muhammad consider themselves to be perfectly pious by this only title, but beside this; they do not look for the commandments and the conditions of the Law; they ignore all of it without doing or preserving the Law says; there are no prayers of any kind, no fasts and they don’t want to even hear about Mecca; instead of sympathy they commit larcenies, frauds, charms and witch crafts [...].*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Victor A. Friedman, Robert Dankoff, “The earliest known text in Balkan (Roumelian) Romani : A passage from Evliya Çelebi’s *Seyāhat-nāme*”, *JGLS*, vol. 5, n° 1, 1991, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2006, p.67.

<sup>8</sup> Ana Oprîşan, “An overview of the Romanlar in Turkey”, Adrian Marsh, Elin Strand (eds.), *Gypsies and the Problem of Identities: Contextual, Constructed and Contested: Papers presented at the First International Romani Studies Conference in Istanbul, at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, April 10-12, 2003*, Istanbul, Mas, Transactions Series vol. 17, 2006, p. 167 (pp. 163-169).

As Suraiya Faroqhi points out, the work of Cantemir was “enriched by copious notes reflecting the Istanbul folklore”<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, as an intellectual who “had lived in Istanbul for decades, spoke and read Ottoman and had been in contact with many educated Istanbulers”<sup>10</sup> with an “intimate knowledge” “on Ottoman life and institutions”<sup>11</sup> Cantemir, even though there is no proof to confirm his sources, might have been quite familiar with the accounts of Evliya who half a century before was suggesting the same origin with a similar attitude to describe Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from Evliya's, describing Gypsies' origins, life, characteristics and reflecting their perception in the Empire, there is no other text, except for the books of European travellers<sup>12</sup>, to be found on the subject revealing the Ottoman view. It is only after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that we come across texts dealing with Gypsies. Referred to as “the longest century of the Empire”<sup>13</sup>, the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the whole for the Ottomans and the Ottoman historiography represents a period of reform and change during which the Empire underwent an important modernization and westernization process. As a result of the reforms undertaken, the Ottoman *intelligentsia* became quite familiar with the European way of life. Europe served during this period as an example not only for political and military purposes, but also in architecture, science and arts. The European country by excellence that was taken as an example, especially in the fields of arts and sciences, was France. Thus, it is quite common to find French influence in the works of the Ottoman men of pen. This is also valid regarding the texts written on Gypsies by the Ottomans in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Following a historical chronology, the first text reflecting Ottoman's knowledge on Gypsies, belongs to the prolific Ottoman playwright, novelist and journalist Ahmet Mithat Efendi. In his novella *The Gypsy* published for the

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<sup>9</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, London/New York, I. B. Tauris, 2005, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Halil İnalçık, “Foreword”, in *Dimitrie Cantemir, Historian of South East European and Oriental Civilizations*. Alenxandru Dutu & Paul Cernovodeanu (eds.), Bucharest, Association internationale d'études du sud-est européen, 1973, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> The European travellers, especially the French, give non-negligible information on the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire and on their perception by the Ottoman State and society from the mid-sixteenth century on. As this article deals with the Ottomans' knowledge on the Gypsies they weren't integrated in the study. For more information concerning the European accounts on Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire and also on Gypsies' social and judicial status in the Empire, with an emphasis on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see: Ömer Ulusoy, *Les Etres en marge: les Tsiganes de l'Empire ottoman*, İstanbul, Les Editions Isis, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. İstanbul, Hil, 1995.

first time in 1887<sup>14</sup> Ahmet Mithat relates the tragic story of an Ottoman European style well-educated young man who falls in love with a Gypsy girl and dies of a broken heart at the end because of the prejudices present in the society against Gypsies which prevent the young couple from getting married<sup>15</sup>. The young hero of Ahmet Mithat's story, Şems Hikmet Bey, son of a well-known Istanbulite family, by means of education turns the young "savage" Gypsy girl Ziba into a lady proving to his family and entourage that even the Gypsies were humans and deserved to be treated as such. Although the young man proves the society's perception of the Gypsies to be wrong along the story, this does not change his family's attitude towards the young girl and in consequence the hero, Şems Hikmet dies as it has already been revealed.

