

---

# Ottoman Immigrants and the Formation of Turkish Red Crescent Societies in the United States

Işıl ACEHAN\*

## Abstract

*The role of the Turkish Red Crescent Society and its humanitarian work during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence by delivering healthcare and assistance to tens of thousands of wounded or sick soldiers is well known. However, the humanitarian work of Turkish Red Crescent societies abroad, established in various locations extending from South America to the Far East, still remains an understudied subject. This article aims at exploring the Ottoman diaspora mobilization and the humanitarian role of the Turkish Red Crescent societies in the United States in the post-war reconstruction of Turkey after WWI and the Turkish War of Independence. It argues that the Turkish War of Independence witnessed a tremendous transformation of humanitarian relief work by the Ottoman government and Ottoman diaspora in the U.S. The work of the Turkish Red Crescent Societies in WWI and its aftermath is an example of humanitarian policy in the making.*

## Key Words

Ottoman Empire, United States, immigrants, the Turkish Red Crescent, humanitarian relief, World War I, the Turkish War of National Independence.

## Ottoman Migration to the U.S.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup>, thousands of Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Albanians, Greeks, and Sephardic Jews left the Ottoman Empire for economic as well as political reasons.<sup>1</sup> Their migration had been in part fostered by American charitable and philanthropic work, particularly in regions, such as Harput, with a considerable Christian population. The circulation of information about life and opportunities in the United States started the process of an Ottoman migration, particularly to the East Coast. The first departures were seen among Armenians who made their way to America with missionaries. Immigrant networks, letters to friends, and immigrants going back and forth would provide rich sources of practical information about jobs and opportunities in American industries, and lead immigrants to the American cities where members of their groups had already established themselves. Those letters attracted not only other Armenians but also other Ottoman

---

\* Assist. Prof. Dr., İpek University, Department of History, Ankara, Turkey.  
E-mail: iacehan@ipek.edu.tr

peoples living in close proximity to one another in Anatolian villages.

---

**A number of Ottoman migration agents, fostering and coordinating the migration process for profit had been established in Turkish and European ports of departures.**

---

Additionally, a number of Ottoman migration agents, fostering and coordinating the migration process for profit had been established in Turkish and European ports of departures. Consequently, immigrants from Anatolia, many of whom migrated from Harput, a large Ottoman province which at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century included today's Elazığ, Tunceli, and Malatya, migrated to industrial New England cities and towns, including Lynn, Peabody, Salem, Worcester and Lawrence. In 1891, for example, an Armenian from Worcester, MA sent a letter to the Ottoman Legation in Washington, D.C. warning the Ottoman government about an individual, Gaspar Nahigyan from Harput's Huseynik Village, who had established agents not only in Harput, but also in İstanbul and the United States. Nahigyan had been encouraging Harput's residents, both Muslims as well as Armenians, to migrate to the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

The peak years for migration from the Harput area was after the 1909 law that

rendered Ottoman Christians eligible for military service.<sup>3</sup> However, it was not just Christian males who left the province in order to avoid conscription; the Muslim population, who were suspicious of the Committee of Union and Progress, were also reluctant for many years to serve in the army. Consequently, Turkish migration to the United States reached its peak just before the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. Thus, both economic and political factors created a massive demographic change in the region by stimulating outmigration to the United States. Additionally, the creation and development of informal immigrant networks facilitated the process and persistence of migrations from particular villages and regions. Immigrant networks, which assisted the journeys and arrivals of new co-ethnics or co-villagers, would determine the settlement as well as employment patterns of the immigrants.

## Early Years

In their early years, Turkish immigrants in the U.S., who had mainly focused on adaptation to the new country, were not interested in the homeland affairs at all. However, their indifference to the homeland changed gradually as a response to the political developments in Turkey and the change in the attitude of the government towards immigrants. There were three crucial events which

shaped the nationalizing endeavours of the Ottoman and later Turkish government.

