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The Expansion of American Missionary Activities in the Ottoman State under Nathaniel G. Clark

Nathaniel G. Clark'ın Görev Süresi Boyunca Amerikan Misyonerlik Faaliyetlerinin Osmanlı Devleti'nde Genişlemesi

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ABSTRACT

Nathaniel G. Clark served as Corresponding Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), one of the most influential Protestant missionary organizations in the United States between 1865 and 1894. In this position, he conducted the organization's external correspondence with missionaries and other agencies and assumed direct responsibility for missionaries in the station areas. Through these relations, Clark influenced missionaries in line with his own ideology and shaped the missionary policies of the American Board. During his tenure, Clark replaced Rufus Anderson's church-centered approach and laid the base for James L. Barton's humanitarian and medical programs. This study examines the American Board missionary policies in the Ottoman State during N. G. Clark's tenure. Initially, the study focuses on Nathaniel G. Clark's tenure and compares Clark's policies with his predecessor, Rufus Anderson, and his successor, James L. Barton. Afterwards, the Central Turkey College in Aintab and the American College for Girls at Constantinople, which were established with Clark support, are examined, and their impact on Ottoman society is analyzed.

Keywords

American Board (ABCFM), Nathaniel G. Clark, Higher Education, Central Turkey College, American College for Girls at Constantinople

ÖZ

1865-1894 yılları arasında Nathaniel G. Clark, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin en etkili Protestan misyoner kuruluşlarından biri olan American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) bünyesinde Sorumlu Sekreter olarak görev yapmıştır. Bu pozisyonda, örgütün misyonerler ve diğer kurumlarla yürüttüğü dış yazışmaları idare etmiş ve istasyon bölgelerindeki misyonerlerin doğrudan sorumluluğunu üstlenmiştir. Bu ilişkiler sayesinde, misyonerleri kendi görüşleri doğrultusunda etkileyerek Amerikan Board'un misyonerlik politikalarının şekillenmesinde rol oynamıştır. Görev süresi boyunca Clark, Rufus Anderson'ın kilise merkezli yaklaşımını değiştirerek James L. Barton'ın insanî ve tıbbi yardım programlarının temelini atmıştır. Bu çalışma, N. G. Clark'ın görev süresi boyunca Osmanlı Devleti'ndeki American Board misyoner politikalarını incelemektedir. Çalışma ilk olarak Nathaniel G. Clark'ın dönemine odaklanmakta ve Clark'ın politikalarını selefi Rufus Anderson ve halefi James L. Barton'ın politikalarıyla karşılaştırmaktadır. Daha sonra, Clark'ın öncülüğünde kurulan Antep'teki Merkezi Türkiye Koleji ile İstanbul'daki Amerikan Kız Koleji ele alınmakta ve bu kurumların Osmanlı toplumundaki etkileri incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Amerikan Board (ABCFM), Nathaniel G. Clark, Yüksek Öğretim, Merkezi Türkiye Koleji, İstanbul Amerikan Kız Koleji

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INTRODUCTION

Missionaries served as agents of cultural dissemination and soft power, expanding US influence in the nineteenth century. Although the Monroe Doctrine (1823) promoted non-alignment, the ideology of "Manifest Destiny" provided an expansionist premise that extended American influence abroad. Moreover, the religious revival of the Second Great Awakening shaped Protestant identity and institutionalized the missionary zeal that led Andover Seminary students to found the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1810. The ABCFM's mission was to evangelize the "uncivilized heathen." The Ottoman State became one of the central mission fields from 1820 onwards, and it was prioritized as the "Holy Land", where the American Board sought to spread Protestantism and Western values.

Firstly, these American missionaries analyzed the regions and communities to which they were sent. After determining the "needs" of these communities, they initiated the process of religious and cultural infiltration. As the influence of the American Board over the Ottoman State increased, the organization separated its administrative structure in these lands into "missions, stations, and out-stations." The missions coordinated the strategy in specific regions of the countries, stations in the respective missions oversaw the activities of the organization in urban centers, and outstations worked with native Protestant helpers to implement their policies in rural areas (Kocabaşoğlu, 1989). Through this structure, the American Board effectively carried out its mission of propagating Protestantism and American culture in Ottoman society.

In this sense, the missionary education institutions formed "the most effective" factor in the missionary efforts since they were regarded as the "centers of cultural activities" (Alan, 2002, p. 20). The American missionaries' primary goal was to raise local Protestant communities; thereby, the missionary schools emerged as institutions that established American hegemony over the Ottoman lands through cultural assimilation by providing "social services" to local people. Consequently, as Gülbadi Alan states, the missionary schools aimed to "achieve what could not be achieved in the past through wars and political struggles" (2002, p. 20). In this context, Kocabaşoğlu compares American missionaries to US naval forces, as missionaries symbolize "soft," "sympathetic," and "humanitarian" power elements. In contrast, the naval forces represent "hard" and "cold" aspects of establishing American influence (1989, p. 13). Therefore, the object of American missionaries extended beyond the sole propagation of Protestantism to include establishing "political hegemony" and "cultural imperialism" (Alan, 2002, p. 21).

Although the missionaries carried out their activities in these foreign lands, the American Board was directed from Boston, where its officials evaluated missionary

reports and determined the overall strategy. Within this structure, the Corresponding Secretary emerged as one of the most influential positions, serving as a bridge between the Prudential Committee and the missionaries in the field. Initially tasked only with "preparing reports" and "correspondence", the position gradually expanded to "overseeing foreign missions", "managing communications", and "shaping missionary policy" (ABCFM, 1894, p. 11). Rufus Anderson, who preceded Nathaniel G. Clark, emphasized the Secretary's "great freedom" to guide missionaries with recommendations that often reflected personal ideology, despite the formal distinction between advice and instruction (1861, p. 153). Through this position, Clark developed his vision of prioritizing higher education and the role of women in missionary work.