Ahmet Mithat Efendi was a fervent western-oriented Ottoman intellectual who had faith like many others had at the time in the reforms and progress. All along his writing career he believed to have a mission to educate the people by means of literature<sup>16</sup>, and his novella *The Gypsy* should be considered as the result of such an intention. Even though he was inspired by the French author Prosper Mérimée, the Gypsy girl Ziba incarnates, contrary to the *femme-fatale* Carmen, purity and honesty. But it would be misleading to consider Ahmet Mithat free of prejudices. In fact he seems to share the prejudices against Gypsies and Gypsiness and his Gypsy representations are not at all different from the ones of Mérimée. He describes Gypsies as savage, nomadic, good-for-nothing, immoral, gouger, impostor, irreligious, and thieving people. Their primary occupations are fortunetelling, basket making, flower selling, shamelessly dancing and singing. The gypsy women are generally beautiful during their youth, but with age become repulsive. Their physical description is rather conventional; the Gypsies are dark-skinned with white teeth.

In sum, Ahmet Mithat's approach and representation of the Gypsies in its essence are more likely to be qualified as those of a man who initially acknowledges the conventional stereotyped negative Gypsy image. It is only after the Gypsies get rid of their gypsiness that they deserve to be fully accepted by the society<sup>17</sup> and as a consequence unconsciously by the author himself as he tends to prove to his public that Gypsies are human beings too.

Despite his negative representation of the Gypsies Ahmet Mithat's principal contribution regarding Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire is that he

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Histoire de la littérature turque du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Faruk Bilici (ed.). Translated by F. Bilici, C. Erikan, F. Fidan, G. Mete-Yuva. Arles, Actes Sud, 2011, p. 588. For the date of the first edition see also the bibliography of: Nüket Esen, *Karı Koca Masalı ve Ahmet Mithat Bibliyografyası*, Istanbul, Kaf, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Çingene*, Istanbul, Sel, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> A. H. Tanpınar, *Histoire de la littérature turque du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 572.

<sup>17</sup> Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Çingene*, p. 69.

enabled the Turkish speaking Ottoman public to catch up with Europe since he is the first Turkish writer who points India for the true origin of the Gypsies. It's quite interesting and also strange that as an Ottoman, Ahmet Mithat was inspired by Mérimée's *Carmen* to lay out Gypsies' origin and to describe their mode of living, while European scholars were, for almost two decades, using as reference the monumental work on Ottoman Gypsies of the eminent Dr. Alexander Paspati. In fact, Paspati's *Etudes sur les Tchingbianés, ou Bobémiens de l'Empire ottoman* appears to be unnoticed by the Ottomans.

The eminent writer, journalist, publisher, encyclopaedist and lexicographer, Şemseddin Sami, an Ottoman intellectual of Albanian origin in his encyclopaedia *Dictionnaire universel d'histoire et de géographie* published in 1891 uses as reference for his "Gypsy" entry like Ahmet Mithat not Paspati but a French lexicographer. According to Ağâh Sırrı Levend who wrote a biography of Şemseddin Sami, the Ottoman lexicographer in his six volume encyclopaedia used 84 sources in Arabic, Persian and Turkish and 7 sources in European languages<sup>18</sup>. After an examination of these sources there seems to be one which might have been served as reference to Şemseddin Sami to write down his "Gypsy" entry. It is the popular French *Dictionnaire universel d'histoire et de géographie* published in 1842 by Marie-Nicolas Bouillet. The use of Bouillet's encyclopaedia regarding his "Gypsy" entry by Sami is more than likely, since there are passages which are almost translations from French into Ottoman-Turkish<sup>19</sup>. Yet unlike Bouillet, Sami is quite sure about the country of origin of Gypsies. Regarding the rest Sami reproduces the same data about Gypsies with some additional personal convictions of his own. Both authors begin with what they consider the most common feature of the Gypsies: they are nomadic people who wander from town to town, from village to village without having a settlement or a country for themselves. Sami points out nevertheless that the Gypsies had in some towns in the Ottoman Empire entire districts. Both authors, Bouillet and Sami, suggest the invasion of Timur as the reason for the initial exodus of the Gypsies from India. According to Sami it was after their defeat in India that the Gypsies fled from their country of origin and were scattered all over the world seeking shelter. Sami in his redaction follows almost entirely the pattern of Bouillet. The question of origin is followed by the numbering of the different names given to Gypsies in other countries. Then, the reader has the opportunity to learn the common physical and social features of the Gypsies: dark-skin, white teeth, ugliness etc.; they are known to speak the languages of the countries in which they are living, although they have a

