



ENVER PASHA'S TRIP TO CHINA: AN INVESTIGATION OF OTTOMAN-CHINESE RELATIONS¹

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Abstract

The trip to China by the Counsel Delegation, appointed by Sultan Abdulhamid II and led by Enver Celalettin Pasha, marked a significant turning point in the Ottoman Empire's external affairs in Asia, especially with China, at the beginning of the 20th century. This study aims to analyze Ottoman archives and travel notes to investigate the Counsel Delegation's activities, sent within the framework of Panislamism to influence Chinese Muslims involved in the Boxer Rebellion and to reveal the trip's short- and long-term consequences. The Boxer Rebellion, which erupted at the end of the 19th century, led to the formation of a unique allied group. Due to positive Ottoman-Chinese relations during the reigns of previous emperors and Abdulhamid II, the Ottoman Empire was not part of this grand colonial effort. However, after Chinese Muslims sided with the Boxers and the Japanese envoy Sugiyama was killed by a Muslim general, German Emperor Wilhelm II requested that the Ottoman Empire join the allied group to stop the Chinese Muslims. Instead of sending troops, Abdulhamid sent a nine-member delegation to China to assess the situation and engage with Chinese Muslims. This study will focus on the significance and impact of Enver Celalettin Pasha's trip, detailing its political, economic, and cultural aspects. It will also explore how the Ottoman Empire's strategic goals in Asia were shaped and how this trip contributed to those objectives.

Keywords

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ENVER PAŞA'NIN ÇİN SEYAHATI: OSMANLI – ÇİN İLİŞKİLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME

Öz

Enver Celalettin Paşa'nın başkanlığında Sultan II. Abdülhamid tarafından görevlendirilen Nasihat Heyeti'nin Çin seyahati, 20. Yüzyılın başında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Asya'daki dış ilişkilerine ve özellikle Osmanlı – Çin ilişkilerine dair önemli bir dönüm noktasını temsil eder. Bu çalışmanın konusu Boksör İsyanı'na karışan Çinli Müslümanları isyandan uzaklaştırmak için Panislamizm etki alanı çerçevesinde Çin'e gönderilen Nasihat Heyeti'nin Çin'deki faaliyetlerini Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri ve seyyah notları üzerinden açıklamak ve bu seyahatin kısa ve uzun vadeli sonuçlarını ortaya çıkartmaktır. 18. yüzyılın sonlarında patlak veren Boksör İsyanı dünyada bir daha örneği görülmeyecek bir müttefik grubunun bir araya gelmesine sebep olmuştur. Önceki hükümdarlar döneminde başlayıp, II. Abdülhamit döneminde de olumlu bir şekilde devam eden Osmanlı-Çin ilişkileri sebebiyle Osmanlı bu büyük sömürgecilik hareketinin içerisinde yer almamıştır. Ancak Çinli Müslümanların Boksörlerin tarafında yer alması ve Müslüman bir general tarafından Japon elçi Sugiyama'nın öldürülmesi üzerine Alman İmparatoru II. Wilhelm Osmanlı'nın da müttefiklerin yanında yer almasını ve Çinli Müslümanları durdurmasını istemiştir. Abdülhamit bu durumda Çin'e asker çıkartmak yerine kendi belirlediği dokuz kişilik bir heyeti durumu anlamak ve Çinli Müslümanlar ile görüşmek üzere Çin'e göndermiştir. Bu çalışmada Enver Celalettin Paşa'nın Çin seyahatinin genel önemine ve etkisine odaklanıp, seyahatin siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel boyutları üzerinde durulacak, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Asya'ya yönelik stratejik hedeflerinin nasıl şekillendiği ve bu seyahatin bu hedeflere nasıl katkı sağladığı analiz edilecektir.

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Introduction

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) united an unprecedented alliance of international powers in response to anti-foreign and anti-Christian uprisings in China. While the rebellion initially began during the reign of earlier Qing emperors, it reached its peak in the early 20th century. The Ottoman Empire, maintaining positive relations with China during Sultan Abdulhamid II's reign, chose not to join the colonialist intervention despite pressure from European powers. Tensions escalated when some Chinese Muslims (Hui) supported the Boxers, and a Muslim general was implicated in the assassination of Japanese diplomat Sugiyama Akira. In response, German Emperor Wilhelm II urged the Ottoman Empire to align with the international coalition and intervene against the Chinese Muslims.

Rather than deploying troops to China, Sultan Abdulhamid II opted for a diplomatic approach. He dispatched a nine-member delegation, known as the Counsel Delegation (Nasihât Heyeti), to investigate the situation and engage with Chinese Muslim communities. This study examines the delegation's activities through Ottoman archival records and travelers' notes, analyzing their efforts within the framework of Pan-Islamism to dissuade Chinese Muslims from participating in the rebellion. Furthermore, the study seeks to uncover the short- and long-term consequences of this mission, both for Ottoman-Chinese relations and the broader Pan-Islamic policies of Sultan Abdulhamid II.