Corresponding Secretary Nathaniel G. Clark emerged as an influential figure in reshaping the American Board policy during his tenure from 1865 to 1894. Criticizing his predecessor, Rufus Anderson's, strict church-oriented policies, Clark prioritized higher education and women missionaries to reach a wider section of Ottoman society. Under Clark's tenure, American missionaries laid the foundations of certain educational institutions that would later become influential American colleges, serving as a means to spread American cultural values. Especially, Central Turkey College in Aintab and the American College for Girls in Constantinople adopted N. G. Clark's educational policies, emerging as significant missionary institutions that projected influence over Ottoman society. After Clark's tenure, James L. Barton maintained Clark's policies as his successor, and he extended the scope of missionary activities by promoting "humanitarian service" as a strategic priority.

This study aims to analyze Nathaniel G. Clark's tenure and the impact of Clark's terms of office on the missionary policies of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The concepts of soft power and cultural imperialism form the theoretical context of this study. Joseph Nye (2004) defines soft power as a nation's ability to influence others through "attraction" rather than "coercion" by relying on cultural aspects. In this sense, missionaries emerge as mediators of American culture overseas. At the same time, Edward Said's (1979) analysis of Orientalism shows how Western powers construct the East as "inferior" and legitimize Western hegemony through the discourse of "civilizing missions", a pattern explicitly reflected in the discourse and activities of American missionaries in the Ottoman State.

Since Nathaniel G. Clark's term lasted between 1865 and 1894, the study primarily concentrates on the second half of the nineteenth century. Firstly, the study provides brief information about Nathaniel G. Clark and the administrative structure of the American Board, highlighting the process by which Clark's policies were formed and the significance of the Corresponding Secretary in shaping missionary policies. Afterward, N. G. Clark's tenure is compared with those of Rufus Anderson and James L. Barton.

Finally, to comprehend Clark's influence in Ottoman society, the study focuses on two missionary colleges that Clark pioneered, the Central Turkey College in Aintab and the American College for Girls at Constantinople.

Nathaniel G. Clark and Missionary Policies of Clark's Tenure

Nathaniel G. Clark (1825-1896) served as Corresponding Secretary of the American Board from 1865 to 1894. He was educated at the University of Vermont, Andover Theological Seminary, and Auburn Theological Seminary. Although his poor health prevented him from becoming a "home missionary", he pursued a career in teaching before joining the Board. As secretary, Clark emphasized the importance of higher education and women's missionary work. During his tenure, institutions such as Central Turkey College and the American College for Girls at Constantinople were established, reflecting Clark's vision of combining evangelical faith with liberal education. Despite his later blindness and illness, he continued to direct the correspondence until his resignation in 1894, after which James L. Barton succeeded him (E. S. Clark, 1897).

Before Nathaniel G. Clark, Rufus Anderson served as Corresponding Secretary of the American Board from 1832 to 1866 (ABCFM, 1929, p. 235). Anderson's administration emphasized the "Three-Self" principle (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating churches), which asserted that the primary goal of missions should be evangelism rather than social or cultural transformation. While Anderson encouraged education in vernacular languages, he discouraged the teaching of English, fearing that it would lead students into "materialism" and "secular careers," diverting them from the religious realm (Strong, 1910, p. 216). This attitude led him into conflict with missionaries such as Cyrus Hamlin, whose founding of Robert College in 1863 reflected an alternative vision of liberal education. In general, the Anderson era represented what William E. Strong calls the "Planting" phase of ABCFM history, which prioritized the establishment of native churches and limited the scope of missionary work to purely religious purposes (1910, p. xi).

Unlike Rufus Anderson, Nathaniel G. Clark believed that a self-reliant Protestant community could only be nurtured through higher education. Supporting Cyrus Hamlin's educational ideologies, which were suppressed during the Anderson period, N. G. Clark promoted extending missionary efforts with a more inclusive curriculum. According to him, the missionary activities in the Ottoman State had already reached "spatial" and "functional limits", including in areas such as "higher education, medical aid, and care" (Köse, 2003, p. 146). Instead of traditional methods of preaching and basic religious education, the American Board was required to undergo a fundamental

transition to enhance the social impact of the mission through higher education, medical services, and humanitarian aid.

Additionally, N. G. Clark also adopted Anderson's "Three-Self" (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating) principle, although their interpretations of this approach differed. According to Blaufuss, Rufus Anderson prioritized "self-propagation" as "the most crucial" aspect, while Nathaniel G. Clark emphasized "self-support" (2000, p. 66). For Anderson, self-propagation meant the "authentic" evangelization of the local population through independent churches. On the other hand, Nathaniel G. Clark considered self-support as a means of vocational and economic empowerment to create a prosperous Protestant community. Considering the context of the early years of his tenure, Clark's economic perspective reflects a pragmatic approach to the sustainability of missionary activities.