The first sign of Ottoman government's interest in its citizens in the United States was seen as a part of the Young Turk Revolution and proclamation of the Second Constitution. The government policy of curbing emigration alone was not sufficient enough to address the economic and social problems of the immigrants. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire changed its attitude of indifference towards its subjects in the United States, a vast majority of whom had migrated clandestinely. Thus, along with the desire to curb the outmigration, a policy of encouraging the return of immigrants was adopted. The most important attempt of the Ottoman political elite to convince its subjects to return to Turkey was in 1908, when Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) proclaimed general amnesty to all political fugitives from Turkey, regardless of ethnicity. The amnesty was part of the Young Turk "Revolution" and the proclamation of the Second Constitution in 1908, which restored the 1876 Ottoman Constitution with the hope of creating a strong state and protecting freedom of speech and the press. Furthermore, the Second Constitution would mark an end to the religious community (*millet*) and its all-pervading influence, except in the sphere of religion.<sup>4</sup> Many ethnic and religious

groups under Ottoman rule, including Arabs, Turks, Greeks and Armenians, rejoiced with the events of 1908.<sup>5</sup>

Proclamation of the Second Constitution and the *Tanzimat*'s ideal of reconciliation of Ottoman nationalities, *Ittihad-ı Anasır* [Unity of the Elements], also found its way to the United States and the Ottoman ethnics. On July 30, 1908 the general amnesty was declared by the Turkish Consul Münci Bey in New York. This amnesty targeted about 200,000 Armenians and other Ottoman ethnics in the United States. The message from the Sultan to the Turkish consul was:

Inform all the fugitive Turkish citizens in New York City and in all the United States, including political fugitives without regard to race or nationality—whether Greek, Armenian, Turkish, Albanian, everything that after promulgation of a constitution for the Turkish Empire, his majesty the Sultan, upon request of the government, has granted general amnesty, and all political fugitives may go back to Turkey after having the necessary passports verified at the office of the Turkish Consul General, 59 Pearl street, New York City.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Turkish Consul General Münci Bey, at the time of the proclamation of the general amnesty, there were 400,000 Turkish citizens in the United States, of whom more than 200,000 were political fugitives. They had often longed to return to their old homes, he noted, but feared to do so. He assured these political fugitives, as well as other Turkish citizens in the United States,

that they could return to their old homes without any fear. Although the amnesty included political, not criminal, fugitives, it prompted great hope for the return of Ottomans in the United States to “help in the work of constructing a united nation” as Turkey was expected to be “as free as the United States.” To encourage return of the immigrants, Münci Bey contrasted the new era in the Ottoman Empire with the period after the Russian revolution of 1905, which resulted in a failure of constitutional democracy. He assured that the proclamation was made in good faith and that there would be “no repetition of the Czar’s fiasco in regard to the Russian *duma*.” With the Second Constitutional Era, he believed, Turkey would “now take its former place among the nations of the world.” The Consul noted that he would be “surprised if at least 100,000 Turkish subjects did not return to their native lands within the next month or so.” He estimated that at least 5,000 out of the 50,000 Armenians, and Syrians would depart in a very short time after the proclamation. Furthermore, the Turkish refugees, the Turkish Consul noted, did not constitute a large number in New York City but had settled in Providence, Rhode Island as a large colony which was also expected to return.<sup>7</sup>

After the proclamation of general amnesty, the Armenians and Syrians of New York City were consulted with respect to their thoughts about the Sultan’s call for return. Mihran Bohgelian,

an Armenian spokesperson, said “I feel absolutely certain that the Sultan is acting in good faith I trust implicitly in the proclamation.” Moreover, F.M. Faddoll, a Syrian Jeweler and an important figure in the Syrian community in New York City, noted “we Syrians, of course, are greatly pleased at what the Sultan has done.” Regarding the situation of the Armenian and Syrian immigrants in the United States, he observed that “the Armenian is a political refugee, where Syrian is not; the Syrian has come to America because the conditions of life, business and industry there do not offer the possibility for progress that America does.” He believed that “the advance in the cause of freedom may mean a new era for Syria.”<sup>8</sup> The proclamation also found its voice in Turkish newspapers. *Sabah*, one of the most prominent newspapers of the time, noted that many of the Muslim and Armenian refugees were preparing to return to their homeland.<sup>9</sup>

