Journal of American Studies of Turkey
39 (2014): 55-76

Sultan's America: Lessons from Ottoman Encounters with the United States

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On 23 June 1892, the Reverend John Joseph Nouri, Doctor of Divinity and Laws and a "native" and "loyal subject of the Ottoman Empire," landed at the port of San Francisco, the *terminus a quo* of his first trip to the United States (*Y. Prk. Tkm.* 30/53 1). As the Archdeacon of Babylon and Jerusalem, and the Grand Apostolic Ambassador to Malabar, India, and Persia, he was a self-ordained biblical archeologist who aligned his faith with the urge to explore Eastern Turkey and the Holy Lands. This time, he undertook the non-biblical task of discovering the New World, not ancient religious sites. On 12 March the following year, he thought he saw enough of Southern states and decided to head northeast to Chicago via the Southern Pacific Railway. While waiting at the station, he was approached by a motley group of thieves, forced to surrender his train ticket, and robbed of his possessions including jewels, medals, papers, and vestment. After the mugging, the thieves, John Hurey, George Smith, and Susan Smith, poisoned and dumped him in critical condition at the Napa State Insane Asylum, where he was incarcerated as a mental patient without proper examination.

After three long months of isolation, Nouri was released, and, upon seeing the daylight, he rushed to the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia for retribution. The District's Chief Justice Edward Bingham heard his testimony, and, based on evidence of the robbery and poisoning, ordered the detainment of Hurey and the Smiths. To his surprise, however, the local court considered the stolen items insufficiently valuable and consequently released the robbers on bail. His Southern Pacific ticket, which had been sold to a third party, received no consideration at all. The litigation, slow-moving and ineffectual, revealed a grim reality to this Ottoman maverick standing alone against local thieves: American courts would not provide justice. He complained to the Ottoman Sultan, Abdulhamid

II (1876-1909), that "a terrible blight" was cast upon his "happiness and future prospects," and begged "His Imperial Majesty" to pursue diplomatic satisfaction from the United States for the "gross injustice and cruel outrage" perpetrated upon him (10). For Nouri, exposure to the New World brought abuse, disrespect, and injustice, as he witnessed the subjective nature of the American justice system.[1]

Though Nouri's case is an extreme example, many Ottoman immigrants in the United States experienced challenges that required third-party intervention, and, by the end of the 1890s, Sultan Abdulhamid's palace became a common site for airing grievances. The appeals came from the US through solitary petitions and the Ottoman Ambassador in Washington, as well as through the Sultan's consultants and provincial surveyors. The content of these appeals, which asked the Sultan to procure satisfaction from the US, converged on the issues of ethno-religious identity and the Empire's reputation in an American setting. The Sultan's knowledge of America and his concern with these issues help us to unpack entangled interactions between the two nations and cultures, as well as showing how Abdulhamid's attitudes toward America transgressed the usual divisions between political and cultural history. Cultural politics is a category that remains understudied in the field of US-Turkish relations: whereas varying aspects of American diplomatic, military, and missionary activity in the Middle East have been a frequent subject of scholarly discussion, Ottoman encounters with the US — which involved cultural and internal dynamics of the Empire and pan-Islamist vision of Abdulhamid II — have received

1 Special thanks to Alice Freifeld, Ariel Salzmann, Gregory Mason, Jason Opal, Jim Robbins, Laila Parsons, Malek Abisaab, Melissa Molloy, Timothy Roberts, Üner Turgay, anonymous reviewers of this article, and colleagues at McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, Turkish Cultural Foundation, and University of Florida Center for European Studies.
Nouri's correspondence: 20 Feb. 1894 "Affidavit from the District of Columbia," in Turkish records, *Y. Prk. Tkm.* 30/53, esp. 1-5, 7-11; "From Asylum to Palace," *New York Times* (21 April 1897); Bingham, in Herndan, 165-166. Lloyd Bailey regards Nouri as a mental patient who claimed to discover the Noah's Ark on the Mount Ararat (Bailey, 85-86). Sultan Abdulhamid would not acknowledge the odds: Nouri was neither mentally ill nor the Ark's discoverer. Cited affidavit, newspaper, court hearing, and the Sultan's interest in the case demonstrate that Nouri, though of an unusual character, was sane. The Presbyterian Rev. Easton's 1897 interview also finds him to be "not an imposter" but a "well versed" and "able Oriental scholar," who passed a translation test on "hieroglyphic tablets in the Smithsonian Institution." "John Joseph Nouri Crowned," *San Francisco Call* (19 April 1897), 2.