The method employed in this study is document analysis, a qualitative research approach used to rigorously and systematically analyze the content of written documents (Wasch, 2013: 1). Document analysis involves a systematic examination and evaluation of all printed and electronic documents. Like other qualitative research methods, it requires the careful interpretation of data to derive meaning, deepen understanding of the subject, and develop empirical insights (Corbin - Strauss, 2015). In line with this method, both primary and secondary sources will be examined. The primary sources include documents from the Ottoman Archives, which are crucial not only for Turkish history but also for understanding the histories of other countries and nations with which the Turks have had significant interactions. Additionally, archives from European countries were also reviewed, and British newspapers from the time of the delegation's arrival were analyzed. Qing historical records were also examined. Hasan Enver Pasha's travel notes will serve as vital primary sources. Moreover, the records in the personal archives of historians from that era are considered valuable for this study.

1. General Status of Ottoman-Chinese Relations in the Historical Process

China is Turkey's most distant and oldest neighbor. Since ancient times, the settled Chinese civilizations and the nomadic Turkic tribes have maintained contact. These two deep-rooted civilizations, which alternated between periods of conflict and peace, often through treaties, learned much from each other and engaged in significant cultural exchanges. For anyone studying Turkish history, the Chinese annals serve as invaluable primary sources. While the Turks underwent numerous transformations, migrating from the steppes of Central Asia to Anatolia, the Chinese maintained their dynastic continuity and expanded their territory.

The Ottoman Empire, also referred to as the Turkish Empire in Western chronicles, was an influential state that spanned the Middle Ages to the modern era. It was established in 1299 by Osman Gazi, an Oghuz Turk, in the Söğüt district of

present-day Bilecik province in Turkey (Osmanlı Tarihine Giriş, n.d.). Originally a small principality, the state evolved into an empire in 1453, during the reign of Mehmed II, when he conquered Constantinople and brought an end to the Byzantine Empire. In 1517, following Selim I's successful Egyptian campaign and victory at the Battle of Ridaniye, the Islamic caliphate was transferred to the Ottoman Dynasty. From that point forward, each Ottoman sultan also held the title of caliph (Sümer, 1992). The empire reached its greatest territorial extent in 1683 but began to decline following the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. The Ottoman Empire eventually collapsed with the abolition of the sultanate in 1922. Notably, the conquest of Constantinople occurred during the Ming Dynasty in Chinese history, marking a fascinating intersection of two ancient civilizations.

The Ottoman Empire is referred to as Lu Mi (魯迷) and Lu Mi Guo (魯迷國) in Ming Dynasty historical records. "Lu Mi" represents the word "Rumi" transliterated into Chinese sounds, while "Lu Mi Guo" translates to "Rumi Country," referring to the Ottoman state. The name "Rumi," originating from the Ottoman Empire, was used in both Eastern and Western contexts. In Ming historical records, "Lu Mi" is listed as one of the countries within the Tribute System and is recorded in the Xi Yu Lie Zhuan (西域列傳), the final chapter of the History of the Ming Dynasty (明史) (Fidan, 2010: 63–66).²

On the Ottoman side, the earliest known record of China is found in *Acâibü'l-Letâif*, a travelogue detailing a journey to Ming China. This work, written in Persian by Hodja Gıyâsüddin Nakkaş during 1421–1422, is the first known Ottoman embassy book. It is registered under Ali Emiri number 828 in the Millet Library (history section) and was published in 1727–1728. During the reign of Sultan Ahmed III, the book was translated into Ottoman Turkish by order of Damat İbrahim Pasha under the title *Hitây Sefâretnâmesi*. Gıyâsüddin Naqqash embarked on this journey from Herat in 1419, documenting his observations as he traveled to Hitay (China) and back to his homeland. The work provides detailed descriptions of various aspects of Ming China, including religious beliefs, social structure, security systems, law enforcement, geographical features, architectural uniqueness, and protocols for receiving foreign envoys (Lu, 2018: 24–25).