As a part of the unification program carried out by the Ottoman government, Mehmed Ali Bey, the Turkish minister to the United States was recalled by the government and was replaced by Münci Bey, the Consul General in New York. After the minister was recalled, Münci Bey made his way to Washington as Chargé d’Affaires. His first step towards the unification of all the Ottoman citizens in the U.S. was holding a mass meeting of Turks, Armenians, Syrians, and Greeks, and all persons interested in the Ottoman

Empire at Carnegie Hall, New York City, on 23 August 1908. He conveyed that he would “preside and assist in the discussion of the best means of getting a permanent good government for Turkey, so that the people would be free to go ahead and develop the resources of the country.”<sup>10</sup> However, when all hope for the reunification of Ottoman ethnic elements under one umbrella disappeared and the government eventually came to terms with the impossibility of achieving the ideal of *İttihad-ı Anasır*, these efforts turned out to be in vain. Moreover, the failure of the programs could be due to economic opportunities that the U.S. offered as well as the suspicion over the government’s intentions about the political fugitives.

## The Balkan Wars

The second crucial element in nationalizing the Ottoman diaspora in U.S. was the Balkan Wars. Although the earliest nationalizing efforts of the Ottoman government covered all Ottoman subjects in the U.S., by the time of the Balkan Wars these efforts targeted only Muslim citizens. During the Balkan Wars, a number of governmental and non-governmental figures visited Peabody and the other towns and cities where the Turks lived, in order to foster national consciousness as well as to raise money for the families of soldiers killed in the Balkan Wars. By 1913, the Turkish immigrants’

ignorance had been broken in terms of the old country as well as the newly adopted country. When Ahmed Emin Yalman, who was doctoral student of journalism at Columbia, visited Peabody in 1911, he was disappointed with the ignorance of the Anatolian workers as well as the wages and conditions under which they were working. However, when he visited Peabody for a second time in 1913, he was surprised by the progress that had been made by the Anatolian workers. Yalman observed that the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) had resulted in ending their indifference to the homeland. They had subscribed to the İstanbul newspapers and they had been gathering in the coffeehouses in order to read the newspapers and discuss the situation at home. Discussions were followed by fundraising efforts for the homeland. Moreover, two Turks from Midilli (a former Ottoman island which was left to Greece at the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913), who had lived for a period within the Turkish community of Peabody, had started publishing a Turkish newspaper which contributed to the intellectual development of the Turkish workers to a great extent by introducing new ideas.<sup>11</sup>

Kemal Karpat notes that the Turks in the United States lacked an enlightened leadership like the ones that Armenians and Greeks had, that would allow them to set up permanent foundations in the United States. He explains this reason for the lack of such leadership as:

The mass-elite division of the Turks was their worst enemy, for the elite looked down upon their own lower classes as ignorant beasts of exploitation rather than as kin to be helped. Members of the Ottoman intelligentsia, like many modernist Turks, were trained to serve not their people and society but the state and thus were unable to establish their own viable, independent ethnic community. Lacking a communal foundation to provide continuity, each wave of immigrants had to start a new process of adjustment to the unfamiliar environment but ultimately abandoned its efforts, either by returning home or by disappearing within the American society.<sup>12</sup>

Although Karpat's observation about the Turkish immigrants' failure of establishing foundations in the United States for a permanent presence is true to some extent, a deeper look into the Turkish society on the North Shore will prove that they neither lacked leadership nor were they ignored by the elites who fostered the process of nationalization and adaptation of Turkish immigrants in the U.S.