notably less attention. This article explores alternative accounts of contact and conflict between the two nations. By looking at America through the perceptive prism of Abdulhamid, the impact of cultural complexities and prejudices on early US-Turkish relations becomes clear.[2]

Mapping the Field

Until the 1960s, studies of US-Turkish relations emphasized the influence of the United States on the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, and were written predominantly by travelers and missionaries such as Arthur Hornblow and Edward Prime. Instead of approaching the relationship as reciprocal, these studies promoted the US as the undertaker of a sacred mission to civilize the region. The missionaries, from this perspective, intended to "enlighten" Ottoman subjects (Prime 180). Their endeavors had a dual objective; to inspire evangelical zeal and to keep "wicked" Turks "out of hell" ("Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" in Stout).

The Ottoman region, including the Holy Lands, represented to the idealistic missionaries a holy space populated by a group of Jews, infidels, Muslims, and nominal Christians. To achieve ambitious goals, the leadership asked missionary colleagues: "What can be done for the Jews, Pagans, Mohammedans and the Christians?" (Problem of Turkey) The missionaries acted upon the assumption that "if the Gospel life can make a strong impression [upon them] the dynamic of it will be carried into every hamlet

2 Ottoman migration statistics are not certain. The 1893 Ottoman census documents 56,000 emigrants in US, in *Y. Prk. Dh.* 6/5; Karpat (1978), 237-274; 25,000 to 50,000 Muslim Turks in America between 1890-1924, in Grabowski, 85-86; and articles of Mehmet Uğur Ekinci and Şahin, in Balgamış and Karpat, eds. 45-56; 87-101, respectively. Survey reports and petitions, in *Ya. Hus.* 433/105; *Y. Mtv.* 310/204; *Y. Prk. Dh.* 2/86; *Y. Prk. Tşf.* 6.92; *Y. Prk. Zb.* 21/74; *Zb.* 388/173, 398/99, 323/29, 352/89; a striking Rio de Janeiro report on attacks targeting Ottoman emigrants from Syria, in *Ya. Hus.* 392/91; Aleksandros Mavroyeni, the Ottoman Ambassador to Washington between 1886-1896, in Andrianopoulou (2004); Kuneralp (1989); Mavroyeni's reports in *Hr. Sys.* 69/21, 71/8, 71/37, 72/42; Louis Alberi Sabuncuzade, Abdulhamid's consultant between 1891-1909, in Karpat (2001), 199; *Y. Prk. Azj.* 13/68; *Y. Prk. Tkm.* 4/47; Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's presentation on Islam and the American Literature Conference, in *Y. Ee.* 39/12; on Abdulhamid, Ottoman citizenship, Islamism, and Turkish culture see Abdulhamid's note to the U.S. Congress, in *Ya. Res.* 62/51; Benjamin Fortna, in Kasaba ed., 38-61; Yasamee; Salam, 125–147; Yurdusev, 5-35; Chowdhury; Davison, 110–13; Deringil, 16-43; representative studies include Erhan, in Aydın and Erhan, eds., 3-35; Köprülü, 927-947; Grabill; also see cultural politics, in Rockhill, et al., esp. 1-80.

of distant Kurdistan," thereby opening the door to the East (Eddy 86). The scholarship associated with this process of cultural conversion — which was eager to discover and promote divine symbols of US presence in the region — was undeniably prejudiced against Oriental societal norms as regards to education, family, gender, and religion. In particular, the one-sided nature of the scholarship illustrates the missionaries' lack of interest in Middle Eastern cultures. Because their primary concern was ideological conversion, most Americans who wrote about Turks were unreceptive to local political and cultural realities, especially the millet system, the system that divided the Ottoman subjects into confessional communities.[3]

The late 1960s registered a change in the field, and a new atmosphere of political revisionism and cultural resistance became apparent. During the American Historical Association's 1968 Conference, its President, John Fairbank, called American missionaries "the invisible men of American history," and noted that his colleagues were salvaging missionary history from missionaries (Fairbank 877). The Cold War initiated a shift by scholars in the US to reorient the field by considering American political and missionary enterprises in the region. An increasingly global context impacted the views of scholars in Turkey as well: they championed Turkish sovereignty; urged the US to go back home; and encouraged Turkish leaders to reject the role of the great power's petty satellite. Clearly, first-person accounts from the late 1800s had been distorted by American and Turkish scholars who judged the world according to familiar binary oppositions; in the 1960s, such distortions finally became subject to scholarly attention.[4]