² An example of these records: (是年, 琉球入貢, 魯迷國貢獅子, 犀牛.) This year, Ryuku brought gifts (tribute), and the Rumi Country brought gifts of lions and rhinos. (1524) 明史/本紀/卷十七本紀第十七世宗一/嘉靖三年 (Ming Shi / Ben Ji/ Juan Shi Qi Ben Ji Di Shi Qi Shi Shi Zong Yi / Jia Jing San Nian), retrieved from <http://www.guoxue123.com/shibu/0101/00ms/016.htm>

In the second half of the 19th century, during the reign of Sultan Abdulaziz, Yakup Bey, the Emir of Kashgar, sought assistance from the Ottoman Empire. As a symbolic gesture of allegiance, Yakup Bey had the Friday khutba read and coins minted in the name of the Ottoman Sultan (Özyurt - Şeker, 2004: 84–93). Yakup Bey further demonstrated his loyalty when Sultan Abdulhamid II ascended to the throne. With the symbolic annexation of the Emirate of Kashgar to the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman Empire and China briefly became neighbors. However, this situation was short-lived, especially after the Qing Dynasty reconquered the region. Following the Chinese invasion, the Emirate of Kashgar once again requested support from the Ottoman Empire. Unfortunately, the Ottomans were unable to provide the necessary assistance due to their involvement in the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877–1878 (Duman, 2023).

Relations between the Ottoman Empire and China during the Qing Dynasty included notable events such as the Counsel Delegation's visit to China under the leadership of Enver Pasha, the primary focus of this study, and Sultan Abdulhamid II's efforts to strengthen ties with Chinese Muslims within the framework of Pan-Islamism. Both empires faced significant challenges from the rising dominance of Western powers in the 19th century, leading to limitations on their sovereignty. Despite these pressures, neither the Ottoman Empire nor China was fully colonized. In the 20th century, both nations embarked on transformative paths. Turkey fought for independence following the First World War, culminating in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's proclamation of the Republic in 1923. Meanwhile, China endured Japanese colonialism during this period but eventually defeated it, with the Chinese Communist Party playing a significant role in unifying the country. In 1949, the People's Republic of China was officially established, marking a new era in Chinese history.

2. Historical Background of the Boxer Rebellion

The year 1900 witnessed the formation of an unprecedented military alliance between the world's eight leading powers: Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States. This coalition, unparalleled in history, united to combat a common adversary—the Boxers, a secretive and militant society whose primary goal was the eradication of all “foreign devils” in China. The Boxer Rebellion, as it came to be known in the West, marked a turning point in Chinese history and international relations.

The origins of the Yi He Tuan (义和团), commonly referred to as the “Honest and Harmonious Fists,” remain obscure, veiled in myths and legends like many other secret societies in Chinese history. Records suggest that the group existed as early as

the 1700s, with some accounts linking the Boxers to the expulsion of Jesuit missionaries in 1747 (Esherick, 1988: 45). However, how this clandestine society grew into a formidable force by 1900 remains a subject of historical intrigue. A significant factor in the movement's rise was the tacit support it received from Empress Dowager Ci Xi (慈禧). While not a Boxer herself, Ci Xi was reportedly sympathetic to their cause. She viewed foreign envoys and their influence as the root of China's problems, and she saw the Boxer Movement as a potential means of expelling foreign powers without direct imperial involvement (Purcell, 1963: 118–119). This unofficial endorsement lent the movement a degree of legitimacy and emboldened its followers.

However, imperial support alone cannot fully explain the Boxers' rapid ascendancy. Natural disasters, including floods and famines, created widespread hardship and discontent among the population, providing fertile ground for anti-foreign sentiment. Furthermore, military, political, and economic sanctions imposed by Western powers exacerbated existing grievances. These external pressures, coupled with internal instability, contributed to the rise of the Boxer Movement as a force capable of mobilizing significant resistance against foreign encroachment (Dennett - Dixon, 2005: 255–256). In retrospect, the Boxer Rebellion was not merely a violent response to foreign interference; but also a manifestation of broader social, political, and economic tensions within late Qing China. The movement's fusion of nationalism, mysticism, and rebellion against foreign domination highlights the complexities of China's struggles during this era of profound transformation.

At the end of the 19th century, anti-foreign sentiment had reached its peak in China, permeating nearly all segments of society. Only a small minority of Chinese, such as compradors³ and others with material interests tied to foreign enterprises, showed any tolerance toward foreigners. This widespread resentment drove many to align with secret societies, particularly the Boxers, who openly expressed their hatred for foreigners. The Boxers had a long history of covert resistance, targeting both the Manchu rulers and foreign influence. However, in 1898–1899, they emerged from their secret gatherings and began to publicly espouse their nationalist and xenophobic ideologies (Bodin, 1979: 4). The Boxer Movement's violent campaign against foreigners intensified toward the end of 1899. On December 30, 1899, British missionary Reverend S. M. Brooks became the first European Christian to be killed by the Boxers (Xiang, 2014: 141). By the spring of 1900, the movement had spiraled out of control. In Bao Ding, approximately 90 kilometers southwest of Beijing, seventy Chinese Christians

³ Comprador (maiban): It is a title derived from the Portuguese word *comprador*, meaning buyer. They are local (Chinese) intermediaries operating in the port cities that opened after the end of the cantonment system.

were massacred. On June 9, 1900, Beijing witnessed its first Boxer attack on foreign property (Bodin, 1979: 5).

