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**CORRELATION AND INTERACTION BETWEEN
ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL CULTURE BASED
ON J. W. VON GOETHE'S WEST-ÖSTLICHER DIVAN**

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Abstract: In 19th Century Europe, advances in Oriental research as well as various art-forms such as the visual arts, literature, music, and architecture, aroused high esteem and even outright enthusiasm for the Orient. In this context, a particularly strong impulse was set by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his astonishing work *West-Östlicher Divan*.

Using the term 'divan' as a starting point, the paper first outlines the long tradition of cultural and political relations between people and nations. Goethe's work plays a highly significant role in the portrayal of these relations: With his intense closeness to the poet Hafiz (his 'twin'), Goethe invokes the mutual permeation of Orient and Occident. The presentation provides an introduction to the genesis of the work after 1814, describing its structure, analyzing the themes and leitmotifs of the poetry collections, and, drawing on the various types of relationships, revealing the significance both cultures held for each other. The tremendous impact of these ideas during the 19th and 20th centuries will be demonstrated by examining significant developments including the problematic forms of political interaction.

Goethe's aspirations for the relationship between orient and occident served as an impulse: The idea is to enhance the cultural activities between oriental and occidental countries, as building a bridge facilitates a better understanding of each other, and to develop further economic and political relations.

Keywords: orient, Occident, L.W. von Goethe, relationship, West-Ostlicher Divan, cultural relations.

**İ.V.FON HÖTENİN “ŞƏRQ-QƏRB DİVANI”NA ƏSASLANAN ŞƏRQ VƏ QƏRB
MƏDƏNİYYƏTİNƏ TƏSİRİ VƏ QARŞILIQLI ƏLAQƏSİ”**

Dr.Birgit Biehl

Xülasə. XIX-cu əsrdə Avropa tədqiqatlarında, eləcə də təsviri incəsənət, ədəbiyyat, musiqi, memarlıq kimi müxtəlif incəsənət növləri üzrə irəliləyişlər Şərqdə yüksək hörmət və hətta açıq həvəs oyatdı. Buna Volfonq fon Höte və onun heyrətamiz əsəri “Şərq-Qərb divanı” xüsusilə güclü təkan verdi.

Məqalə «divan» terminindən başlanğıc nöqtəsi kimi istifadə edərək, insanlar və millətlər arasında uzun müddət davam edən mədəni-siyasi münasibətlərin ənənəsini göstərməklə başlayır. Hötenin yaradıcılığı bu münasibətlərin təsvirində çox mühüm rol oynayır. Şair Hafizlə (onun əkizi) Hötenin sıx yaxınlığı Şərq və Qərbin qarşılıqlı nüfuzuna təsir edir. Təqdim olunan məqalədə 1814-cü ildən sonra əməyin genezisi haqqında giriş verilir, onun strukturu təsvir edilir, mənsub olduqları mədəniyyətlərin birinə olan əhəmiyyəti üzə çıxarılır.

Bu ideyaların XIX-XX əsrlərdə böyük təsiri mühüm hadisələrin, o cümlədən siyasi qarşılıqlı əlaqənin problemləli formalarının öyrənilməsi ilə nümayiş etdirilir.

Hötenin Şərq və Qərb arasındakı əlaqəyə dair istəkləri bir təkan rolunu oynadı. İdeya Şərq və

Qərb arasında mədəni fəaliyyəti inkişaf etdirməkdir, çünki bir körpünün bir-birini daha yaxşı başa düşməyi və gələcək iqtisadi və siyasi əlaqələrin inkişafına kömək edir.

Açar sözlər: Şərq, Qərb, İohan Volfonq fon Höte, əlaqə, «Qərb-Şərqi Divan», mədəni əlaqələr.

**ВЗАИМОВЛИЯНИЕ И ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ МЕЖДУ
ВОСТОЧНОЙ И ЗАПАДНОЙ КУЛЬТУРАМИ ОСНОВАНО
НА «ЗАПАДНО-ВОСТОЧНОМ ДИВАНЕ» И. В. ФОН ГЁТЕ
Др. Бригит Биехл**

Резюме. В Европе XIX века достижения в исследованиях Востока, также как в различных формах искусства: литературе, музыке и архитектуре, вызвали крайнее уважение и даже открытое увлечение Востоком. В этом контексте, особенно мощный импульс исходил от Иоганна Вольфганга фон Гёте и его изумительного произведения «Западно- восточный Диван».