---

**With the proclamation of the Second Constitution, Turks, as well as the Ottoman millets were expected to return to the homeland in order to take part in the formation of a new nation.**

---

One of the early attempts for Turkish nationalization was marked by the

Turkish Consul of Boston, Abraham Effendi's visit to Peabody with his clerk Faik Bey in 1911, which created much excitement among the Turkish residents of Peabody. A large number of Turks, about 250, gathered at the O'Shea building in Peabody Square to see the Consul. His address, which was one of the first attempts at nationalization among the Turkish immigrants, was on the topic "The progress and the education of a nation."<sup>13</sup>

While conditions worsened due to the Balkan Wars, Turkish nationalism was built up among the Turkish immigrants in the United States. As was noted before, with the proclamation of the Second Constitution, Turks, as well as the Ottoman *millets* were expected to return to the homeland in order to take part in the formation of a new nation. However, Balkan Wars had started a process of no return for the Ottoman *millets* that would emerge as nationals by the end of World War I. During and after this process, not only government representatives visited Peabody in order to tell about conditions in the home country, but also leading figures among the Turkish immigrants updated their countrymen about the conditions in Turkey while also trying to make the immigrants' assimilation into the host community easier.

One of these leading figures among the Turkish residents of Peabody was Joe Hussien, who had acted as both an

interpreter and arbitrator for the Turks in legal matters and as a mouthpiece for the Turkish community on the North Shore. Another figure, as was mentioned before, was Mamad Efendi, a Turkish resident in Peabody since 1902 and a storekeeper since 1905. Knowing the customs of the newly adopted country, he also counselled the Turks when they encountered difficulties.<sup>14</sup> There were also other prominent figures who advised the Turkish community on the North Shore and tried to ease the difficulties stemming from being in a foreign land. One of the earliest examples of the consciousness among the Turkish immigrants was seen after the Turks and Greeks had a “miniature battle” on 19 October 1912. It was claimed that the fight had started after an assault on a Turk by a Greek on Wallis Street, Peabody where they lived in adjoining houses. Wallis St. 82-84 was a double house on Wallis Street, with the front part occupied by Turks and parts in the rear occupied by Greeks. It was noted that the Turks and Greeks “evidently sought to import the war of their several countries and fight it out with knives.” The fight came to an end with the arrival of police officers who took two Turks and a Greek into custody while the severely wounded were taken to hospital. The fight was perhaps one of the most important events that led to a rising Turkish and Greek antipathy on the North Shore. Police Chief Grady “cautioned them against meeting each

other and fighting over their war.” Moreover, he also noted that “they could go back to their native lands and get all the real fighting they wanted, but they must keep out of it here.”<sup>15</sup>

---

Following WWI, the Turkish War of Independence strengthened the ties that Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in the U.S. had with the homeland, as it became a test of allegiance.

---

The following day after that event, 20 October 1912, a mass meeting of around 1,000 Turks from Peabody, Haverhill, and Lowell, was called by Mehmed Efendi. Besides raising US\$ 1,000 for the war cause and expecting to send US\$ 7,000 from Peabody to be forwarded to the Sultan, leading Turkish individuals raised a sense of nationalism and suggested ways to the Turks to make their lives easier in the United States. Moreover, a call to arms had been awakened among the Turks, as about 30 of them left the U.S. to fight in the Balkan Wars. Mamad Efendi, one of the most prominent figures among the Turks on the North Shore, counselled the Turks to “obey the laws of the country in which they reside” and resented the fight which was taking place between the Greeks and Turks of Peabody. Another Turk, Huseyin Efendi of Lynn, gave a talk on religion and loyalty to

the native land, which left many of the Turks in tears. Another speaker at the meeting was Mehmed Suleyman Efendi, 18 years old, who addressed the meeting on the Mohammedan religion; a talk that aroused great enthusiasm. Moreover, Huseyin Efendi, another Turkish individual, advised the Turks “not to engage in combat with the local Greeks,” and if assaulted by them to “inform the police authorities.”<sup>16</sup>