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<sup>18</sup> Ağâh Sırrı Levend, *Şemseddin Sami*, Ankara, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1969, p. 83-85.

<sup>19</sup> Compare : Marie-Nicolas Bouillet, « Bohémiens », in *Dictionnaire Universel d'Histoire et de Géographie*, 5<sup>th</sup> augmented edition, Paris, Alger, L. Hachette, 1847, p. 229, and Şemseddin Sami (Fraschery), « چنگانه », in *Kamûs-ül Âlâm*, Constantinople, Mihran, 3<sup>rd</sup> vol., 1891, pp. 1880-1881.

sort of argot, or a strange language they speak among themselves; and even though they confess the religion of the people among whom they are living, it is uncertain what they really believe in.

Apart from the similarities in the assumptions of the two authors, there are some differences and additional information on Gypsies given by Sami. For instance the Ottoman encyclopaedist gives as the total number of Gypsies all over the world as high as four to five millions. There are also Gypsies who are white-skinned with blue eyes. The women are generally beautiful but become ugly as soon as they give birth. They have a sharpness of intelligence, great capacity and talent especially in music and most of them have a beautiful voice. The settled Gypsy men are generally blacksmiths, while the nomadic Gypsies are sieve and basket makers. But as the most common occupations of the Gypsies, we find bear taming and horse dealing for males, and fortunetelling for women.

By reading Sami's "Gypsy" entry we again witness a sort of recurrent repetition of the clichés about Gypsies. Yet what is important regarding the Gypsy perception in the Ottoman Empire by taking into account Ahmet Mithat Efendi's novella and the "Gypsy" entry of Sami is that they contributed, to some extent, to legitimizing and justifying the prejudices present among the Ottoman society, since they reclaim a certain authority and scientificity on the subject. Especially Sami's "Gypsy" entry should be considered as an example for this process. Here, one can observe the same phenomenon which was taking place more than one and a half century before in Europe. As Fraser underlined it in his *Gypsies*, since the publication of Chamber's *Cyclopaedia*, the European encyclopaedists throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were developing and repeating the negative image of Gypsies in their works with the same discriminating attitude<sup>20</sup>. And with Sami's Encyclopaedia, let us say the Ottomans joined them.

It is still worth noting that although Sami and Ahmet Mithat, as western-oriented Ottoman intellectuals, might have been under the influence of European writers, their Gypsy representations in their works should not be considered as imported from Europe. On the contrary, their negative Gypsy representations, as I tried to demonstrate, were already quite common among Ottomans considering the accounts of Evliya or of Cantemir.

As far as the two texts of the two Ottoman intellectuals are concerned, the Ottomans' knowledge on Gypsies regarding their origins and language seems to be updated by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, two crucial questions remain to be asked: What was the impact of the works of these two authors on common people? What did the common man know about Gypsies in the late 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> A. M. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 189.

century in the Ottoman Empire? Even though it might not be possible to answer these questions accurately, probably the common Ottoman man was unaware of the information on Gypsies given by Sami and Ahmet Mithat. A lengthy report of seven pages submitted to the local authorities on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1891 by Sa'adi Efendi, an Ottoman-Turkish and Persian teacher at a secondary school at Serres-Greece, enables us to come to such a conclusion<sup>21</sup>. Based on his personal experiences Sa'adi writes his report to underline the urgency of improving the living conditions of the Gypsy populations in the Empire. For the teacher, the Gypsies, who “didn't give from the earliest times onwards any proof of human existence except for birth and death”, needed to be educated. According to Sa'adi, as they are generally not very religious people, it is quite probable that they would change their religion and become Christians due to the missionary activities in the Empire and in consequence they would serve the interests of the enemies at the expense of the Muslims and the Ottoman Empire.