Используя термин «диван», как отправную точку, статья в начале описывает в общих чертах давнишнюю традицию культурных и политических отношений между людьми и нациями. Произведение Гёте играет очень важную роль в описании этих отношений. Своим интенсивным сближением к поэту Хафизу (его «близнецу»), Гёте вызывает к взаимному проникновению между Востоком и Западом. В представленной статье дается вступление к генезису труда после 1814 года, описывая его структуру, анализируя темы и лейтмотивы поэтических сборников, и приводя различные типы взаимоотношений, раскрытие их значения для каждой из культур, которой они принадлежат. Громадное влияние этих идей в XIX и XX веках продемонстрировано исследованием значительных событий, включая проблематичные формы политического взаимодействия.

Сильное желание Гёте, взаимоотношения между Востоком и Западом, послужило импульсом. Идея заключается в том, чтобы усилить культурную активность между восточными и западными странами, так как строительство моста способствует лучшему пониманию друг друга и развитию дальнейших экономических и политических отношений.

Ключевые слова: Восток, Запад, взаимодействия, Иоганн Вольфганг фон Гёте, «Западно-восточный Диван», культурные отношения.

Əsas hissə/Main part

With my presentation, I hope to contribute to an improved understanding of Oriental cultures. Nowadays, from a so-called Western point of view, the sheer wealth of these multi-faceted cultures is frequently sidelined by political conflict or violent acts of terrorism. As a result, it is easily forgotten, that Oriental cultures strongly affected a wide range of people in Germany as early as in the Middle Ages, and particularly during the 18th Century. In 19th Century Europe, advances in Oriental research as well as various art-forms such as the visual arts, literature, music, and architecture, aroused high esteem and even outright enthusiasm for the Orient. In this context, a particularly strong impulse was set by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his astonishing work *West-östlicher Divan*.

My presentation focuses on this work. The occasion for this is the upcoming official opening of a ‘Divan’ in the former Villa Calé in Berlin, established by the Qatari government. The Villa Calé, a prime example of neoclassicist architecture, was built for the publisher Franz Calé between 1904 and 1907. After the global economic crisis in 1929, it became a state-owned property and was subsequently used in a variety of ways. It was ultimately threatened by decay, before being extensively restored to its former glory. The ‘Divan’ is launched as a place for dialogue and interaction, as a forum for both the exploration of Arabic cultures and the broadening of the already existing cultural, political, and economic ties between Germany and the Arabic World: In 2017, the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Berlin hosts exhibitions and festivals in said ‘Divan’ to celebrate the

Year of Culture in Germany.

What exactly is a “Divan”?

The term **diwan**, presumably of Persian origin, initially referred to the assembly of Muslim armies and the register for the armed forces. It was later used for a developing administrative structure, for a council board, a public authority, a law firm, or an office recording data such as the tribal affiliations and the pension entitlements of Muslims. This fiscal authority asserted itself in all the conquered territories. From the 10th Century onwards, divans took on all relevant tasks of a public administration.

The meaning of ‘divan’ was further expanded towards the treasury, the customs office, the ministry, the council chamber, and not to forget, the settee and the sofa bed. As such, the term has also found entry into European languages – think of the French *douane* and the Italian *dogana*, both meaning “customs”. Furthermore, the divan as a sofa is familiar to German speakers – upholstered benches were commonly found along the walls of oriental council chambers.

In all Muslim empires using Persian as their official language, communal halls and opulent audience halls were called divan. It was this particular meaning – an Oriental assembly hall – that, in the wake of the aforementioned 19th Century European enthusiasm for the Orient, found its way into many Western languages.

With its double meaning of assembly and register, divan also described literary collections by one or more authors on a shared subject, and, in particular, anthologies of poetry.

If, nowadays, one does a Google search for the word divan in German, one still encounters the already mentioned sofa; however, the more frequent results include websites of restaurants, all types of shops, neighborhood centers, and – in large cities – intercultural district centers.

Considering all these glossary elements concerning divan, we have reached the core of our subject: Goethe published a collection of poems titled divan. In Berlin, the State of Qatar opens a divan as a place of assembly for German-Arabic cultural exchange. His Excellency Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, ambassador to the State of Qatar in Berlin, described the objective for Berlin’s new **Divan** as follows:

The idea is to enhance the cultural activities between the two countries because through building a bridge between cultures you can have a better understanding of each other, and develop further economic and political relations.

J.W. von Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan* plays an important part in the genesis of this idea. I would now like to introduce this work to you, and illustrate its enduring influence by means of selected examples.