## The Great War

For the Ottoman immigrant ethnics in the United States, the wake of World War I would lead to a tremendous transformation in terms of identity. The Ottoman Empire was now crumbling and turning into a new entity which would lead to the immigrant’s transformation of identity from thousand miles away. By the time of Turkey’s entrance into World War I, one of the Turkish immigrants, a man named Mehmed from the Diyarbakır village of “Aşağı Çanakçı,” established the *Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i İslâmiye* (Islamic Benevolence Society) in Peabody. The Society had been founded in an effort to raise money for the orphans of Muslims who lost their lives during World War I. He had also secured a license for the Society, which was composed at the beginning of seven Turkish business owners in Peabody. After founding the Society, he had begun the work of

registering new members to the Society by gathering the Turks on Sundays in the Society building and giving lectures on the conditions in the homeland and on their duty for the welfare of their own country. Mehmed also started visiting the Turkish coffee houses in Peabody and its vicinity, such as Salem and Worcester, and giving lectures. He was collecting at least 25 cents from each person. He told about all his efforts in a letter to the Turkish Consul in Boston.<sup>17</sup> By 30 November 1919, he had collected around US\$ 6,700 to be sent to İstanbul for contribution to the war effort.<sup>18</sup> By 13 December 1919, the amount of the money raised among the Turkish immigrants had reached US\$ 7,010.55, and they had decided to give the money to the Turkish Red Crescent Society.<sup>19</sup>

---

Although the Balkan Wars and World War I had seen early attempts of humanitarian efforts by societies established by Turkish and Kurdish Ottoman immigrants, the Turkish War of National Independence transformed humanitarian relief due to the magnitude of the civilian suffering, particularly for the orphans of deceased soldiers.

---

## The Turkish War of Independence

Following WWI, the Turkish War of Independence strengthened the ties that Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in the U.S. had with the homeland, as it became a test of allegiance. Although they had always retained their contact with the homeland and kept tabs on their farms and families left behind, their interest in the homeland affairs intensified in this period. Turkish and Kurdish immigrants, who were usually ignored or disregarded by the Ottoman government for a long time, became the centre of interest for the new Ankara government as their value as a source of revenue to fund the reconstruction of the war-torn country as well as to take care of the orphans of war became more evident.

Although the Balkan Wars and World War I had seen early attempts of humanitarian efforts by societies established by Turkish and Kurdish Ottoman immigrants, the Turkish War of National Independence transformed humanitarian relief due to the magnitude of the civilian suffering, particularly for the orphans of deceased soldiers. Moreover, the establishment of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 1919, would change the whole structure of fundraising efforts by making the flow of funds from the U.S. to the Ottoman Empire much more convenient.

As a part of the fundraising process, by 21 August 1921, US\$ 150,000 had already been raised among the Turks and Kurds residing in the United States and the amount was given to the Turkish representative, Abdülhak Hüseyin, in Washington. It was stated that the amount would be sent to the Turkish Red Crescent Society in Turkey through Guarantee Trust Co. in İstanbul.<sup>20</sup> The Turkish-American Information Bureau, located at 18 West Street, NYC, noted that through the newspapers they were informing the Turkish immigrants in the United States about the success of the Second Battle of İnönü (*II. İnönü Muharebesi*, 26-31 March 1921). They also wanted the Turkish Red Crescent Society to prepare a documentary film about the Battles of İnönü to promote raising funds for the Turkish Red Crescent Society. It was suggested the film should also include beautiful sights of İstanbul and Anatolia as well as the views of beautifully dressed ladies in their homes and on the streets. The Bureau believed that the film would help improve the image of Turkish society among the American people. Moreover, the Bureau would contribute to the film in all ways possible and wanted the film rolls to be mailed to the Turkish-American Information Bureau in New York City.<sup>21</sup>