Nathaniel G. Clark's tenure began during the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), directly following the devastation of the American Civil War, which lasted between 1861 and 1865. Since the Civil War devastated the United States' economy, donations to the American Board declined. After ABCFM limited "appropriations to the various missions in 1862," N. G. Clark emphasized economic self-sufficiency to ensure both the sustainability of missions and the welfare of Protestant communities in foreign fields (Blaufuss, 2000, pp. 69-70). During the Reconstruction Era, the opposition to racial injustice increased, and respectively, the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in 1865, the 14th Amendment granted citizenship rights in 1868, and the 15th Amendment gave African American men the right to vote in 1870. Nevertheless, the promises of the Reconstruction faded due to the reluctance of the Southern states and economic disinterest of the North, which led to "racism transformed into Klan terror and theories of black degeneration" (Norton, 2012, p. 430). During this period, the American Missionary Association, which was another branch of the Congregational Church, "sponsored the hundreds of teachers" for the education of emancipated people in the South (Stone, 2006, p. 16). According to Karin L. Zipf, since the emancipation did not satisfy "the conscience of New England Congregationalists", they considered that the southern regions needed schools dedicated to the mental and moral uplifting of the freed people" (Zipf, 1997, p. 114). These developments also influence the missionary thought in foreign lands since missionaries considered slavery was existing in the Ottoman society in following forms: "female harem domestic slaves, the military and civil kuls of the Sultan, court and elite eunuchs, domestic slaves, Circassian agricultural slaves, slave dealers, and slave owners" (Stone, 2006, p. 16). Thereby, Nathaniel G. Clark's emphasis on higher education and "self-support" portrayed the American Board's desire to "liberate" these people from what they defined as "Ottoman slavery."

Meanwhile, the Ottoman State underwent significant political and economic distress. "High external debt," caused by the wars in the Balkans, subjected the Ottoman State to "severe external pressure both politically and economically" (Kieser, 2005, p. 163). This situation hastened the modernization process in the Ottoman State, which the American missionary considered as an opportunity to expand their activities. For instance, Mary M. Patrick defines the Ottoman State as "a strong military regime" where freedom and liberal values were absent; however, she praises Sultan Abdulaziz for his "internationalist" and "tolerant" approach, stating how he appointed non-Muslims to significant positions (Patrick, 1934, pp. 24-26). Moreover, Strong asserted that after the Ottoman-Russian War (1877-1878), "the dawn of the brighter days" had come for the missions, and the Treaty of Berlin (1878) introduced a British control mechanism that granted freedom for missionary activities in the Asia Minor by ensuring "the absolute and unequivocal religious liberty" (Strong, 1910, p. 226). Both Patrick's and Strong's statements convey that the American missionaries praise the modernization process and the "liberal movements" as long as they advance the interests of the American Board.

Furthermore, Sultan Abdülhamid adopted policies that "favored Muslim interests" and sought to "strengthen the state against Western separatist movements" due to the political instability (Kieser, 2005, p. 159). However, the early years of Abdülhamid's reign were characterized by "anti-Christian" policies; a considerable number of Protestant schools were established during this period (Yazıcı, 2014, p. 235). One of the main reasons for this expansion was the "secular outlook" of the education model that N. G. Clark promoted. Thereby, these higher institutions assumed crucial roles in shaping Ottoman society through their curricula and cultural influences.

Nathaniel G. Clark's tenure mostly coincided with the American Board's "Watering Period" (1850-1880). During this era, American missionaries ensured their influence through their institutions such as schools, printing presses, and churches. To ensure the permanence of Protestantism, Clark encouraged self-support, higher education, and integration of women missionaries. A report dated 1868 from Constantinople outlines the success of self-support initiatives in the Western Turkey Mission and states that "stronger churches" in the mission could carry out Clark's policies:

> The important measures adopted by the last annual meeting in the matter of self-support have been carried out with a good degree of success. A few feeble churches have found it difficult to pay the full fourth of their preachers' salaries, but the stronger churches have done better than was anticipated. It remains that the Mission go forward in the same line of policy, firmly and in the spirit of Christ. The independence of the churches in pecuniary matters will simplify our relations with them and solve many difficult questions, but will, at the same time, be attended with no little danger (PABCFM, Reel 583, pp. 230-234).

Moreover, the report emphasized the "spiritual cooperation" with native laborers by acknowledging the past shortcomings in establishing "intimate social and spiritual relations." To address that issue, the report pledges to hold "regular devotional meetings" at every station; it concludes that only spiritual unity with the local population and self-support would lead to lasting improvements by stating, "the prayer of faith both with and for our brethren is undoubtedly the one thing we lack" (PABCFM, Reel 583, p. 233). In brief, N. G. Clark's policies conveyed that the survival of Protestant communities required not only effective missionary institutions but also qualified native Protestants and deeper cooperation between missionaries and the native population.

In contrast to Rufus Anderson's scripture-based education model, higher education emerged as Nathaniel G. Clark's most distinctive policy during his term. According to Ayşe Aksu, the American Board's educational system was structured around "common schools, Sabbath schools, high schools, colleges, seminaries, and theological seminaries." Common schools promoted basic literacy and religious awareness by "making people able to read the Bible"; Sabbath schools conveyed fundamental Protestant ethics through stories from the Bible for people of every age. High schools offered positive science courses and served as "nurseries" that supplied higher institutions, as they directed their students either to colleges or seminaries. Seminaries were intended to educate qualified native church officials who would embrace the "life of piety". In contrast, theological seminaries provided "more intensive theological knowledge" than secular seminaries, training highly educated clergy. Lastly, colleges provided a "secular" education model for Protestants who were unwilling to become clergy and non-converts (Aksu, 2010, pp. 37-40). In this sense, these missionary colleges formed a higher education model that differed significantly from Anderson's strict religious model by combining the Protestant doctrine with an extensive educational scope.

Higher education became more widespread during the N. G. Clark era, and the American Board realized that "restrictions upon higher education were unwise and even intolerable," as Clark stated:

> The history of missions has shown that for the development of a Christian community, whose membership should be vigorous and self-reliant, competent to support and advance the religious institutions necessary for a permanent Christian civilization, some broader view of the education required must be adopted (Clark, as cited in Strong, 1910, p. 319).

Moreover, Ira F. Pettibone's letter to Clark, dated 1881, highlighted the significance of higher education and their self-support to enhance the quality of missionary education:

> I note what you say about High Schools. My impression in reference to them is this. [He went][1] for several years in the plan of having at nearly every station. Station-Classes for the preparation of young men for [new] Theo. Seminaries. As all the expense of this fell upon the Board, & as the demand for a higher Education in all our stations increased it was deemed wise to [have] in most of our stations' high schools. Tuition would be charged to these schools, which would thus soon be self-supporting. (PABCFM, Reel 603, pp. 1479-1480).