Tensions escalated further with the assassination of Japanese diplomat Sugiyama Akira on the morning of June 11, 1900. Sugiyama, who had gone to the train station to meet Admiral Seymour's contingent arriving from Taku to reinforce the foreign embassies, was brutally killed. This incident exacerbated the already volatile situation in Beijing. On June 19, foreign diplomats received an ultimatum from the Zhongli Yamen, the Qing Dynasty's foreign affairs bureau, demanding that all foreigners leave the city within 24 hours. The ultimatum warned that their safety could not be guaranteed beyond this period, but it also assured safe passage to Tianjin for those who left the city by the morning of June 20 (Qi, 1981: 102-103). The foreign officials unanimously decided to remain in Beijing, citing the impossibility of evacuating under such circumstances. In an attempt to buy time, they requested a meeting with the Zhongli Yamen on the morning of June 20, but no response was received. German diplomat Baron von Ketteler, impatient for answers, departed for the Zhongli Yamen with his interpreter. However, shortly after leaving the embassy barracks, they were intercepted by an imperial soldier who shot and killed Ketteler. The interpreter managed to escape and returned to the barracks to report the incident. In the aftermath of Ketteler's assassination, the Chinese government sent a message to the foreign diplomats reiterating the terms of the ultimatum but omitting any mention of the diplomat's death. The foreign envoys ignored the message. Later that day, at 4 p.m., Chinese forces opened fire on the embassy barracks, resulting in the deaths of many officers and soldiers (Bodin, 1979: 6).

On July 18, 1900, a messenger successfully slipped through the Chinese lines and reached the Japanese embassy with critical news: a reinforcement force of 12,000 troops was on its way from Tianjin. This information brought great relief to the besieged embassy occupants. However, the reinforcements would not arrive in Beijing for nearly a month, prolonging the uncertainty and hardship faced by those trapped in the city.

Intense fighting continued August 12 and 13, with both sides engaging in fierce combat throughout the day and night. On August 14, the sound of Maxim machine guns could be heard outside the city walls, signaling the arrival of relief forces. At approximately 2:30 p.m., soldiers from the British India Regiment breached the city and reached the embassy barracks, marking the end of the forty-five-day siege of the diplomatic quarter in Beijing. On August 16, additional operations cleared the area surrounding the North Cathedral, a significant refuge for local Christians. British, French, and Russian forces secured the site, only to discover that Japanese troops had

already reached and fortified the cathedral. Inside, Bishop Favier and approximately 3,000 refugees were found, having endured fifty-seven days of siege and hardship. The multinational effort successfully rescued the occupants, ending a prolonged and harrowing chapter of the Boxer Rebellion (Purcell, 1963: 258).⁴

3. The Counsel Delegation's Journey to China

Abdulhamid II secured significant leverage in foreign relations by asserting his sovereignty over the Muslims of the world—from the Maghreb to China—as part of his caliphate policy. To this end, he implemented various strategic measures, including propaganda in Muslim-majority regions, dispatching ulema, providing financial support to pro-Ottoman publications, and constructing buildings for religious activities (Georgeon, 1999: 266–274). This political strategy, which was particularly emphasized during Abdulhamid II's reign and sought to unite all Islamic countries under a shared political vision, was referred to as Pan-Islamism by Western observers. Islam, which was introduced to China in the seventh century, spread rapidly and led to a significant increase in the population of Chinese Muslims. Today, among China's 56 officially recognized ethnic minorities, ten are predominantly Muslim, collectively comprising a population of approximately 24 million (Ceylan, 2016: 34).

The contingent of Chinese Muslim soldiers known as the Gansu Army, or Gansu Braves, was a loyalist force of the Qing Dynasty, originally recruited to suppress Muslim rebellions. Commanded by General Dong Fuxiang (1839–1908), the Gansu Army was transferred to the Beijing area in 1898, where it was officially reorganized as the Rear Division of the Wuwei Corps, a modernized unit tasked with protecting the imperial capital. Despite wearing traditional uniforms, the soldiers were equipped with modern rifles and artillery, enabling them to play a significant role during the Boxer Rebellion. On the afternoon of June 11, 1900, Secretary Sugiyama Akira of the Japanese embassy traveled unescorted to the train station to meet incoming Japanese troops. Dressed conspicuously in a formal Western suit and bowler hat, he became an easy target. Near Yongding Gate, Sugiyama was intercepted by Gansu Muslim troops, who captured and brutally killed him in his car (Preston, 2002: 71).