After a period of silence ensuing from political alignment in the Middle East, studies of the relationship between the US and Turkey have gained momentum, but the boundaries of the field remain subordinated to *a priori* definitions. While Heleen van den Berg, Michael Oren, and Ussama Makdisi trace the American legacy in the region, other scholars such

3 Early works also include Walsh; Hamlin; Barkley; Tracy; Clement; Dwight; Childs; Elder; a monograph promotes the author's background mentioning, "he has had wide experience in the mission field," in Beaver, esp. 203-327. The 1741 Connecticut sermon by Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," in Stout, ed.; for Jonathan Edwards see Marsden; Piper; for the Millet system see Şahin, in Stanton, ed., 181-183.

4 Fairbank, 861-879; revisionist studies are: DeNovo (1963); Stevens, ed.; Field; also see Pakin 507-24.

as Çağrı Erhan, Nurdan Şafak, and Uygur Kocabaşoğlu stress American imperialism and its criticisms in the context of Turkey. The current literature tends to ignore cultural reciprocity and has largely ignored evidence of Turkish agency and the potential for rewriting intercultural history with this agency in mind.[5]

This lacuna is twofold. First, current scholarship overlooks the political and religious connotations of the US presence in the Middle East; instead, the literature addresses questions such as the extent to which American missions democratized governments and enlightened locals. While this question prompts valuable analyses that stimulate debate about American influence on the region, American missionaries, Fairbank's invisible men of American history, still dominate the field, a reason that obscures the dynamics of nuances in the cultures' co-productivity. Likewise, the field's practitioners work with a limited set of materials from Washington or missionary collections, which prioritize American interests and neglect Ottoman and Turkish texts. Innovative, responsible scholarship should include the sources in İstanbul and Ankara. By including primary sources from both cultural traditions, scholarship might become bilateral, hence facilitating the production of more nuanced cultural histories.[6]

Abdulhamid's America

In December 1878, Grigor of the Fanariote diplomat family, the Aristarkis, presented a study of "American civilization" to Sultan Abdulhamid II (*Y. Ee.* 12/6). The Sultan was already knowledgeable about America. His grandfather, Mahmud II, recognized the US as the most favored nation with the 1830 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation (Malloy 1318-1321). Under this treaty, the Ottomans traded opium, figs, and raisins with American rum and colonial products, a major factor in achieving the imperial treasury's only favorable trade balance throughout the nineteenth century. Other

5 Also see Erhan (2000), 191-212; Çakır; Wilson, 27-44; Howard, 291-310; Kieser; Salt, 287–313; "Misyonerlik," in *T*ürkiye Diyanet Vakfı *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, XXX: 193-199. Exceptions include: Reeves-Ellington, et al., esp. 269-292; Balgamış and Karpat, eds.; McCarthy; Halman, in Oscar Handlin, et al., 992-996; Criss, in Farber, ed., 49-73.

6 Şahin (2006), 195-198. Fairbank's call was neglected and the field continues to work on American papers. DeNovo's description of James Field's scholarship as "admirable" and "sympathetic" to missionaries speaks to numerous works that include his own; DeNovo (1970), 932.

noteworthy exchanges took place between the two nations around this time. For example, the American naval architect and shipbuilder Henry Eckford helped to rebuild the Ottoman fleet, which was destroyed during the 1827 Battle of Navarino. After becoming the new sultan, Abdulhamid was also briefed by Ottoman ambassadors in Washington on American politics. During his reign, the Translation Bureau, a branch of the Ottoman government, translated American opinions on the Ottoman *status quo*, and the missionary institutions, established by the agents of the American Board, flourished in *fin-de-siècle* İstanbul.[7]

However, Grigor Aristarki's perspective (1878), the result of his six-year residence in the US, was strikingly original and offered a nuanced depiction of American politics, military, and culture. Unlike in Europe, government branches in the US were "functional"; in addition, a wealth of industrious, "tax-paying" citizens and unlimited "natural resources" supported the U.S. army (*Y. Ee.* 12/6 3, 8-9). In contrast to these commendations, he criticized the lax morality of youth culture, which he