Pettibone's statements reflect Clark's vision for a financially self-sufficient and sustainable missionary education system, which differed from Anderson's earlier reliance on Board-funded theological education.

Women missionaries and women's education emerged as another significant policy of Nathaniel G. Clark. During the Rufus Anderson period, women's role in the American Board was confined to "subordinate" roles, primarily as "wives of missionaries" who were expected to maintain their Protestant households in "heathen lands" (Çoban Döşkaya, 2021, pp. 523-532). However, these women in foreign lands sent reports about the conditions of local girls and women; they eventually pressed for the ordination of "unmarried women missionaries" in foreign lands, which led to the establishment of Women's Boards in 1868 (Çoban Döşkaya, 2021, p. 527). Clark recognized the potential of women in spreading Protestantism by reaching families in the mission fields through education and household visits. Despite the opposition during his term, N. G. Clark expressed his "cordial support" to women missionaries and contributed to the establishment of the Women's Board of Mission (Strong, 1910, p. 311). In *A Retrospect*, Clark emphasized that the missionary efforts would remain unfinished "until women are reached" and praised women's role as "helpers of the Paul." In the paper, he defines Woman Board as the "most valuable auxiliaries at home and abroad" (Clark, 1894, pp. 117-118). Thereby, the women's role in the American Board transformed from a "subsidiary wife" to a woman missionary, who "promoted cultural and social changes among local peoples through the mission they represented" (Narin, 2018, p. 253).

A report from Constantinople dated May 21, 1868, reflects the increasing interest in women missionaries, their potential in education and social aid services, while advocating for gradual changes in this regard at the same time: "The Mission is prepared heartily to welcome a larger number of female missionaries …. When their number of such missionaries shall have considerably increased, the Mission will undoubtedly adopt some general principles" (PABCFM, Reel 583, pp. 232- 233). Moreover, the report declared that the mission adhered to Clark's guidance to integrate women missionaries

[1] Words in brackets represent editorial reconstructions of sections in the original text that were partially illegible.

into its structure. With the growth of women missionaries' position, women's education became a prominent policy in the American Board's policies. According to Elizabeth S. Clark, N. G. Clark's approach "opened doors" for women's education by creating opportunities that had never existed before. Clark's academic background led him to develop a diverse educational that included "theological seminaries, colleges for both men and women, training schools for Bible women, and also for nurses in connection with the medical schools and hospitals, and schools of lower grade down even to the kindergarten" and Elizabeth S. Clark defines all these developments as "a blessing to the untrained children of untrained mothers in many homes of the far east" (E. S. Clark, 1897, p. 18).

Consequently, after succeeding Rufus Anderson in 1865, Nathaniel G. Clark reshaped the American Board's missionary policies. He replaced Anderson's evangelical focus with higher education-based policies focused on self-support and institutional development. Clark laid the foundation for the long-term influence of missionary education in the Ottoman State by supporting Cyrus Hamlin's secular-style college model. Furthermore, his views on women missionaries and women's education differed from his predecessor. Despite all the opposition, N. G. Clark encouraged the women's potential in the American Board Structure, and his policies caused the influence of missionary activities to reach a broader segment of society.

Expanding Missionary Policy into the Social and Cultural Sphere

After N. G. Clark's tenure, James L. Barton was the Corresponding Secretary of the American Board between 1894 and 1927 (ABCFM, 1929, p. 235). Barton pursued policies that included altruism and humanitarian services, as he states, "Christianity alone, altruistic, enlightened, aggressive, can create the motive and furnish the training required by individuals and by society ... to produce the highest type of social and national life" (Barton, 1912, p. 96). Society-oriented missionary work had already begun with N. G. Clark, and the American Board's structure evolved in accordance with these policies. As Blaufuss (2000, p. 72) states, Barton's social policies reflected "current trends in ABCFM" and led him to succeed N. G. Clark after his period.

James L. Barton's term was marked by US imperialist aspirations due to practices such as the Open Door Policy and the Roosevelt Corollary following the Spanish-American War (1898). These policies were intended to ensure US economic interests and justify US interventionism by demonstrating the United States' hard power, transforming the US into a Pacific power. Meanwhile, through Barton's emphasis on education, healthcare, and social welfare, American missionaries ensured these interests globally as instruments of U.S. soft power. The Social Gospel Movement (1870–

1920) emerges as another significant factor that shaped Barton's social policies during this term.

The movement was as a response to deficiencies of rapid industrialization and it suggested only the Protestant values could solve the social problems caused by capitalism, industrialism, and moral degeneration since the movement was defined as "a reassertion of the validity of Christian principles for all of life, an attempt to recover the ground so tragically lost with the rise of capitalism" (Latta, 1936, pp. 256–270). Thereby, this movement promoted the idea that missionaries should be concerned not only with evangelization but also with the social needs of the local communities.

James L. Barton defines the Ottoman State as "a fifteenth-century Oriental government in conflict with modern civilization" and advocates that as long as the Ottoman government pursued these "oriental ideals", confrontation was inevitable for both the government and people (Barton, 1908, p. 267). Constructing the discourse of the "uncivilized Orient", Barton envisioned that only "the modern thought" of Protestant civilization could replace "the outdated" governance of the Ottoman State:

> One thing is sure, the methods of government which were successful there six centuries ago cannot be continued indefinitely. Modern thought and ideas will not submit in patience and quietness forever to the oppressive measures of the Middle Ages. Dawn is breaking and it is useless for the night to rail at its coming. Intelligent belief will win in the end, and justice and righteousness must triumph (Barton, 1908, pp. 271–272).