Although the Gansu Muslim troops were not involved in the assassination of German diplomat Baron von Ketteler, these events deeply concerned German

⁴ There is a book chapter authored by me on this subject. For more detailed information, see: Görez, Feyza. (2018). *The Siege of Beijing During the Boxer Rebellion*. In G. Ünal Chiang, F. E. Ceylan, & E. Ceylan (Eds.), *Chinese Civilization: History, Culture, Literature, Philosophy* (1st ed., pp. 119–135). Kesit Publishing.

Emperor Wilhelm II. Seeking to address the unrest, Wilhelm II sent a message to Sultan Abdulhamid II, urging him to suppress the influence of Chinese Muslims and align with the Allies, citing the policy of Islamic unity as a basis for cooperation. However, Sultan Abdulhamid II deemed it insufficient to convey such advice via a telegram. In his view, effective guidance rooted in Sharia and Qur'anic principles required the involvement of ulema and religious scholars who could assess the situation on the ground. This approach reflected Abdulhamid II's strategy of addressing diplomatic matters within a framework of religious and moral principles.

Initially, the proposal to send a delegation was rejected. However, on December 5, 1900, the Ottoman government decided to proceed with the mission, framing Wilhelm II's appeal for assistance from the Islamic Caliphate as "an unprecedented success."⁵ The composition of the delegation underwent several revisions before it was finalized just five days prior to departure (Çelik, 2015: 264). French sources closely monitored and reported⁶ on the delegation's formation, indicating the international attention it garnered and its diplomatic significance. Sultan Abdulhamid II personally selected Brigadier General (Mirliva) Enver Pasha, one of his trusted aides, to lead the delegation. Enver Pasha, a prominent military and administrative figure of the time, symbolized the strategic importance of this mission. The delegation also included religious scholars to provide Islamic guidance. Among them were Mustafa Şükrü Efendi, a teacher at Beyazıt Mosque and Madrasa, and Kadı Hacı Tahir Efendi, an official from the Office of Fatwas. The inclusion of religious leaders highlighted Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamic policies and his efforts to strengthen the authority of the Ottoman Caliphate within the Muslim world.

Initially, the delegation was to include two Chinese Muslims employed in palace services who had learned Turkish, but this plan was later abandoned. Instead, two privates, Mahmut and Hasan, were added. This change reflected an effort to simplify and make the delegation more practical. Additionally, Colonel Ömer Nazım

⁵ "The Germans, after establishing a cordial relationship with the sultan (the seat of honor), began to suggest to the sultan that he, as the caliph of the Muslims, should be engaged in the affairs of the entire Islamic world and the idea of Islamic unity. They asked the sultan to advise them so that the Muslims in China would refrain from abusive behavior towards non-Muslims. ... Although the sultan promised to do so, no delegation was sent. It is thought that the obstacle to this is the issue of money..." Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, Babıali Evrak Odası (BEO), 416/12.

⁶ Mr. Minister, Your Excellency will find enclosed with my letter the circular on the Turkish delegation appointed by the Sultan to establish relations with the Muslims of China. In the present circumstances, I think it would be useful to know the Bab-Ali intentions on this matter, which is said to have been recommended by the German government. The Pan-Islamist movement developing in Kouang-Si, Kouang-Tog and especially in Yunnan, where Muslims are concentrated, could be dangerous and I will try at all costs to obtain information from our ambassador in Istanbul, through your Excellency, about the intentions of Enver Pasha's delegation. (June 4, 1901) (Sirma, 1980: 159).

Bey, appointed by the Sultan, joined the delegation. Ömer Nazım Bey later became known as Colonel (Miralay) Nazım Bey and served as the Central Commander of Thessaloniki. Translators played a critical role in the delegation. These included Vincenzo Quignoli, a Croatian who had worked at the Austrian Consulate in Istanbul for many years, his daughter Mademoiselle Hortense, and Mehmet Efendi from Istanbul (Toros, 1982: 295–296). The international composition of the translators underscored the delegation's aim to bridge linguistic and cultural barriers and ensure effective communication in diverse contexts.

The formation and dispatch of this delegation hold significance not only for Ottoman-Chinese relations but also for understanding Sultan Abdulhamid II's diplomatic strategies and his efforts to implement Pan-Islamic policies. The delegation symbolized the Ottoman Empire's capacity to engage in international diplomacy while reaffirming the religious and political authority of the Caliphate. This mission, closely followed by contemporary observers, represented both the symbolic and practical dimensions of Abdulhamid II's foreign policy.