7 For Aristarki see Kayaoğlu, 113; also *Y. Mtv*. 96/120; *Hr. Sys.* 51/16; *A. Mkt. Mhm.* 694/9; *Ya. Hus.* 291/21; and Ali Rıza, trans. The 1830 Treaty reflected diplomatic and commercial considerations like the Ottoman purchase of US technology as well as recognizing Americans as "the most favored nation" and granting the US extended rights and privileges in the Ottoman Empire; the treaty, in Malloy; the Ottoman version, in *Muahedat Mecmuası*; missionaries on the treaty, in *Treaty Rights*; the 19th-century Ottoman-American trade, in Turgay; also Gordon, 711-721; Kuneralp (2000), 7-20. Eckford, in Howard, 294; our current research, with Gregory Mason, examines American contributions to Ottoman reforms by looking at Eckford's service under Mahmud II. Besides the Directorate of Foreign Press examining non-Turkish publications, the Ottoman government established in 1821 the Translation Bureau for training personnel on Western languages. Abdulhamid became upset when the bureau, unprepared and overwhelmed, failed to translate American sources. Also see Quataert, 81; Deringil, 136. The US media defended missionaries and denounced Abdulhamid. George Knapp stated that "women and children fall beneath the wanton hand of the oppressor," i.e., the Sultan, "A Mischief-Making Society," *Washington Post* (24 Mar. 1899), 6; for *Meridian Weekly Republican*, missionaries were "under the patronage of the Sultan [who] has shown no disposition to encourage" them. "Scores on the Turk" (26 Apr. 1900), 4; also see "Turks as Violators," *Los Angeles Times* (2 Jun. 1896), 9. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was established in 1812, Boston Massachusetts, as an Evangelical missionary institution. Of its global missions, the Ottoman Empire was the most critical region. Şahin (2009); Daniel; Doğan and Sharkey. The Board publications vilified Islam and turned their readership against the Turks. In a symbolic case, the Ottoman ambassador in Washington sent Hepworth's articles to Abdulhamid. The Sultan discussed them with his Foreign Affairs, in *Hr. Sys.* 66/62; George Hepworth, "America's Big Interests in Turkey," *Boston Daily Globe* (4 Sep. 1904), 2A4. Hepworth was a prolific missionary who wrote on Ottoman atrocities and made numerous contributions to *Atlantic Monthly*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Hartford Courant*, and *the Sun*.

viewed as bereft of family discipline. In particular, he described "single women" as enthusiastic about partying and "flirting" with men, obviously threatened by the casual, extramarital sexuality he witnessed in the United States (1). His profile of the US helped convince Sultan Abdulhamid to offset the expansion of British and French interests in the region through contacts with the far, yet comparably powerful, US. Importantly, as well, Aristarki's study nurtured the Sultan's pan-Islamist vision and inspired him to endorse Islam as a panacea against American immorality.[8]

The existing literature understates the scope of Ottoman pan-Islamism by portraying it as a political and intellectual movement that was confined to the Islamic World. During the late nineteenth century, Islamist politicians and scholars became unified through their endeavors to resuscitate the Muslim nation (ümmet). İstanbul, the headquarters of state projects like the Hejaz Railway, welcomed Islamist leaders, such as Jamaladdin Afghani, Namık Kemal, and Sheikh Abulhuda, and sent Ottoman missionaries to Africa and Asia. They stressed Islam as progressive — in response to ongoing debates about Islam *versus* modernity — and missionaries educated locals in Sunni religious practices. All these developments support the significance of Islamism within the Islamic World. But leading scholars in the field tend to emphasize them at the expense of neglecting the Islamists' interests in the non-Muslim World. In this regard, Aristarki's proposal indicates the extent of Islamist ambitions, which encompassed America and beyond.[9]

Similarly, Alexander Russell Webb, the US ambassador to the Philippines between 1887 and 1892 and a Muslim convert through Sheikh Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of India, eagerly allied himself to Abdulhamid's mission to cure social ills in the New World. In June 1892, Webb offered the following strategies to disseminate Islamic ideologies in the US: print pamphlets, establish a journal, hold sermons, and organize Muslim communities across the country. Their intended audience was intelligent, educated, and broad-minded urbanites. Personal and pragmatic reasons dictated their target demographic; as a well-versed, intellectual Muslim

8 See comments on American "religious constitution," in *Y. Mrz. D.* 14516 (imperial edict no. 2759); also *Y. Mtv.* 96/120; *Hr. Sys.* 51/16; *A. Mkt. Mhm.* 694/9; *Ya. Hus.* 291/21.