With this dichotomy, Barton justified the transformation of Ottoman society with "the modern Protestant" values. During this period, the Western powers' perception of the Ottoman State transformed from "a sick man" to be kept alive to "a terminally ill" man whose inheritance was to be shared; non-Muslim communities, especially Armenians, were exploited for these imperial purposes (Kocabaşoğlu, 1989, p. 119).

Presenting themselves as humanitarian relief agents, American missionaries supported and encouraged Armenian uprisings, defining them as "Christian loyalty" and "the test of martyrdom" (Strong, 1910, p. 394). Thus, these social conflicts created opportunities to expand American Board activities through relief programs; this led to the growth of Armenian armed groups backed by foreign powers.

James L. Barton's tenure coincided with "the Increase period" of the American Board; this was a period when earlier investments yielded outcomes, with the emergence of "self-supporting" churches and colleges. Barton considered this "self-support" principle as "the fixed part of the work in Turkey", nurturing a native intellectual Protestant community:

> This principle of self-support has become a fixed part of the work in Turkey. The people are now thoroughly committed to it. They recognize that the mission is not there to

> transplant institutions from abroad, but to sow seed from which institutions may grow in the soil of Turkey, watered by Turkish showers, warmed by the Turkish sun, cultivated and cared for by Turkish hands (Barton, 1908, p. 277).

Moreover, Barton maintained the core principles of Anderson's Three-Self policy of self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation, since he defined those institutions that adopted Three-Self principles as "finished products of mission" (Blaufuss, 2000, p. 77). Extending missionary activities beyond the mere gospel propagation, Barton argued for the establishment of institutions such as "schools, hospitals, and asylums" and the promotion of values such as "peace, temperance, and fraternal love" to foster "a new society." Thus, social transformation significantly shapes Barton's tenure since he emphasized that this was central to the missionary approach:

> The method of missionary approach in the East has from the first tended to lift up the community and regenerate society. Mission stations in all countries are always social settlements in that the home of the missionary is the centre of the new life. In the midst of the people whom the missionary expects to reach he plants his home and rears his children (Barton, 1912, p. 54).

In brief, missionary work was a social affair at its very core, so it had to aim to "lift up" the native communities.

During war, plague, and famine, medical aid became the most crucial issue in mission fields. According to Barton, "times of great national distress" provided "unusual opportunities" for missionaries to expand their influence among communities (Barton, 1908, pp. 214–215). In this sense, medical missionaries made the highest contributions to missionary efforts due to their direct humanitarian impact. They were preaching "the compassionate Christ in a language that cannot be misunderstood," and they appealed "to the conscious needs of every class in every land" (Barton, 1915, pp. 3–4). These missionaries exceeded the traditional methods of evangelization and became "the most irresistible forces for the Christianization of the East", as Barton states:

> The medical missionary preaches by the silent practice of his profession as powerfully and at times even more eloquently than does the clerical missionary speaking from the sacred desk. The medical missionary and his dispensary and hospital are not a by-product; they are among the most irresistible forces for the Christianization of the East (Barton, 1912, p. 61).

Education formed the fundamentals of Barton's policies as well. He argued that they could not train intellectual native leaders without colleges and theological seminaries; only these institutions would ensure Christianity's position as an "intelligent faith" in the East and maintain its "commanding influence" on society (Barton, 1912, p. 33).

Advocating N. G. Clark's educational policies, Barton emphasized that "free educational institutions" fostered "democratic values" and "individuality and freedom"

(Barton, 1913, pp. 44–45). In this sense, he acknowledged the social impact of missionary education as follows:

> Educational missions have also promoted an acquaintance with the ideals and institutions of other lands which has led to social, commercial and political readjustments among Eastern races…. It has necessarily created a community of interest which has developed into cooperative effort on the part of the graduates of mission institutions and the missionaries by helping to build up in those countries institutions called for by the modern Christian movement (Barton, 1913, p. 47).

Consequently, these institutions would initiate "social, commercial, and political readjustments" in society, and Barton acknowledged that this could lead to unrest in the Ottoman State.

Lastly, James L. Barton expanded on Clark's policies about women missionaries by attributing to them a sacred duty to educate women in the East. Barton argued that Eastern religions "condemned" women and placed them in an "inferior rank," and "no non-Christian religion accords to women a position at all commensurate with the position demanded by Christianity" (Barton, 1913, p. 107). Thus, only American missionary women could achieve to save these women from their condition. Moreover, he also emphasized the influence of an "educated woman" in local communities, as they formed the foundation of households and families.

> To reach the child, the missionary found that he must make his approach through the home, and, in most cases, the mother was found to be the dominating force in the home. If the mother favored the child's education in a Christian school, there was little prospect that the father's attitude would materially change the situation (Barton, 1913, p. 114).

In brief, reaching women in Ottoman society meant reaching the entire household; therefore, women played a significant role in Barton's policies.

Consequently, Barton adopted Clark's educational and women's missionary approach and expanded them into an extensive social sphere. Missionary schools, health care, and relief programs became instruments of cultural transformation, presenting Protestant civilization as both "spiritually superior" and socially progressive. Similar to the N. G. Clark period, higher education, with its emphasis on democratic ideals, aimed to nurture self-sufficient Protestant communities capable of influencing their societies in line with American interests.