The Turkish delegation set sail on April 18, 1901, aboard the Russian-flagged ship *Nicola*, following Sultan Abdulhamid II's Order No. 26, dated April 9, 1317 (1901), issued from Yıldız Palace to the Grand Vizier. On April 23, the delegation reached the Suez Canal and continued their journey aboard the German steamer *Saksin*. By May 4, they arrived at Colombo Port, where they engaged with local Muslim communities and visited mosques. On May 10, the delegation reached Singapore. Enver Pasha, leading the delegation, carried specific instructions from the Sultan. His orders emphasized establishing contact with German representatives and military officials at each stop. Given that the delegation had embarked on this mission at the request of German Emperor Wilhelm II, it was expected to be formally welcomed and hosted. However, upon their arrival in Singapore, the delegation encountered an unexpected situation: no German representatives were present to receive them at the consulate. This breach of protocol deeply angered Enver Pasha, as it contrasted sharply with the anticipated diplomatic courtesy. In the absence of official reception, the delegation turned its attention to engaging with the local Muslim population. Through these interactions, the influence of the Ottoman Caliphate was strongly felt, demonstrating its symbolic power among Muslims even in distant regions. Enver Pasha utilized the opportunity to assess the Ottoman Empire's standing in Singapore and reported back to the government, recommending the establishment of a permanent consulate in the city to strengthen relations and enhance the empire's presence in the region (Toros, 1982: 307–308).

The Ottoman delegation arrived in Shanghai on June 3, 1901, approximately two months after departing from Istanbul (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives, 88/95). Upon their arrival, it was evident that European forces were in complete control of the city, with no visible remnants of the Boxer Rebellion. Despite the delegation's diplomatic mission being initiated at the request of German Emperor Wilhelm II, they were once again met with indifference from German representatives in Shanghai. Their obligatory meeting with German Field Marshal Alfred von Waldersee, Commander-in-Chief of the European armies, resulted in an icy reception, underscoring the strained relations. Enver Pasha immediately reported this lack of courtesy to the Ottoman Palace via a special telegram. When the palace inquired about the outcome of their negotiations, Enver Pasha explained that the Germans, having completed their military objectives in the region, no longer saw themselves as having any material or moral obligations. Moreover, he recommended returning the travel expenses provided by the Germans to avoid being seen as indebted to them (Sirma, 2000: 174).

During their 21 days in China, Enver Pasha and the delegation turned their focus to engaging with Chinese Muslims. This allowed them to address and mediate conflicts between Muslims and Western forces in the region, further strengthening ties with the local Muslim community. The delegation's efforts to foster goodwill were met with appreciation, as evidenced by the numerous gifts they received from Chinese Muslims. Their mission concluded with the delegation boarding a Japanese steamer to travel to Japan before returning to Istanbul via Russia.

4. The Ottoman Mission to China in European Archives and the British Press

The Ottoman delegation's journey to China, led by Enver Pasha in the early 20th century, attracted the attention of European powers and media outlets of the time. Organized as part of Sultan Abdulhamid II's broader pan-Islamic policies, the mission aimed to strengthen the symbolic authority of the Ottoman Caliphate over Chinese Muslims and respond diplomatically to Germany's requests. However, evaluations in Western archives and the British press highlighted the logistical challenges, cultural misunderstandings, and the limited influence of the Ottoman delegation in China. Reports published in newspapers such as *The Spectator* and *The Straits Times* presented a critical perspective on the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic efforts.

The Straits Times (10 July 1901) report on Enver Pasha's Ottoman mission to China, based on direct quotations and translations, is as follows: "The Sultan of Turkey was persuaded, we understand by the German Emperor to dispatch the mission 'to pacify the Mahomedans in the north-west provinces of China in the event of their

causing the authorities trouble.” The Straits Times noted that Sultan Abdulhamid II of the Ottoman Empire had sent the mission at the request of the German Emperor to pacify the Muslim population in China’s northwest provinces. This request stemmed from serious rumors that the Muslim population could cause trouble for the authorities. The Ottoman Sultan’s religious authority was believed to be effective in calming the Chinese Muslims who were subjects of the Chinese Emperor. However, the report highlights how this expectation did not match reality: “The majority of them, 9,999 in 10,000 or more probably 99,999 in 100,000, never heard of the Sultan of Turkey, and their whole idea of Mahomedanism is that it is a religion which prohibits the eating of pork.” According to this statement, most of the Chinese Muslim population had never heard of the Ottoman Sultan. Their understanding of Islam was limited to the prohibition of eating pork.