9 Ottoman pan-Islamist literature include: İttihad-ı *İslam*; Nuri; *Hüccet-i* İsl*am*; *Alem-i İslam*; Karpat (2001); Mardin; Bein, 607-625; pan-Islamist position that "Islam does not challenge progress," in Fuat Köprülü, qtd. in Kara, 21; also the pan- Islamist view of America in Şahin, "Ottoman Prophesy of a Muslim America," in Şahin, ed.

convert raised in New York and Massachusetts, Webb viewed his type of urban milieu as conducive to Islamic ideas, which he believed appealed to civic minds. He argued that Islam could "take firm root," thereby "ensuring healthy growth and the permanent establishment" of Islamic culture in the US (*Y. Prk. Nmh.* 5/56 3-5). Webb's suggestions, from publishing and preaching to organizing urban communities across the US, sound extremely relevant to Abdulhamid's version of Islam and the US as they would warrant his cultural policy toward the US in coming decades.

Abdulhamid's "approval and encouragement of the project" confirmed Webb's commitment to Islam as the only faith, through which the regeneration of Americans was possible, though not probable (2). Webb had discussed his plans with Jeddah and Hindu Muslims and requested financial support, but his alliance with Sultan Abdulhamid is unique because Webb actively solicited the Sultan's advice. His reference to the Sultan's honorific titles is also instructive; it implies that the nascent American Muslim community led by Webb respected the Sultan's preeminent status as the Imperial Majesty and Caliph of Muslims of the World. Webb's proposal made spreading Islam in the US an exciting prospect, so the Sultan gave him guidance and support akin to patronage; the imperial treasury sponsored pamphlets and periodicals, including the *Moslem World*, and funded weekly sermons given by Webb and his disciples. The Ottoman government awarded Webb with the Imperial Order of Merit and appointed him Honorary Consul-General of the Ottoman Government in New York.

Webb's appeal to Sultan Abdulhamid also paved the way for others to receive support for related enterprises. For instance, the painter Teresea Viele received the Sultan's support for an Islamic seminar series she delivered at the 1893 Chicago World Fair on the place of polygamy and women in Islam, which she copied to the Translation Bureau on the Sultan's request.[10]

10 *Y. Prk. Nhm.* 5/56; on Webb see Abd-Allah; al-Ahari's *Voice of Islam* (in press); imperial subsidies for pamphlets, in *Ya. Hus.* 276/50; 25,000 Ottoman piasters allocated to *World of Islam*, in İ. *Hr.* 343/1311/B-02 and 1311/B/08; regular salary to Webb, in İ. *Hr.* 345/1312/M-12 and 1312/M/29; "such publications would flourish in the U.S. with the Sultan's support," in *Ya. Hus.* 325/1. Webb's appointment as the head-consul with an imperial Order of Merit, in İ. *Hr.* 373/1319/Ca-34 and 28/Ca/1319; also, "Sultan Honors an American," *New York Times* (1 Oct. 1901); Teresa Viele's 16 Aug. 1894 letter to Ahmet Mithat, in *Y. Mtv.* 102/103; Abu Nazzare's funding request for his trip to the US, in *Y. Prk. Mm.* 1/71.

Islam in America, the 1893 travel book penned by Islamist scholar Mirza Abdurrahim, compared eastern encounters with the west, and in the process revealed Abdulhamid's investment in Webb's cultural project. This travelogue begins with informing readers that Webb's smart son and daughters embraced Islam. The stubborn eldest daughter, however, succumbed to pressure from her British husband and rejected Islam, a point that appealed to Ottoman pan-Islamists in Cairo and İstanbul, who had turned against Great Britain after the 1882 occupation of Egypt. According to the travelogue, Americans were well-suited for Islam on five grounds: American culture was hieroglyphic and reading-oriented (a fact that motivated Webb's publication efforts); American society was susceptible to mass conversions (so early conversions could inspire greater numbers of Americans in following the suit); American norms of governance and work ethics were rational and pragmatic (as were Islam's); Americans hated the British (like Muslims); and the US might adopt the language of Islam (Arabic) in place of English, which they were speaking out of obligation (Mirza Abdurrahim 34-38). To the travelogue's readership of Ottoman intellectuals, who defended their ideas on similar grounds, these reflections were absolutely convincing, a fact that begs scholarly attention because such positions on the part of Ottomans are largely unknown to contemporary Turkish-American scholars (*İttihad-ı İslam*; Nuri; *Hüccet-i İslam*; *Alem-i İslam*).