Central Turkey College and the Cultural Impact of Clark's Educational Model

After Rufus Anderson's strict scripture-centered approach, Nathaniel G. Clark's vision of higher education combined theological thought with cultural and social aspects. Promoting secular-looking institutions modeled after New England colleges, he

aimed to cultivate an indigenous Protestant intellectual community aligned with American values. Clark asserted that missionaries and Protestant intellectuals were fundamental factors in promoting both the Gospel and "principles of a better social life":

> Now in establishing missions among uncivilized races it becomes us to introduce not simply the gospel but the germinant principles of a better social life, and to take the lead and keep the lead in all educational effort … not by means of a large number of missionaries, but by a few through training and normal schools for both sexes. Among highly civilized races, as among the higher classes of India, in China, and in Japan, the problem is essentially the same, only more difficult. A higher education that is already known must compel and command attention, or if it be not higher on the intellectual side it must assert its superiority on the religious side by its results on moral character (Clark, 1890, pp. 193–194).

In other words, Clark constructed his strategy as intellectual progress and promoted a hierarchy that positions "Western models as superior" (Eker, 2025, p. 66). This approach was most clearly reflected in the specific educational institutions that implemented his educational policies, the Central Turkey College and the American College for Girls at Constantinople.

Central Turkey College was established in Aintab in 1876 and acted as a prominent institution in the Central Turkey Mission until its relocation to Aleppo in 1924. According to Kocabaşoğlu (1989, pp. 92–94), the significance of Aintab for American missionaries dates to 1830, when missionaries Parnell, Hamilton, and Newman began distributing copies of the Turkish Bible printed in Armenian script. By 1860, Aintab had become the center of the mission, with its "five stations and 20 out-stations," 12 churches representing a Protestant community of 3,690 members, and 26 schools that included approximately 2,000 students. Moreover, the city turned into American missionaries' "center of operations" for "a large population living in northern Syria, stretching from Urfa in the east to the Tarsus Mountains in the west" (Barton, 1908, pp. 139–140).

Nathaniel G. Clark's visit to both the Levant region and the Central Turkey Mission improved relations with local Protestant communities, and Clark recognized the growing demand for a college from the Armenian community. As Stone (2006, p. 142) asserts, the closest Christian colleges to the region were located in Constantinople, Robert College, and in Beirut, the Syrian Protestant College. Thus, studying at any of these institutions "involved risks for young people from southeastern Turkey, the long and hazardous trip to either site was, in itself, a major deterrent." Thus, in 1871, the Commission of the Protestants of Aintab sent a letter to convey their demand for higher education. The commission demanded that the college be established in Aintab instead of Marash due to the region's discontent with the lack of education and the superior resources available in Aintab. The letter emphasizes this demand as follows:

> The Bible is truly a wonderful book; it has promise of the "life that now is and of that which is to come"; it purifies the heart, it enlightens the mind, it makes man the child of God, while, at the same time, it develops within him all his noblest powers as a man. Our own experience and present condition are ample proof of this statement. We well remember what that condition was twenty-five or thirty years ago. Not only did we spend our care and strength on things that were worthless and unsatisfying, but we can truly say that we had not even a thought about the necessity or advantages of Education or Civilization. Then a population of [illegible] thousand Armenians was contented with one common school, and in that one school the only branches taught were ordinary reading and writing. When, however, through the agency of the American Board, the Bible was translated into our modern language, we can hardly explain how, but we know that it soon changed our opinions as to the importance of Education. In a short time, the Evangelical Armenians in this city, not to mention the members of the old Armenian churches, were not content with three or four schools … All the churches within the bounds of this "Mission" are convinced of the necessity of a more thoroughly educated Ministry, and hence, as you are probably aware, for a long time have desired the establishment of a College in this section of the country (PABCFM, Reel 641, No. 170, pp. 199–200).

The Commission reported that missionary activities had radically transformed the Armenians' understanding of education within 30 years, shifting their aspirations from "mere reading and writing" to a pursuit of higher learning. Moreover, the letter signifies Aintab's strategic location to reach a wider section of communities since it was "midway between the Arabic-speaking population on the south and the Armenian-speaking population of the Taurus mountains and the regions beyond" (PABCFM, Reel 641, p. 203).

The 1872 Prudential Committee report outlines the college's mission in the region. According to the report, the college was established to train educated local leaders to replace the missionaries who had left the region, "to withstand the unchristian influences of European civilization" and the "wiles of Romanism," thereby achieving an early close to missionary work in this field. In this sense, the Committee envisioned that the Central Turkey College would serve as a "great Christian agency" just like Harvard and Yale Colleges (PABCFM, Reel 673, No. 487, pp. 762–763). The college was officially established in 1876 and offered a modern curriculum, including courses such as "Political Economy," "World History," "Chemistry," "History of Turkey," "American History," and "Armenian Language and Literature" (Kocabaşoğlu, 1989, p. 182). This way, the college adopted Clark's vision of combining "materialism" and "humanitarianism" with Christian thought and introduced these values in line with American culture to a diverse student base, "two-thirds Armenian Evangelical" and "one-third Armenian Apostolic" from different parts of Anatolia (Stone, 2006, pp. 246–247). In the following years, the college, with its courses about the Armenian language, history, and literature, instilled a sense of local identity through missionary discourse, and "increased the national consciousness of the Armenian community" (Taşkın, 2012, p. 424).

Although the college claimed that it did not have a direct mission of "national enlightenment", its ideals promoted the separatist political movements of the time and influenced the formation of Armenian political organizations that "advocated revolt against the repressive Ottoman regime," such as the Hunchak Party, which was founded in 1887 (Stone, 2006, p. 153). The college recognizes its impact on these movements in its annual reports as follows:

> The college has followed for many years the policy of giving to its students a large degree of personal freedom. At the same time it has been necessary to restrict this freedom in certain ways, owing to political conditions and to the immaturity of the students. Political conditions have changed. Many new influences, also, from without have come to bear on students' lives, for better or for worse. The college cannot prevent this, and if it could, it might result in the production of weaklings instead of sturdy men. The faculty has found it necessary to recognize this situation. Teachers may attempt to guide their students, but, in the end, character, taste, thought, and experience must teach each one the wisest use of his liberty (Central Turkey College, 1914, pp. 29–30).