The newspaper reports that Enver Pasha faced disappointment upon his arrival in China:

When Enver Pasha arrived here, he found that in the first place there were no Mahomedans handy to be pacified, and in the second place that the name of the Sultan of Turkey was not a name to conjure with in China. (The Straits Times, 1901:2)

This reveals that upon reaching China, Enver Pasha found no Muslim population readily available to be pacified, and more importantly, the name of Sultan Abdulhamid II held no significance in China. The article mentions that reaching the Muslims of Kansu would have required traveling through India and Kashmir, yet even this would have been futile.

The report also recounts an incident Enver Pasha experienced during his mission:

In company with General Creagh, Enver Pasha inspected one of the Mahomedan British regiments here. He spoke to one of the native officers, a very intelligent man, saying: ‘I come from the head of your religion, the Sultan of Turkey.’ ‘Your Excellency,’ replied the officer, ‘the only head that I know is the King of England.’ (The Straits Times, 1901:2)

This anecdote clearly demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the Ottoman Caliphate’s influence in China and the surrounding regions.

Ultimately, the newspaper describes the mission as a failure with the following assessment: “The mission, as far as it regards its avowed object was a complete farce.” This statement emphasizes that the Ottoman delegation’s diplomatic mission to China fell far short of its intended goals and was deemed a failure. However, the newspaper acknowledges that the visit may not have been entirely pointless, concluding with: “The mission will not, however, have been altogether in vain if it leads to some appreciation in Turkey of the real condition of things in China.” According to this

perspective, the Ottoman mission's visit would not be entirely futile if it helped Turkey gain a better understanding of the actual conditions in China.

Regarding the Ottoman delegation's journey to China, the British newspaper *The Spectator* (24 August 1901) reported extensively on the matter. The article describes how Sultan Abdulhamid II sought to seize an opportunity to assert his authority as the Caliph over the Muslim population in the region. According to the report, "His Majesty was to pose as the friend of the Chinese Emperor, and to exert his authority as Khalif over his co-religionists on his behalf." This initiative was presented to the Sultan as a strategy to assist the Allies by persuading the Muslim population to cease their resistance against European forces. The article also highlights the logistical and cultural challenges faced by the Ottoman delegation. It notes, "Enver Pasha, not to Kansu *via* India and Nepal, but to Shanghai, where they know about as much of Mahommedans as they do of the Mennonites in Baden." Upon arriving in Shanghai, Enver Pasha was reportedly astonished to discover that China, contrary to his preconceived notions, was "a civilized country, with great cities and well-dressed people." Furthermore, the report underscores the limited impact of the Ottoman mission, observing that the Muslim population in Kansu appeared indifferent to the Caliph's claims: "The Mussulmans of the Empire outside Kansu might be recorded like Episcopalians in Scotland on a Survey map." The *Spectator* further critiques the underlying diplomatic motives of the mission, suggesting that had the Ottoman envoy succeeded, "he would have asked, in reward of a grave service rendered to the Manchu dynasty, for 'concessions' on the Yangtze," which could have been transferred to German interests. This assessment underscores the broader context of European diplomacy during the era, which, according to the article, was often driven by commercial and territorial ambitions rather than genuine cooperation or moral imperatives (The Spectator, 1901: 243-244).

Lee (2018) highlights how the Ottoman mission to China became a focal point of European geopolitical concerns. Britain perceived the mission as a Pan-Islamic maneuver, driven by the Ottoman caliph's influence, which could galvanize Chinese Muslims and destabilize British regional interests, particularly in the wake of tensions with the Afghan emir. The British regarded this religious mobilization as a significant challenge to their dominance in Asia. In contrast, France viewed the Ottoman mission as a strategic opportunity to expand its sphere of influence in China. French representatives actively supported the Ottoman delegation, hosting them in French-controlled areas and even raising the Ottoman flag, actions symbolizing cooperation. As Lee (2018) notes, France aimed to leverage the sultan's religious authority over the Chinese Muslim population to penetrate the Yangtze Valley and establish influence

where other European powers had struggled to do so. Simultaneously, this pragmatic support sought to ensure amicable relations with Sultan Abdulhamid II, whose Pan-Islamic influence posed a potential threat to French colonial territories. Thus, while Britain approached the Ottoman mission with suspicion, France sought to exploit it for its imperial ambitions (109-114)

A report dated June 24, 1901, from the French Foreign Office archives in Shanghai, provides additional insight into the delegation's departure. It states:

I have the honor to inform your Excellency that General Enver Pasha left Shanghai the day before yesterday, on the 22nd of the month, with the Ottoman delegation he headed, to return to Turkey via Vladivostok. This trip was organized by Colonel Dessino, the Russian Military Attaché who was here on a mission. Only the French and Russians saw Enver Pasha off. Meanwhile, the absence of Germans and British was conspicuous. (Sirma, 2000: 174).