1. Let us go back to the year **1814**: Goethe, born in Frankfurt in 1749, lives in Weimar, at the court of Grand Duke Carl-August, his patron and friend. The latter had sided with Prussia against France during the Napoleonic Wars in 1806. Goethe feels strongly involved and becomes a close observer of the armed conflicts. After Napoleon’s victory near Jena and Auerstedt, the duchy came under considerable political and financial pressure. Napoleon’s rule did not end until 1813, with the decisive battle of nations taking place near Leipzig. After years of suffering heavy losses, Europe now finds itself in a phase of reformation. During the *Wiener Kongress*, the major powers rearrange the continent’s borders. In the shadow of the French Revolution lurk social upheavals. Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach is declared a grand duchy. Goethe is 65 years old; a famous writer holding high offices, he is appointed secretary of state soon after. His literary work is determined by retrospection: in 1814, he publishes the third part of his autobiographical work *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*.

In these turbulent times, Goethe immerses himself in oriental cultures. His *Divan* begins with the following words:

“Nord und Süd zersplittern, Throne bersten, Reiche zittern, Flüchte du, im reinen Osten Patriarchenlust zu kosten...”

‘North and West and South up-breaking! Thrones are shattering, Empires quaking; Fly thou to

the introubled East,

There the patriarchs' air to taste!

(all English quotations are taken from: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *West-Eastern Divan* in twelve books, translated by Edward Dowden, London and Toronto 1914)

Goethe had been drawn to oriental poetry and culture since his youth. Early on, the Quran was the main focus of his interest – for instance, he translated individual suras and incorporated them in his drama *Mahomet*, which remained a fragment. Based on its English translation, he transferred a part of the Arabic work *Muallaqat* into German. He explored the books of Moses which time and again he integrated into his own works, and translated Voltaire's drama *Mahomet* as well as the *Song of Solomon*. In 1813, Goethe participated in an Islamic service at a Weimar secondary school; the following year, an art dealer from Leipzig sent the Weimar court library 'a camel-load of papers and volumes' predominantly consisting of oriental literature.

The most profound inspiration for his own work, however, came in 1812 in shape of the poetry by the Persian poet Mohamed Shams ad- din **Hafiz**. Its translation had been completed by the orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. In 1814, Goethe read the more than thousand pages of the two volume work, responding with tremendous enthusiasm.

There are many parallels between Goethe and the life and work of this poet, who early on was granted, in his name affix, the characteristic of a *hafiz*, someone who preserves (the Quran). Born in 1320 in Shiraz, he spent his entire life in this city, working as a theologian and teacher, and, following a religious epiphany, living in mystical orders. Where Goethe could rely on the support from Grand Duke Carl-August, Hafiz had Schah Schudscha as a patron. Towards the end of his life, he witnessed conflicts similar to those Goethe would later experience, for instance, when the invasion of the Mongolian warlord Timurleng (German malapropism: Tamerlan) took place; according to legend, the two men met in person.

Hafiz's main topic is love. He sings of it with multilayered erotic imagery, predominantly using the form of the Ghazel (i.e. a love poem based on an interlaced rhyme scheme). Goethe, who was known to keep his distance from Christian doctrine, valued the complete absence of doctrinal attitude in Hafiz's self-perception as a poet. The Islamic mysticism, the Sufism, exerts formative influence over him: All things secular are an expression of divine being; all shapes of love a path to paradise.

This worldview, shared by these two unorthodox freethinkers, constitutes the leitmotiv of Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*. Full of enthusiasm, the poem *Unbegrenzt* from the *Buch Hafis* states:

“Und mag die ganze Welt versinken, Hafis, mit dir, mit dir allein,

Will ich wetteifern! Lust und Pein Sei uns, den Zwillingen, gemein! Wie du zu lieben und zu trinken,

Das soll mein Stolz, mein Leben sein.”

Limitless

‘Ah! Let the whole world slide and sink, Hafiz, with thee alone the strife

Of song I seek. Twin-brothers we, Our pain, our pleasure common be! To love like thee, like thee to drink, Shall be my pride, shall be my life.’

Thus, Goethe's *Divan* becomes both homage to the Persian poet laureate, and a poetic dialogue across centuries and cultures.