Rationality and widespread anti-British sentiments, which characterized the American nation in the travelogue, required a qualified explanation as its author, Mirza Abdurrahim, knew that these qualities, when demonstrated, would have a stronger impact upon the targeted Muslim readership. He offered several key examples to illustrate his points about his perceptions of contemporary American cultures. The Fourth of July Independence Day celebrations indicated American joy at having successfully separated from the British. Second, Americans mistrusted anything British: for instance, an American merchant insisted on payment in dollars or any currency except British pounds; and an unnamed traveling companion on the way to Chicago suggested exchanging pounds with dollars or francs to travel across the country (36-37). Finally, the travelogue predicted that the intelligent Americans, unlike the stubborn British, would enthusiastically embrace Islam (35). Thanks to conversions, the number

of Chicago Muslims had already swelled to such a level that Al-Masjid al-Haram, their Ottoman-inspired mosque, hosted hundreds of Muslim brethren by the 1890s. Mirza Abdurrahim argued that the mosque was the heart of a closely-knit Muslim community and inspired a sense of belonging in Islam, through dress codes and community affairs; he speculated that the Chicago Islamic community would be a source of pride for Sultan Abdulhamid, himself a reader of the travelogue (30-32).

Salient points in other texts published at that time corroborate the travelogue's take on the American response to Islam. Mehmet Ubeydullah, the Ottoman politician and scholar who also visited the US during the 1893 World Fair in Chicago, encapsulates some of these points in the journal, *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (*The Proper Way*). His article, "İttihad-ı İslam" ("Pan-Islam"), argued the following: the Sultan is the leader of all Muslims as Sultan and Caliph; a specific education plan could address children and non-Muslims; geography and history books should be revised according to the Islamic norms and values; and Arabic would be the Muslim *lingua franca* (qtd. in Alkan 56). Considering Aristarki's study, Mirza Abdurrahim's travelogue, and the pan-Islamist literature in conjunction with the requests of American-Muslim converts for assistance, Sultan Abdulhamid's intention to foster the spread of Islam in the US appears justified in this context.[11]

Sultan Abdulhamid's long arm, reinforced by sultanic and caliphal powers, manifested in more areas of contacts and conflict with America, including refuting anti-Islamic propaganda in the US and trying to reduce the ethnic and religious strife that involved American citizens and locals in the Empire. The sultan sent books and photograph collections to New York and Washington libraries to publicize Islamic culture and disseminat-

11 Mirza Abdurrahim, 30-38. *Hıfzı's-sıhha muallimi* [professor of hygiene] İsmet Zade and Mehmed Arif published the Turkish version of the travelogue from the prestigious *Matbaay-ı Amire* [Ottoman imperial press] and the travelogue reached the Sultan and a wider readership. Several Ottomans responded to Webb's invitation and went to New York to facilitate Webb's preaching and publishing activity; in *Ya. Hus.* 279/24. The Muslims' British-hatred, in Schissler, 103-115; Wilfrid Blunt, the 19th-century British traveler in Egypt who tried reconciling Europeans and Muslim intellectuals, in Berdine. Mirza Abdurrahim's travelogue ignores the role of migrants in the Chicago community, see Schmidt. Our contention is that "Ubeydullah's travelogue, like *Islam in America*, claimed for pan-Islamism a more receptive position toward Americans," in Şahin (2008).

ed interviews that countered adverse opinions about Turks and Islam (*Y. Prk. Bşk.* 40/47). He also sent financial aid to poor Ottoman emigrants in New England (partly to retain the Empire's prestige in America); and provided imperial protection to American missionaries during local incidents (*Y. A. Hus.* 333/88; *Y. Prk. Eşa.* 26/100). Hamidian cultural political choices, however, did not go unchallenged. For instance, when Abdulhamid learned that Syrian Christians and American missionaries orchestrated the construction of a mosque at the Chicago World Fair, he postulated that the unusual Syrian-American partnership would pursue profit by advertising a "distorted" image of Islam — the opposite of what his American-convert constituency was advocating (*Ya. Hus.* 267/60 2). His December 1892 ultimatum threatened that the mosque-construction enterprise would cost the US its active, most-favored nation status (*Ya. Hus.* 267/82). The mosque subsequently landed space only in the fair's Turkish quarter and was not publicized as a Syrian-American product. The following year, responding to rumors that anti-Islamic publishers were distributing books and pamphlets to Americans, and that a theater company would stage a "British scenario of Prophet Mohammad," the Sultan demanded that US diplomats "recall seditious pamphlets" and "forestall" the play (*Y. Prk. Hr.* 18/28 2). In the midst of Chicago's celebration of world cultures, Sultan Abdulhamid was defending and advocating Islam in North America and beyond; and yet he could not protect Islam from the representations in the mass media.[12]