On 21 March 1923, Dr. Mehmed Fuad (Umay) Bey was granted permission from the Grand National Assembly of

Turkey to go the United States in order to raise funds among the Ottoman immigrants for immediate war relief. For the first time, humanitarian action became an organized effort by fostering diaspora mobilization. Dr. Mehmed Fuad, the founder of *Himaye-i Etfal* (Society for the Protection of Orphans), a society that was established in 1921 to provide orphanages to children of the deceased soldiers in the Turkish War for Independence, began visiting many of the Turkish colonies in the United States, giving lectures and raising a considerable amount of money for the establishment of orphanages in Turkey. Dr. Fuad Bey arrived in Ellis Island on 6 April 1923 on a ship named S.S. Aquitania, and headed to the Ottoman Welfare Association at 35 Rivington Street.<sup>22</sup> In the first meeting held by the Ottoman Welfare Association for the benefit of Turkish Orphan Society, Dr. Fuad Bey notes that a total of US\$ 17,500 was raised in just six hours. To those who donated over US\$ 1,000, a personally autographed picture of Mustafa Kemal was given by Dr. Fuad Bey. He visited the Turkish colonies in Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. He lectured about the Turkish War of Independence and the success of the struggle, and many Turkish and Kurdish workers residing in these cities donated their life savings to support the construction of orphanages and the reconstruction of the country.

Dr. Mehmed Fuad (Umay)'s visit to Peabody, Massachusetts aroused great excitement among the Turkish and Kurdish immigrants. It was one of the first chances for the Muslim Anatolian immigrants to manifest their national pride and attachment to the homeland. At the same time their socioeconomic achievement was evidenced with the arrival of Mehmed Fuad in Peabody "in an auto decorated with a large American flag and followed by a dozen autos filled with Turks, the machines decorated with American and Turkish flags." A day before his arrival, the Turks refrained from work and "went around with badges in honor of his coming."<sup>23</sup>

Mehmed Fuad noted that there were around 600 Turks when he visited Peabody in 1923. Despite their small number, they had established the Red Crescent society. The next day, after being shown some of the tanneries in Peabody and Salem, Fuad gave an address to the Turks and Kurds at the Peabody Institute. The scene was described as:

All the Turks in town were present. They made much of the doctor's coming, many of them taking a day off. They wore badges in his honor and displayed in front of the Institute the American and Turkish flags. Much enthusiasm prevailed. Baskets of roses were carried down the aisles and the flowers were bought at any price, bunches of money being put in the baskets. It was said that \$8,000 was raised among the Turks of this city for Dr. Bey to take back with him.<sup>24</sup>

Fuad Bey visited Peabody for a second time on 14 August 1925, as he came for the National Conference of Social workers held in Denver, Colorado in June, 1925. When he arrived in Massachusetts, he was met by a delegation of Turkish people from Peabody and escorted to the Moose Hall in Peabody to deliver an address. When interviewed by *The Salem Evening News*, Fuad Bey noted that American people were “more friendly towards the Turkish people.” He gave an example of an American Senator, William H. King from Utah, who was visiting Turkey at that time. The Senator’s ideas before leaving this country were rather unfavorable” but he had changed his old opinion as was proved by his statements he had made to the Turkish papers during his visit. Fuad Bey concluded his interview by noting “as the time passes, the American people will be even more friendly toward the Turkish people.”<sup>25</sup> Mehmet Fuad’s two visits to the Turkish community in Peabody had contributed to the maintaining of a better image of the Turkish society in the city by showing enthusiasm over their homeland while manifesting their concern over becoming part of American society. Moreover, Mehmed Fuad’s interview with *The Salem Evening News* and his expression of his faith in the prospect of better Turkish and American international and intergroup relations based on trust and cooperation enhanced the Turkish immigrants’ individual and

collective self-esteem and weakened the preexisting negative views about the Turkish immigrants.