Marked by these impressions, Goethe undertakes two journeys from Weimar to the vicinity of Frankfurt as well as the Rhineland, the first in July 1814 followed by the second during the spring of 1815 – a carriage ride from East to West. He is 66 years old. Already the first days of travel were filled with enormous productivity. Freed from everyday life's burdens and full of anticipation to revisit the landscapes of his youth, which he hasn't seen for 17 years, the poems virtually pour into his quill. Much later, he will liken these days to the creative power of his youth, highlighting them as a singular blessing of life at old age. In Wiesbaden, he meets his acquaintance Johann Jacob von Willemer who is accompanied by his future wife Marianne Jung. During his second voyage, Goethe stays at the Willemers' country estate near the river Main. The man, an elderly banker, has since

married his Marianne, a young spirited woman. A festive birthday celebration is held for Goethe on 28 August. Marianne sings, accompanied by a guitar, while Goethe reads drafts of his poems to Jussuf and Zuleika, the pair of lovers from his west-eastern collection of songs, which is extended on a daily basis. Goethe, delighted to discover Marianne's talent for poetry, writes: 'But that you are sending me glowing glances of youth / [...] my songs shall praise, / to me your name Zuleika stays.' (*Invitation*) Then Marianne, in reference to several of Goethe's love poems, responds by assuming the role of Zuleika: 'Overjoyed at your love...' (*Night of a Full Moon*) An amorous play between the two is set in motion, encrypted in its use of quotations from Hafiz. What follows in the *Book of Love* and the *Book of Zuleika*, is a web of intimate and mutually interdependent motives, a dialogue that abruptly breaks off when Goethe departs. Goethe is forced to flee; the court in Weimar and his wife Christiane await him. His letters and diaries give testimony to the extent of the wistfulness his 'renunciation' caused. Marianne will suffer considerably from this separation. Goethe never returns, however, in 1819, he sends the Willemers the first copy of the complete *West-östlicher Divan*.

Goethe's literary departure towards the East, towards the 'original home of humankind', therefore owes its existence to an impulse caused by the intense experience of love. It took until the mid-19th Century for this connection to be revealed, and Marianne's poetic contribution to the *Divan* thus finally acknowledged.

I. Shortly after the first journey in 1814, Goethe **publishes** a collection titled *Poems to Hafiz*, followed by an extended version called *German Divan – An Assembly of German Poems with Constant Reference to the Divan of the Persian Bard Mohamed Schemseddin Hafiz*, released during winter of the same year.

In 1816, Goethe issues a greatly expanded edition titled *West-Eastern Divan or An Assembly of German Poems with Constant Reference to the Orient*. In those days, it is no longer sufficient to him to exclusively focus on Hafiz, as he had familiarized himself with the classical Oriental epic and lyric by then. He announces his collection in the latest edition of *Morgenblatt*, a journal widely read by intellectuals and ladies, and offers explanations of his agenda and the arrangement of his poems into volumes:

'The poet considers himself a traveler. Already, he has arrived in the Orient. He can take pleasure in the habits and customs, the objects, religious creeds and opinions, yes, he doesn't reject the suspicion, he himself might be a Muslim. His own poetic is interwoven with such general affairs, and poems of this type constitute the first book called *Moganni Nameh, Book of the Singer*. This is followed by *Hafis Nameh*, dedicated to the characterization, appraisal, and worship of this extraordinary man...' etc

Goethe subdivides his collection into twelve volumes. Central to his poetry is the leitmotiv of love: the love for oriental literature, the love between two people, love in the sense of faith in a 'Mahometan paradise', love as a 'joyous exchange of worldly against heavenly bliss'. He describes the attitude of his lyrical subject as a 'cheerful happiness within rejuvenated age'.

His inspiration seems inexhaustible: as years go by, his collection is further expanded, and in **1819** he issues yet another new edition, this time under the now familiar title *West-Eastern Divan*. This edition provides the basis for my presentation.



The **title page** consists of two parts:

On the right hand side, we see the title as we have come to know it; on the left, it is printed as a vignette with beautiful Arabic calligraphy:

„Ad-diwan aš-šarqī li'l-mu'allif al-garbī“, 'the Eastern Divan by the Western Author'. These two titles each emphasize different aspects. The German wording poetically links, within an oriental genre (divan), two parts of the world, whereas the Arabic title merely denotes a poetic work by a Western author making use of Oriental forms, without referring to the link between the

two worlds, without indicating their spatial and temporal interconnection.