The so-called Stone Affair illustrates an unrecognized dimension of the Sultan's view of Americans within the Ottoman realm. In September 1901, an armed gang of twenty anti-Ottoman rebels ambushed American missionary heroine, Ellen Stone, on the way to Gorna Dzhumaia, a small town in south-western Bulgaria. The gang captured her, hoping to intimidate the Ottoman government and demonstrate that in their corner of the Ottoman realm, anarchy ruled. This affair inspired anxious responses from

12 Abdulhamid's note to the U.S. Government, in *Ya. Hus.* 267/82; "The Islamic Propaganda," *New York Times* (*NYT*; 28 May 1893); "Muhammed Webb Locked Out," *NYT* (14 Jul. 1894); "Fall of Islam in America," *NYT* (1 Dec. 1895); "Mohammed Webb's Account," *NYT* (27 Mar. 1896); also *Y. Prk. Eşa.* 23/6; *Ya. Hus.* 254/37; *Dh. Mkt.* 2410/86, 2355/128, and 1237/3; *Y. Prk. Tşf.* 6/92; also *Y. Prk.* Şd. 1/43; *Y. Prk. Tkm.* 4/47; *Y. Prk. Zb.* 11/73; *Hr. Sys.* 36/21; the Sultan's foreign-policy views, in *Y. Ee.* 94/43; *Ya. Hus.* 263/2; "use rich investors to win American newspapers in promoting Ottoman perspectives," in *Y. Prk. Ml.* 14/79; also Şahin (in progress); Low, 269-290.

American officials, churches, and the popular press. Theodore Roosevelt, inaugurated as President of the US eleven days after Stone was captured, instructed the State Department to "spare no efforts" in resolving the matter (*New York Times* 6 Oct. 1901). Church circles and newspapers collaborated, turning the affair into a *cause célèbre* and raising $110,000 from church-going readers to pay Stone's ransom.

Despite the public outrage incited by Stone's abduction, the Ottoman government by way of Ahmet Tevfik Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs (1899-1909), declared its innocence in the Stone Affair. Regarding "this girl," the pasha announced, his government claims "non-responsibility" (*Ya. Hus.* 424/41 1-2). This diplomatic maneuver aside, Stone's capture received remarkable attention from Sultan Abdulhamid, whose actions suggested he felt a sense of responsibility for it. The affair invited his attention partly because of its potential to disrupt US-Ottoman relations and the Turkish-Islamist publicity campaign in America. The Sultan met with the Grand Vizier, Mehmed Said Pasha, to institute decrees and establish a special committee for the purpose of negotiating with the kidnappers. He also ordered local authorities to "evacuate nearby villages" and that half the Third Cavalry Regiment "move immediately" to corner bandits around Strymoniko in Greece, predicting that this operation would rescue Stone (1; *Y. Prk. Mk.* 11/6 1). Independently, however, Stone was released half a year later, in February 1902, and her release, long anticipated, overshadowed the Sultan's efforts.[13]

The safety of American missionaries was indeed a defining issue in the Hamidian agenda. Although the missionaries turned to the US government and fellow Americans for help, a detailed study of their interaction with Ottoman communities and reception by the imperial authorities reveals that Abdulhamid espoused not a partisan, but an active intermediary role in resolving incidents between missionaries and his subjects. This role, a good example of his broader commitment to restoring order in the Empire and retaining the Empire's prestige abroad, framed the Hamidian

13 Carpenter; "Large Donations for Miss Stone's Ransom," *New York Times* (6 October 1901); DeNovo (1963), 33-34; *Ya. Hus.* 424/41, 1-2; *Y. Ee.* 94/43; *Y. Prk. Eşa.* 2/57 and 50/1; *Ya. Hus.* 424/41, 2; also *Dh. Mkt.* 441/21; *Ya. Hus.* 424/41; *Y. Mtv.* 231/147; *Y. Prk. Mk.* 11/6; *Y. Prk. Tşf.* 6/70; Curtis, 217-242. Four years later in 1905, Stone came back to open a college in the Empire but Ottoman authorities denied her admission, in *Hr. Sys.* 70/19.