Even the depiction of the Turkish people in the newspapers had considerably changed by the time Fuad arrived in Peabody. Previously, Turks in the U.S. had been criticized several times in American newspapers for channeling money to the homeland. Regarding Fuad’s second visit to Peabody, it was noted:

The meeting of the Turkish residents of this city held in the City hall for the purpose of raising funds for welfare work among Turkish children, Sunday afternoon, was a huge success financially and a total amount of US\$ 6,960 was raised for this purpose. The meeting was addressed by Dr. Fuad Bey of Constantinople, who is in this country to secure financial assistance for the work done in his native land. There were about 160 present and the donations ranged from US\$ 5 to US\$ 260 or an average contribution of US\$ 43.50 per person from those who attended the meeting. The affair typifies the liberality of the men of that race in this city and is conclusive evidence that the men of that race in this city are industrious and thrifty.<sup>26</sup>

The fundraising had been done under the supervision of Joe Hussein, the Turkish spokesperson, who was a resident of Peabody for many years and well known there. The Turks, who had long been criticized for their channeling money to the homeland, maintaining their native language, and intending to return to their homeland, turned out to be described as “industrious and thrifty” by 1925, which

indicates a better image of the Turks as well as better relations with the rest of Peabody's community. Moreover, as the result of an intensified nationalism as well as adaptation to the host country, the earliest attempt of lobbying efforts among Turkish immigrants was seen during this period. With the sponsorship of the Turkish Welfare Society in New York, a memorandum was prepared by the Turkish immigrants and addressed to the U.S. Congress calling for working in collaboration with the new Turkish Republic.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Fuad's son, Tunç Umay, notes that a sum of US\$ 100,000 had already been forwarded to Turkey before Dr. Umay's departure and the total of the funds raised was over US\$ 400,000. With the money raised, six buildings were acquired in Turkey, the Orphan Society headquarters in Anafartalar, Ankara were established, two movie theatres were built and the Turkish Orphan Society's orphanage in Keçiören, Ankara was founded. Turkish immigrants continued donating for the Turkish Children until the 1950s.<sup>28</sup>

## Later Years

In the late 1930s, the Red Crescent Society in Peabody, the "Anatolian Club" in other words, had become the gathering place for the Turkish immigrants in Peabody, Lynn, Salem and nearby areas. They would come at least once a week for meetings and prayers. The Anatolian

Club, which also had been established in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Worcester, became a device for Turkish transnationalism in their later years in the United States. It was where funds were raised to be sent to Turkey through the Red Cross, who turned it over to the Red Crescent. According to the American Red Cross, the sum of \$3,500 was forwarded to Turkey for the victim of flood in Adana on 17 December 1930. For the Erzincan earthquake victims in December 1939, over 10,000 canvasses for tents and 25,000 blankets as well as a large amount of medical supplies were dispatched to Turkey.<sup>29</sup>

---

As the world has become more globalized and the world's humanitarian challenges have become more complex and transnational, the role of humanitarian diplomacy has become a salient feature of international organizations.

---

The Turkish transnational activities became also instrumental in showing those back home the immigrants' success as well as their continuing concern for their homeland. Frank Ahmed recalls in 1939 sitting with the Turks and a representative of the General Electric Corporation for contemplation over the

purchase of an iron lung to be sent to Elaziğ. The Turks in Peabody and Salem had paid in cash for the iron lung and the shipping expenses for Elaziğ. When he asked “why an iron lung and not other types of medical supplies?” the reply was that “Turkey does not have an iron lung, not one in the entire country, that’s why!” Then, Ahmed concluded that “these Turks living on the North Shore of Massachusetts wanted to send a positive message of their interest and success to Turkey.” The message was “we have not forgotten you, do not forget us.” Sending an iron lung was a way “to show that they were still Turks and very much cared for Turkey but, nevertheless, had done well in the United States.”<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies defines humanitarian diplomacy as “persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act, at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles.”<sup>31</sup> As the world has become more globalized and the world’s humanitarian challenges have become more complex and transnational, the role of humanitarian diplomacy has become a salient feature of international organizations. However, a thorough analysis of the history of humanitarian organizations and post-war reconstruction of the world after the