The division of the book resembles the one from the previous edition in 1816. The collection is subdivided into twelve volumes, each of which is provided with a caption in both Persian and German language:

1. Moganni Nameh – Book of the Singer
2. Hafis Nameh – Book of Hafiz
3. Uschk Nameh – Book of Love
4. Tefkir Nameh – Book of Reflections
5. Rendsch Nameeh – Book of Ill Humor
6. Hikmet Nameh – Book of Maxims
7. Timur Nameh – Book of Timur
8. Suleika Nameh – Book of Zuleika
9. Saki – Nameh – Book of the Cupbearer
10. Mathal Nameh – Book of Parables
11. Parsi Nameh – Book of the Parsees
12. Chuld Nameh – Book of Paradise

Here ends the anthology of poems. Goethe, however, considered it necessary to add an appendix with a length of a hundred-fifty pages: *Notes and Treatises for a Better Understanding of the West-Eastern Divan*:

The poet is aware of the fact, that the readers of his time had hardly any knowledge about the Orient – at most, they would have been familiar with travel reports and/or the German Hafiz-translation. He wants to draw attention to the Orient and promote understanding for his journey to another world. By means of selected examples, we are presented with an illustration of the history of the monotheistic religions, content and structure of the Quran, a biography of Muhammad, a description of the Five Pillars of Islam, the history of the caliphs and the Orient, an appreciation of the treasures in Arabic and Persian literature, a separate illustration of the great works by Ferdausi, Anwari, Nisami, Rumi, Saadi, Hafiz, and Djami, all of which Goethe evidently knows. We are offered an introduction to the world of oriental allegories, and an examination of how the lyrical forms and metaphorical language of the orient can be interwoven with the conditions of the German language. The poems' unusual linguistic extravagance is determined an oriental characteristic.

This way, each of the Divan's twelve books is explained, at times even down to the smallest detail, such as individual metaphors. Goethe not only reveals a remarkable knowledge of the orient, Islam, and the literature from earlier times, but also demonstrates a profound understanding of the latest oriental and theological research. To communicate this understanding to his readers is paramount to the author.

II. The *West-eastern Divan* is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's most comprehensive collection of poems, which, given the limited scope of this presentation, makes it impossible to provide a detailed examination. Instead, I would like to try to give you an understanding of the themes the *Divan* contains by means of significant examples, thereby illustrating the singular character of this work, which lies in a special kind of combination between Orient and Occident.

The *Divan's* twelve volumes could roughly be subdivided into groups of three. The first three, *Book of the Singer*, *Book of Hafiz*, *Book of Love*, predominantly broach the issues of singing (i.e. writing poetry), love, and drinking. The following three books, *Book of Reflections*, *Book of Ill Humor*, and *Book of Maxims*, focus on reflection of and re- action to the world. Three volumes are dedicated to individual figures, *Book of Timur*, *Book of Zuleika*, and *Book of the Cupbearer*. The final three books, *Book of Parables*, *Book of the Parsees*, and *Book of Paradise*, emphasize the religious realm.

Let us begin with this **religious realm**. As already mentioned, Goethe did not mind being

called a Muslim. His lyrical subject is a Muslim. The initial poem of the *Book of the Singer*, given the symbolic title *Hegire* (referring to the Arabic *higra*, Muhammad's move from Mecca to Medina in the year 622), begins with the image of flight from a battle-ground toward the East, and "Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen."

'What with love and wine and song Chiser's fount will make thee young.'

[Chiser, actually Al-Chidr (Arabic الخضر al-Hidr or al-Hadir, "the Green") is an esteemed figure in Islam. According to widespread belief, al-Chidr is a man of pre-Islamic times, whose life God extended beyond normal measures, meaning he will not die before the end of time. As to the reason for this prolongation of life, there exist different legends. Goethe follows the motive of the fountain of youth, al-Chidr supposedly drank from.]

The aging Goethe's lyrical subject experiences a rejuvenation (remember the love to Marianne during his travels), prompting it to attempt its journey towards the East, towards the origin:

"Dort, im Reinen und im rechten, Will ich menschlichen Geschlechtern In des Ursprungs Tiefe dringen,

Wo sie noch von Gott empfangen Himmelslehr' in Erdensprachen Und sich nicht den Kopf zerbrachen.

Gottes ist der Orient! Gottes ist der Okzident!

Nord- und südliches Gelände Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände.

Er, der einzige Gerechte,

Will für jedermann das Rechte. Sei von seinen hundert Namen Dieser hochgelobet! Amen."

'There, 'mid things pure and just and true, The race of man I would pursue

Back to the well-head primitive, Where still from God did they receive Heavenly lore in earthly speech,

Nor beat the brain to pass their reach.

God's very own the Orient! God's very own the Occident!

The North land and the Southern land Rest in the quiet of His hand.* Justice apportioned to each one

Wills He Who is the Just alone.

Name all His hundred names, and then

Be this name lauded high! Amen!'