effort that aimed to protect missionaries from local pressures while curtailing their influence upon locals.[14]

In exploring US-Turkish relations from its inception as a commercial partnership in the nineteenth century to the present, it is worth considering what the Turkish party desired early on. In the existing literature, the long history of Turkish encounters with the US appears to concern little more than American interests in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, all to the detriment of documents that reveal the Turkish position. Nonetheless, transatlantic dialectics were never total. Regarding the formative period of relations, interpreting marginalized sources through a pan-Islamist perspective can allow us to reinvent Sultan Abdulhamid's version of America. He approached American missionaries in the Empire and Ottoman emigrants in the US by adopting cultural tactics that served his fundamental goal of restoring law within the Empire and prestige abroad. His response to the US missionaries' efforts across the Empire with his own brand of cultural imperialism in the US is also a subtle reminder that Ottomans and Americans interacted more often on the basis of a reactionary than a unilateral relationship; they looked to each other, in other words, to validate their own cultural values.

Recent studies revise the field's ongoing debates, but even-handed analyses, ones that explore the grey areas of cultural encounters, have yet to surface. Ottoman encounters with the US are best seen not as the subject of American investment in the Middle East, but rather as the object of a symbiotic relationship, one in which the parties' cultural concerns constituted political cleavages. Cultural strategies generally yielded no tangible results: Hamidian initiatives proved ineffective and ultimately went unnoticed. For John Joseph Nouri, culture and politics were subordinate to redressing the gross injustices perpetrated upon him during his stay in America. He did not even know that the Sultan had attempted to emancipate him but not been taken seriously, given the fact that American legal system would not allow third-party interference. Robbed, poisoned, incarcerated, and left disappointed by His Imperial Majesty, Nouri would not return to the Empire that he called home, choosing to live the rest of his life

14 My coming monograph explains how the Ottomans responded to American missionary activities in the capital and specific parts of the Empire; see Shaban, 84-114; articles of Heather Sharkey, Christine Lindner, and Barbara Reeves-Ellington, in Doğan and Sharkey, eds.; and some of our research findings under the Works Cited.

in Trichur, India. Despite Abdulhamid's efforts to ameliorate the situation, the case of John Joseph Nouri serves as yet another example of the Sultan losing one of his loyal native subjects as a result of misinformation.[15] The documents surrounding the case further remind us that unexamined materials could prompt a critical reevaluation of Turkish-US diplomacy; one that begins in the nineteenth century but extends into the present. Such an endeavor could inspire more balanced approaches to the two countries' shared histories, which, in turn, would minimize the impact of extant cultural prejudices on the scholarly conversation.

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15 *Y. Prk.Tkm.* 30/53; "From Asylum to Palace," *New York Times*; Şahin, ed.

(Resmî Mâruzât, official petitions); Y. Ee. (Esas Evrâk, essential papers); Y. Mrz. D. (Mâruzât Defteri, registry of petitions); Y. Mtv. (Mütenevvi Mâruzât, various petitions); Y. Prk. Azj. (Perâkende Arzuhal ve Jurnaller, communication petitions and reports); Y. Prk. Bşk. (Perâkende Başkitâbet, the chief secretary); Y. Prk. Dh. (Perâkende Dâhiliye, internal affairs); Y. Prk. Eşa. (Perâkende Elçilik, Şehbenderlik ve Ateşemiliterlik, embassy, consul, military attaché); Y. Prk. Hr. (Perâkende Hariciye, foreign affairs); Y. Prk. Mk. (Perâkende Müfettişlikler ve Komiserlikler Tahrirâtı, inspectors and police-superintendents); Y. Prk. Mm. (Perâkende Mütenevvî Mâruzât, communication petitions); Y. Prk. Mhm. (Perâkende Mühimme, urgent affairs); Y. Prk. Ml. (Perâkende Maliye Nezareti Maruzatı, petitions of finance ministry); Y. Prk. Nmh. (Perâkende Name-i Hümayun, imperial letters); Y. Prk. Şd. (Perâkende Şuray-ı Devlet, state council); Y. Prk. Tkm. (Perâkende Tahrirât-ı Ecnebiyye ve Mabeyn Mütercimliği, translation office of foreign papers and the palace); Y. Prk. Tşf. (Perâkende Teşrifât-ı Umûmiye Dâiresi, office of protocol general); Y. Prk. Zb. (Perâkende Zabtiye, communication public security); Zb. (Zabtiye, public security)

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