Although the college attempted to restrict its reading material to prevent this political movement, which was considered "Marxist," "godless, and materialistic," it was unable to suppress the unrest (Central Turkey College, 1914, pp. 12–13). Furthermore, some faculty members and their wives even supported radical movements and took an active role in parties such as Hunchak (Stone, 2006, p. 153).

In the early 20th century, the Ottoman government accused the college of being a center of rebellion. During World War I, the Ottoman army "requisitioned" its buildings and closed them in 1916. The college reopened in 1921 but moved to Aleppo after the Armenian population of Aintab moved to Syria for "refuge" under the French mandate. Consequently, the Central Turkey College continued Clark's objective of creating an "enlightened" Protestant society and assumed a prominent role in the region's political and social upheavals for approximately fifty years (Stone, 2006, pp. 157–158).

The Home School and Clark's Vision for Women's Higher Education

Before Nathaniel G. Clark's term, the American Board's policies confined women missionaries to being "helpers of the real missionaries" in the Anderson era. In contrast, Clark recognized the potential of women missionaries in shaping local communities, especially through education. Thereby, his policies concentrated on girls' education and created a "need for single women missionaries" (Çoban Döşkaya, 2021, p. 527).

As a result, the Woman's Board of Missions (WBM) was founded in Boston in 1868, the Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior (WBMI) in Chicago in 1868, and the Woman's Board of the Pacific in San Francisco (WBP) in 1873, and these Woman Boards. After the American Board, these Women's Boards took over the responsibility for "the salaries of women missionaries" and "the financing of girls' schools" (Alan & Bolat, 2011,

p. 111). These developments shifted the missionaries' focus to educating women to create "free and independent" women who would become "potential Protestant mothers" for future generations (Narin, 2018, p. 254).

At the same time, missionary discourse described Ottoman women as "the beasts of burden in the fields, drudges in the house, or idle prisoners in the harem", justifying the intervention of American missionaries in the name of education. Clark's discourse also perpetuates the missionary perception of women's position in society:

> The great offense of Islam against the highest civilization of mankind, and constituting a bar to all true progress, is the treatment of woman. Woman, the drudge and slave of man in this life, is denied the hope of immortality, because denied even the possession of a soul. More wisely than we thought have we been preparing for her restoration to her true place in the social economy (Clark, 1878, p. 8).

To restore women's "true place" in society by raising "independent women" in line with the American Board's interests, Clark favored the establishment of a women's college in Constantinople.

Constantinople was particularly significant for the American Board, as it was considered the "headquarters of missionary work." It was both the source of possible opposition to missionaries and the center of government, from which officials were sent throughout the entire state. Therefore, "a strong mission force" in the city could overcome oppositions "right at their beginning" and dispel "the impression that Christian missionaries are advancing upon the empire only through remote interior districts" (Barton, 1908, pp. 137–138). Hence, Constantinople was "occupied" by American missionaries in 1831. Moreover, Tillman C. Trowbridge's letter dated 1867 reflects the position of Constantinople in the missionary activities: "This city was felt by all the Mission to be the most difficult yet the most important point in Turkey to conquer and hold. As Mr. Barnum says — 'it is the Richmond of the Confederacy!'" (PABCFM, Reel 642, No. 397, p. 1091). Considering Richmond served as the heavily defended capital of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War, Constantinople was considered by the missionaries as the "stronghold of Islam," and its "occupation" meant a spiritual conquest.

The growth of women missionaries and Constantinople's central role increased the demand for a home school for girls, which would be modeled on American institutions. With such a home school, missionaries intend to instill discontent among women about their "degraded" position and reform local gender norms through Christian Education as described in *Life and Light*: "Where has Christianity entered, and done its legitimate work, and left women contented in their degradation?" (Woman's Board of Missions, 1876, pp. 289–298). For N. G. Clark, education was crucial in ensuring

Protestant influence in those "occupied" regions. With his support, "Home School" was founded in Gedikpaşa in 1871, modeled after the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, which combined religious education with an extensive academic program (Reeves-Ellington, 2015, p. 57).

The school's name traces back to Clark's statement in 1869, in which he asserted that Christian women in Constantinople needed a "home" to serve as a religious center (Köse, 2003, p. 203). According to Reeves-Ellington (2015, p. 57), the name "home" reflected three evangelical principles that the school adopted. It would be "the center of women's missionary work" in Western Turkey Mission, it would promote Protestantism in the Ottoman "domestic sphere", and it would provide a common "living space" for single women missionaries to pursue their ambitions and manage their work.

The number of students in the school reached twenty-five in its second year, and the reports indicated that they "tamed" the Armenian girls with American values.

> Untamed Armenian girls, used to no restraint in their homes, had become accustomed to go through the routine of school-life, with the regularity and punctuality seen in our best American schools. The awkward shyness of girls hitherto secluded from society had given way to a quiet repose of manner, and ladylike demeanor (Woman's Board of Missions, 1876, p. 293).

In addition to its "civilizing mission," the school curriculum combined academic subjects with "ornamental courses," reinforcing Armenian national identity and Protestant moral values. English was used as the primary language of education, rather than Armenian. This choice reflected an objective to attract a multi-ethnic student base, which aligned with Clark's vision for English-language education that exceeded the boundaries of vernacular language.