Regarding the unity of a God with a hundred names as the origin of everything worldly, Goethe follows Islamic doctrine in the same manner as with the conviction that the words of the Quran are of divine origin. All his images for the Muslim stance of the Self are most likely modeled on the Muslim mysticism of Hafiz. For instance, he frequently uses the metaphor wine as a symbol of God's love, which intoxicates the dervish:

"So, Hafis, mag dein holder Sang, Dein heiliges Exempel,

Uns führen bei der Gläser Klang Zu unsres Schöpfers Tempel!"

'Thus, Hafiz, may thy singing sweet And thy devout example,

Lead us, while clinking glasses meet, Into our Maker's temple.'

Goethe's image of Islam must be understood in philosophical rather than strictly religious terms. To him, all monotheistic religions are symbolical, in other words, they convey poetic messages from the "Singular", which are poetically ascertainable also in Islam.

In the *Book of the Singer*, Goethe defines the role of the poet, always with reference to the revered Hafiz, even describing himself as the latter's twin. The singer, who uses an oriental reed as his writing tool, must be able to comprehend the incomprehensible. His language lends a voice to the unspeakable. This way, even the writing (singing) constitutes a religious path. Writing poetry is a gift granted by Allah and is therefore free; Love and wine, symbols of religious truth in devotion and inebriation, are the poet's elixir of life.

This brings us to the most extensively elaborated subject: **love**.

Love is the all-dominant metaphor within the *Divan*. The pairs of lovers in the text are symbolic as well: two people, sun and moon, rose and nightingale, word and spirit, East and West... Through the example of seven oriental pairs of lovers, Goethe chooses the classical tradition as a template for his all encompassing role of love. Whether it be Zal and Rudabe in Ferdousi's *Schahname*, Jussuf and Zuleika in the Old Testament and the Quran, Nizami's Schirin and Farhad, Dschami's Leila and Madschun, Dschamil and Badina, Rumi's Bilqis and Solomon, or the lost couple Wamik and Asra – for the most part, their love came to a tragic end. All seven couples typify forbidden, un- happy, or exceptional love, yet they also exemplify the inseparable un- ion of the souls.

Only in the *Book of Zuleika* does the love of two people steer towards fulfilled devotion. The poet Hatem, representing Goethe's lyrical subject, and his beloved Zuleika share their longing, love, and devotion in the form of dialogues. Goethe declared the *Book of Zuleika* the only truly finished center of his *Divan*. The eternity of God rests in the transience of man, symbolized by the unification in love. Hatem and Zuleika represent divine love. At the same time, Goethe experiences the failure of his own untenable love to Marianne.

If we combine Goethe's leitmotifs poetry/song, love, and wine as main constituents of his path to the Orient, we can postulate the following:

Life is love, to live love is spirit. If one were to separate lovers like the Orient and the Occident, the heart would wither in the desert. Violence, as symbolized by the belligerent Timur, must be renounced, while Zuleika's love must be lived.

The path to the East is the path of love. Orient then implies a divine route towards a spiritual world bound to love, drink, and song. The presence of God is received through the wine; the soul thus attains eternal youth. Through the language of his divine soul the poet is granted closeness to the prophets. Within the world of images, and by virtue of the plethora of lyrical forms, Goethe's work epitomizes the magnificent, magical Orient. The Orient is poetry, and poetry is 'heav- en's teaching in worldly tongue'.

Goethe's *Hegire*, his *higra*, is a journey towards the loved one. By merging with her, the poet establishes the divine unity. The path to the Orient is a return to God, to paradise. A final poem from the 'literary remains' may serve as evidence to support this claim:

'Who knows himself and others, Will recognize here, too:

Orient and Occident can no longer be separated.

Aptly between both worlds To sway, I shall allow;

Hence between East and West To move shall be best!'

From Goethe's point of view, the *West-Eastern Divan* had remained unfinished. After the release of the 1819 edition, he continued to work on it, even pondering a future new *Divan*. His final version was published in 1827.

Goethe's openness towards other cultures, their philosophies, religions, and art forms, was unparalleled in his day. Today, his respect for the unfamiliar and his acceptance of different viewpoints appear highly relevant. The way the poetry of the *Divan* levitates between the cultures, facilitates the dissolution of previously fixed boundaries. Even though the knowledge about the Orient had its basis in both the colonialism of the Goethe era, and the 19th Century state of knowledge, Goethe's oriental play illustrates the possibility of a dialogue not bent on conquest and exploitation. The *Divan* could therefore be viewed as a utopia exemplifying unrestricted dealings with foreign cultures. With regard to form and language, the work could be described as a passionate experiment on fictional experience with foreignness.