The teacher in his report, in order to convince the authorities of the rightfulness of his judgement, develops his arguments first by pointing out the negative characteristics of Gypsies. They are irreligious, beggars, good-for-nothing, useless people, thieves whose women and girls seduce married men. Then Sa'adi puts forward the causes of the crimes committed by the Gypsies. It is due to ignorance and the miserable and poor living conditions that these people commit the aforementioned crimes. Even though they fulfil, as the rest of the Ottoman subjects do, all their duties from taxpaying to serving in the army, they don't share the same rights, are not allowed to attend to schools because of their Gypsiness, and are not treated equally as other Ottomans. Neither the State nor the society show any compassion or sympathy towards these poor people. And as a consequence they commit larcenies, thefts and are useless and irreligious. The teacher's report in itself is quite interesting as it gives a complete description of the poor living conditions and situation of the Gypsies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although he shows a lot of sympathy towards the Gypsies, Sa'adi Efendi, like Ahmet Mithat does in his novella, considers Gypsiness as something that should be got rid of. He even gives examples of Gypsies who, although rarely are settled down, lost their Gypsiness, earn their livings by decent jobs and are good Muslims. What is even more interesting about the report of the teacher is his explanation of the name “Çingâne/Gypsy”. According to Sa'adi Gypsies were descendants of the Tartars of Manchuria from the North of China. As the Capital of this place was Çingeyân, the Gypsies were called after it. Thus, the diabolic act which took place between Çin and Gân couldn't be attributed to them.

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<sup>21</sup> The report can be found in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul with the following references: *BOA. Y. MTV.*, 47/180, 24. C. 1308.

It's not quite easy to find out what the teacher understood from the place Çingeyân. Yet, it is highly credible that, by putting forward this place, he aimed to disregard the popular belief after which the Gypsies were considered to be the descendants of the sexual relation or the marriage of the brother and sister *Çin* and *Gân*. It seems that the story of *Çin* and *Gân* was widely known among the Turks as Fanny Janet Blunt also mentions it in her book on Turkey published in 1878<sup>22</sup> and according to Halliday other variants were also present in the Ottoman Empire during the same period<sup>23</sup>. Thus Sa'adi's allusion to this story might be considered as another proof of the negative perception of the Gypsies in society.

To conclude, the Ottomans' knowledge on Gypsies regarding their origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century can be qualified to be accurate from a historical point of view. However, these texts which enable the Ottoman Turkish speaking public to catch up with the European readers, at the same time, due to their scientificity, legitimize the prejudices present in the Ottoman society against the Gypsies since at least from the time of Evliya Çelebi. On the other hand, for the common people the Gypsies remain as a people of uncertain, despised or even cursed origin and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to suggest that the perception of Gypsies, even among those with good intentions whether they were common men or intellectuals, was quite negative and Gypsiness itself was considered as something unacceptable, something that had to be cured.

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<sup>22</sup> Fanny Janet Blunt, *The People of Turkey, by a Consul's Daughter and Wife*, London, Murray, 1878, vol. I, pp. 158-159, quoted in the foot note n° 3 by: William Reginald Halliday, "Some Notes upon the Gypsies of Turkey", *JGLS*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, vol.1, 1922, p. 174; see also William Reginald Halliday, *Folklore studies ancient and modern*, London, Methuen, 1924, pp. 21-22.

<sup>23</sup> W. R. Halliday, "Some Notes upon the Gypsies of Turkey", p. 175; see also, W. R. Halliday, *Folklore studies ancient and modern*, p. 23. The story of the sexual relation between the siblings *Çin* and *Gân*, according to Mustafa Aksu seems to be still in use in order to explain the origins of the Gypsies in Turkey, see: Mustafa Aksu, *Türkiye'de Çingene Olmak*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, İstanbul, Kesit, 2006, p. 19.

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