In 1876, the school relocated to Scutari (Üsküdar) and was renamed "Üsküdar High School." In 1890, it became "the American College for Girls at Constantinople." Finally, after severing ties with the American Board in 1914, the school moved to its new campus in Arnavutköy (Çoban Döşkaya, 2020, p. 1059). S. H. Hayes described the American College for Girls as a "beacon-light" that guided women "in darkness": "Our Constantinople Home stands, upon its beautiful height, a beacon-light to the thousands of women who sit in darkness, as lofty in its ideal, as beautiful in its promise, as it is in situation" (Hayes, 1880, pp. 121–127). In this sense, the school was depicted as "a city upon a hill" that would serve as a model for Ottoman society. Furthermore, N. G. Clark asserted that the American College for Girls represented American values, just like Robert College, and it expanded Protestant influence through the education of young women from the upper classes:

> Points of deep interest to the Secretary in this ancient and world-renowned city were the new Bible House a center of Christian influence for the whole Turkish empire —

> and Robert College, flying the American flag on the heights of the Bosphorus …. The success of this latter enterprise had encouraged the Woman's Board to undertake a work for the higher education of young women of the better classes and thus to give a wider range to the best Christian influences (Clark, 1894, p. 124).

As the "the stronghold of American interests", the college intended to raise "virtuous wives", teachers, and "reformers who could guide Ottoman society: "They [these women] must understand their respective circles of society, and carefully discriminate between the foreign influence which makes for the good of society, and that which will do it harm" (Fensham, 1902, pp. 12-15).

By the twentieth century, the American College for Girls began admitting Muslim students. Halide Edip Adıvar graduated from the college in 1901, and she represented the ideal of the modern Ottoman woman that the college envisioned. Through the missionary discourse, Halide Edip attributed a "sublime moral status" to Anglo-Saxon culture and recognized American education as a "divine grace": "More than for bread and water, more than any other want, we cry for knowledge and healthy Anglo-Saxon influence" (Adıvar, as cited in Özpala, 2017, pp. 47). Moreover, the college was depicted as "a sacred source of enlightenment and civilization" in her memoirs:

> In the dark days when our country was covered by a dense cloud, in the midst of disaster and despair, to you I lifted my eyes. With the finest subtleties and the broadest realities of civilization and humanity, you extended knowledge to the darkest horizon of Turkey, O Institution. And you, honored women, yea, you teachers, who left your own land and your own people to elevate and enlighten the dark corner of this freedomless, portionless land, sacrificing your finest years in your piety; you have struggled to bring light to Ottoman soil, to Ottoman civilization, fighting for learning and culture (Adıvar, as cited in Özpala, 2017, pp. 47-48).

Adıvar's depiction emphasized the impact of college on the Ottoman woman and how missionary efforts shaped the perception of American culture as "the noblest culture." Consequently, Nathaniel G. Clark's education policies focused on Ottoman women and recognized their potential to influence households, extending Protestant impact from "the individual level" to "Ottoman society" as a whole (Demir, 2012, p. 1410). In this context, the American College for Girls and its students, who carried American values to society, emerge as agents of American cultural hegemony.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, American missionaries served as a means of soft power, spreading American cultural influence in foreign lands despite the US's isolationist policy outlined in the Monroe Doctrine. In 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was established in the mission of nurturing Protestant communities and "civilizing" non-Protestants in foreign lands. As the American Board became one of

the most influential American missionary organizations, it targeted the Ottoman State for its "Bible lands" as its missionary field and sent its first missionaries in 1820. Subsequently, these American missionaries primarily focused on the Armenian and Greek communities through their activities in these lands, attempting to shape these communities through Protestant education in accordance with American interests.

The American Board's missionary policies were defined from its headquarters in Boston. Within this administrative structure, the Corresponding Secretaries emerged as a significant position in shaping these policies, as they could influence missionaries in the field through their personal correspondence with them. Nathaniel G. Clark carried out this position between 1865 and 1894; during his tenure, Clark expanded his predecessor Rufus Anderson's church-oriented "Three-Self" approach by integrating higher education and women's missionary policies. While Anderson emphasized native Protestant churches for solely propagation purposes, Clark promoted Protestant institutions as "cultural and spiritual centers" in which local communities could be "shaped" in line with their vision. Moreover, his policies were developed in the context of the Reconstruction era. Since the American Civil War devastated the southern regions, the donations to the American Board declined. In response, N. G. Clark emphasized the "self-support" principle, particularly in terms of economic reasons, which enabled the American Board to establish self-sufficient and longer-lasting missionary institutions. Clark's tenure and its social policies laid the foundation for James L. Barton, who was elected as the Corresponding Secretary in 1894. Barton adopted missionary strategies that emphasized humanitarian relief programs, medical services, and education, advocating that Protestantism had to address the social issues faced by their communities and other potential converts. Following this discourse of American exceptionalism, Barton adopted Clark's "secular" education model to educate local Protestants to lead future generations, with a focus on expanding the role of women in society.

Two prominent American Board educational institutions stood out as the embodiment of Clark's policies: Central Turkey College and the American College for Girls at Constantinople (formerly known as Home School). Central Turkey College initially acted as a Protestant cultural center and gradually promoted Armenian national consciousness through its curriculum. Although the college administration denied any involvement with the political movements, some students and professors were associated with radical political parties. Following the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary model, the American College for Girls at Constantinople aimed to train "virtuous wives" and Protestant reformers, and legitimized American influence by defining Ottoman women as "degraded". At the beginning, the college primarily focused on Christian

women; however, it eventually expanded its scope to include Muslim women as well, thereby extending the American cultural hegemony over diverse Ottoman communities.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Nathaniel G. Clark's policies reshaped the missionary strategies of the American Board as the American missionaries expanded American influence in the Ottoman State through higher education and women's education. Clark's tenure reflects both the projection of influence through cultural attraction, which Joseph Nye later conceptualized as soft power, and also the orientalist narrative described by Edward Said, in which Western powers legitimized their hegemony through "civilizing" missions. Thus, his term illustrates how nineteenth-century American missionary activity became a vehicle for cultural dissemination and the projection of American soft power.

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