III. Reception history: At all times, experiments eventually come to an end. For twelve years, Goethe transformed himself within his poetry, in which he consistently lived this imaginary Orient. Even though he managed, owing mainly to the added *Notes and Treatises*, to develop a strategy making the *Divan* accessible also to the unacquainted reader, the *West-Eastern Divan* did not turn out

a literary success during the 19th Century. Critics described it, for instance, as a *riddle without key*, as a work that simply failed to meet the taste of the contemporary readership, which was used to and therefore expected light reading. The sales figures confirm this assessment: Unsold volumes of the first edition from 1819 could still be found gathering dust on the shelves of book stores at the beginning of WWI. Poets and scholars, by contrast,

seemed to have no difficulty finding the key to this riddle. Out of the group of renowned orientalists, one man deserves particular mentioning:

Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), a linguistic genius and polyglot, and highly familiar with the works of Goethe, Hafiz, and the great Persian epic and lyrical poets, exerted significant influence on spreading knowledge about oriental cultures by providing translations as well as by creating his own poetic works. In 1818, while Goethe was preparing his *Divan* edition, Rückert commenced his studies of oriental languages in Vienna, which he mastered in the shortest of times. He was afterwards appointed professor for oriental languages in both Erlangen and Berlin. A poet and philologist himself, he recognized the complex mesh of traditions, handed-down images, and forms within oriental literature. He preserved these traditions, without conforming to the romantic, emotional German taste, and therefore left us an invaluable heritage. Rückert believed that the language of poetry (the eternal language of paradise) lent expression to the initial unity of humankind. Each Arabic or Persian verse, reshaped into German verse, thus served as a small step towards mutual understanding of the peoples.

IV. Orient and Occident during the 19th and 20th Centuries From the 15th Century onwards, the subject of the “opulent Orient” has been popular in Western European painting. Stimulated by works such as *The Arabian Nights* (alf layla wa layla) or accounts of courtly life in the Orient, all fantasies and longings are projected onto the East. Out of this, a truly distinctive genre emerges, in particular during the 19th Century – **orientalism** – which features prominently in the paintings of Delacroix as well as in the works by Matisse, Kandinsky, and Picasso, in which the exotic appears in form of abstract renderings. In the literary works of this era, the topic is often either subject to wild fantasies regarding the roles of Hammam and Harem, or being submitted to strong romanticizing, as in the case of Karl May’s novel *Through Desert and Harem*, published in 1892.

Nowadays, the relations between the West and the East during the 19th and 20th Centuries are usually summed up under the designation **Orientalism-debate**. Early on, these romanticizing and overtly exotic tendencies gave reason for criticism from informed circles across the Orient, as they were perceived as a purely Western, Eurocentric view on Arabic societies, as an expression of their superiority over the Orient. The West thought of itself as an enlightened civilization possessing a modern political culture, whereas the Orient was considered mysterious and dangerous. That is why 19th Century orientalism could be interpreted as a mirror image of the Western states’ colonial efforts, whose hegemonic interests were frequently characterized by openly displayed racism and Islamophobia.

With this assessment I don’t mean to diminish the extraordinary scientific and cultural achievements accomplished by German orientalist research. The **Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft** for instance, accrued great merits with their tremendous dedication towards a better understanding of the oriental cultures. Founded in Leipzig in 1845, it remains to this day the most distinguished scientific association of German orientalists. Its areas of research include the languages and cultures of the Orient, Asia, Oceania, and Africa, as well as their mutual relations. Reopened in Mainz in 1948, its present location is in Halle/Saale. In 1961, the Orient-Institute was founded in Beirut, with branches located in Cairo and Istanbul. This research community developed the essential method of transcribing Arabic into German; Arabic manuscripts were catalogued, and charts for the respective calendars compiled. In order to be able to meet at eye level, large-scale dictionaries were issued.

When founding, by Imperial Act, the *Seminar for Oriental Languages* in Berlin in 1887, Emperor Wilhelm I. complied with the arising desire for deeper knowledge of the Orient. Already the following year, the **German Orient-Society** was established in Berlin. Its areas of research include archaeology and languages; its objective is to awaken the public's interest in oriental classical studies and the cultures of the Middle East up until the Islamic time.