This conspicuous absence of German and British representatives during the farewell underscores the lukewarm reception the delegation experienced throughout their mission. Nevertheless, the Ottoman delegation's efforts to engage with Chinese Muslims reflected the broader objectives of Pan-Islamism under Sultan Abdulhamid II, reinforcing the symbolic authority of the Caliphate even in distant regions.

The delegation sent by Sultan Abdulhamid II and led by Enver Pasha has been extensively examined through significant historical sources from the Qing Dynasty, such as Qing Shi (清史), Qing Shi Lu (清史录) and Qing Shi Gao (清史稿). However, these records do not provide any evidence of the delegation establishing official contact with the Qing government in Beijing. This absence of documentation suggests that the delegation may have arrived at the wrong location or, even if they reached Beijing, failed to complete the necessary diplomatic procedures. The lack of such information in Qing records implies that the Ottoman delegation was unable to achieve its intended diplomatic objectives and therefore did not warrant inclusion in official historical accounts.

The Qing Dynasty was known for its strict protocols and well-documented communication processes. Sources such as Qing Shi Gao are meticulous in recording diplomatic visits and significant interactions. The absence of any mention of the Ottoman delegation, despite Sultan Abdulhamid II's directives, indicates that the delegation may not have successfully reached the Qing government or established the groundwork for formal diplomatic engagement. This highlights not only a potential logistical failure but also a shortcoming in adhering to the established diplomatic protocols of the period.

5. Delegation Travel Report to Abdulhamid II and Conclusion

The delegation's travel report was authored by Lieutenant Nazım Bey, one of its members, and presented to Sultan Abdulhamid II. The report begins with an account of their journey, noting that they departed on April 18, 1901, and arrived in Shanghai on the 33rd day of travel. The sea voyage, organized by the Germans, was described as uneventful in terms of logistics and safety. However, Nazım Bey highlighted the warm reception the delegation received from Muslim communities in Colombo and Singapore. He remarked on the people's unwavering devotion to Islam and their strong allegiance to the Ottoman Caliphate, reflecting the symbolic power of the Caliphate even in distant lands.

By the time the delegation reached China, the Boxer Rebellion had already concluded. Consequently, the report contains no direct observations about the rebellion itself. Instead, it focuses on the strategic and colonial dominance of Western powers in Chinese ports and territories. Nazım Bey expressed dismay over the mistreatment of the Chinese population by Western colonial authorities. In an admiring tone, he described the Chinese as "kind and well-mannered by nature," particularly emphasizing their hospitality, which he claimed surpassed that of any European.

The report also provides insights into the Muslim population in China, highlighting differences in their practice of Islam compared to other regions. Additionally, it discusses the demographic and military strength of Chinese Muslims, offering a detailed perspective on their socio-political condition under the Qing Dynasty. After spending 21 days in China, the delegation described their departure and return journey, which were marked by a ceremonious send-off. However, the report concludes by underscoring a significant issue: the absence of Ottoman consulates in the ports they visited. This lack of representation resulted in considerable hardships for Ottoman subjects residing or traveling in these regions. The delegation emphasized the need for permanent consular establishments to protect the rights and well-being of Ottoman citizens and to strengthen diplomatic and commercial ties with these territories (Toros, 1982: 311).

As evidenced by the timeline, by the time Enver Pasha and the Counsel Delegation arrived in China, the siege of Beijing was nearly over. The delegation, which reached Shanghai, had no direct contact with the Boxer Rebellion or the Muslim rebels involved in the uprising. Furthermore, the German consular delegation, despite initial expectations, did not meet with them at any point during their journey. During their stay in Shanghai, the Ottoman delegation attended events hosted by the Austrian

and later French consulates, facilitated through their interpreter, Mademoiselle Hortense.

Sultan Abdulhamid II had aimed to leverage Germany's request for assistance as a diplomatic opportunity to project the symbolic influence of the Ottoman Caliphate in the Far East. While the delegation's report does not provide specific details about the reception of the Caliphate in China, French consular archives suggest that the authority of the Caliphate in the region faced certain limitations. Additionally, the absence of any Ottoman consular representation in the ports visited by the delegation highlights the challenges of maintaining a consistent diplomatic presence in such distant regions.

In conclusion, the Ottoman delegation's journey, undertaken as a response to Germany's call for assistance during the rebellion, represents a significant diplomatic effort to assert the Caliphate's influence in the Far East. Although the mission did not fully achieve its intended objectives, it demonstrated the Ottoman Empire's ongoing interest in engaging with distant regions and addressing the challenges of international diplomacy in the context of the era's political and logistical constraints. This journey can be viewed as part of the broader Ottoman endeavor to strengthen its symbolic and diplomatic presence across a vast geographical expanse.

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