Relations between Orient and Occident at government level were mostly determined by strategic and commercial interests. Emperor Wilhelm II's legendary journey to the Orient in 1898 may serve as a case in point. In accordance with the Helgoland-Zanzibar-Treaty of 1890, this journey was devoid of colonial bias; after the expansion of its East-African colonial territory, Germany kept away from the Islamic dominion. Wilhelm II hence undertook a highly acclaimed "pilgrimage" to various countries of the Middle East: after the construction of the Hedschas-railway, the development of the Baghdad-railway was forged ahead and its terminal station erected in Istanbul. Shortly after he had visited Jerusalem and Beirut, the Emperor traveled to Damascus, where he delivered a startling address: He ensured the friendship between Germans, Muslims, and the Ottoman Sultan, citing the growing political and economic role of the Young Turks. A planned subsequent visit to Cairo had to be canceled due to the anarchist machinations in Egypt at the time.

In 1929, **King Fuad of Egypt** undertook a remarkable journey to Berlin. Due to previous wars, both countries found themselves in an emaciated condition. For Germany, the Paris Peace Conference had resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, while Egypt remained British protectorate until 1922. In both countries, strong nationalist currents were at work. While King Fuad's visit, intended as a policy of pinpricks against Great Britain, was successful, the onset of the global economic crisis as well as the rise of the NSDAP in Germany put a quick end to the rapprochement of both countries.

During the past 50 years, intercultural relations between Orient and Occident have clearly intensified. New perspectives have expanded current research on Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan*. Owing to, for instance, Katharina Mommsen's works, Goethe's long overlooked commitment to making world literature – notably oriental literature – available to German readers, was finally recognized. Our motto, stated at the beginning of this analysis, therefore seems more significant than ever: 'Orient and Occident can no longer be separated.'

Since its inception under the Presidents Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Francois Mitterand, the **Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA)** in Paris has implemented this idea in an exemplary manner. It is supported by both the state of France and the Arab League. The institute's main objective is to improve relations with the Arabic world, mainly by means of intercultural exchange (sciences and arts). Its scope is by no means limited to the Islamic Community; instead, it represents the diversity of religions and cultures within this particular realm, thereby providing a nodal point between Orient and Occident.

Meanwhile, a wide range of intensive ties between East and West has evolved in research and teaching in **Germany**. The **Heidelberger Vorträge zur Kulturtheorie** in 2013/14 serve as a representative example: 'West-Eastern reflections' in music and literature are presented in form of a dialogue. This motif of the mirror explicitly references Goethe's *Divan*. The scientific network **Orient und Okzident** adopts interdisciplinary approach at all cultural levels. The enhancement of knowledge through international exchange is made possible by cross-cultural comparisons in the fields of archeology, classical studies, ethnology, theology, etc.

As if Goethe's experiments with foreignness in his *Divan* had sent a signal for a cultural-political program, Daniel **Barenboim**, together with Edward Said, establishes his own Divan-project in 1999. Weimar is the European Capital of Culture, and the conductor and pianist founds his *West-Eastern Divan Orchestra* to signal the desire for peace between Israel and the Arabic countries. The musicians' differing cultural backgrounds are expected to merge in the realm of music – yet another wonderful experiment. According to Barenboim, however, this will not become reality until all borders are opened.

One year later, the **Goethe-Hafiz-Monument** is erected on Beethovenplatz in Weimar:



Two granite chairs face each other, aligned in West-Eastern directions. If one were to combine the two chairs, one would end up with the intact granite block, out of which both chairs were initially sculpted. The unity of Orient and Occident appears conceivable.

When comparing this to Barenboim's vision of merging two heterogeneous worlds by means of music, it becomes clear that with the Goethe-Hafiz-Monument, the focus rests on another aspect: instead of advocating amalgamation and elimination of borders, the art work rather suggests the establishment of a dialogue with respect for existing borders. During its official inauguration, Persian and German presidents Muhammad Khathamy and Johannes Rau both emphasized, that dialogue is the basis for managing human and social relations. To communicate at eye level requires clear geographic and cultural knowledge of the world as well as a critical view of oneself and others. Any attempt to preserve cultural heritage must be tied to a quest for new experiences. Goethe's image of the inseparable twins finds its expression in the monument's counterparts reflecting one another – two differing viewpoints, but not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Conclusion: So where do we stand today in Germany, regarding the intercultural relations between Orient and Occident? Let us hear a final example from **Rudyard Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West***. It seems like the author anticipated the Weimar monument:

Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

Goethe's *Divan*, depicting Orient and Occident as twins, is undoubtedly unique. Much would be gained though, if we could abide by Kipling's ballad and Goethe's and Hafiz's monument in Weimar.

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