Great War, will fill a gap in the history of humanitarian diplomacy. Although the unique role of the Turkish Red Crescent Society is one of the first examples of humanitarian diplomacy in action, its history has not been studied extensively yet. This has partly been due to the unavailability of the archival materials that would provide resources to uncover the history of the Turkish Red Crescent Society and also due to a lack of interest in the subject. In the past ten years, however, the Turkish Red Crescent Society Archives has shown a rapid progress and now a considerable number of archival materials has been indexed and is searchable online. The Turkish Red Crescent archives provide a rich collection to study the humanitarian relief work by the Turkish government and a good example of diaspora mobilization.

---

**As the view of the government about Ottoman immigrants in the U.S. changed from negative to positive, the potential power of the Ottoman diaspora in the country’s post-war reconstruction was realized.**

---

Also, as has been discussed in the article, in the early years, the Ottoman diaspora’s engagement in homeland affairs was not institutionalized at all. This did not change until the arrival of Dr. Fuad

in the last months of the Turkish War of Independence. As the view of the government about Ottoman immigrants in the U.S. changed from negative to positive, the potential power of the Ottoman diaspora in the country's post-war recon-

struction was realized. Dr. Fuad's initiative sets a good example of consolidating a diaspora abroad and integrating them into humanitarian relief work in postwar and post-conflict societies.

## Endnotes

- 1 The numbers of each Ottoman religious group migrating to the United States are imprecise because of the fact that the Ottomans kept few official figures of immigration. Furthermore, the large numbers of clandestine migrations, as was noted, also added complexity to Ottoman statistical figures, so they must be treated with caution. Thus, United States immigration statistics, despite their flaws, give us much more precise information about the numbers and characteristics of the Ottoman immigrants in the United States. Ottoman subjects migrating to the Americas totaled 1.2 million. During the period 1869-1892, 178,000 persons migrated from “Turkey-in-Asia” to the United States; 120,000 migrants from “Turkey-in-Europe” and another 150,000 from the Asian provinces arrived in the United States between 1895 and 1914. The most considerable leap in the population movement from “Turkey in Asia,” was seen in the 1910 census with a total of 23,533 immigrants from Turkey in Asia, an increase around twice the number of immigrants in 1909. In 1911 and 1912, after a decline in the number of migration from “Turkey in Asia” to 10,229 and 12,788 respectively, another rise was observed in 1913. 23,955 immigrated probably due to the devastating effects of the Balkan Wars on the socioeconomic conditions in Turkey and the decline in the prospect of a better life at home. After the outbreak of World War I, Ottoman immigrant arrivals into the United States abruptly came to a halt. See, Susan B. Carter et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Millennial Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006. For a more comprehensive discussion on the numbers and identities of the Ottoman immigrants in the U.S., see, Kemal Çiçek, “Amerika’da Türk Ermeni Çatışması ve Harry the Turk Cinayeti”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Vol. 5-6, No. 20-21 (2005-2006), pp. 65-86; John J. Grabowski, “Forging New Links in the Early Turkish Migration Chain: The U.S. Census and Early Twentieth Century Ships’ Manifests”, in Kemal Karpat and Deniz A. Balgamiş (eds.), *Turkish Migration to the United States: From Ottoman Times to the Present*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2008, pp. 15-28; Thomas Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History*, New York, Free Press, 1983; Kemal Karpat, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1985), pp. 176-7; Kemal Karpat, “The Turks in America”, *Les Annales d L’Autre Islam*, No. 3 (1995), pp. 231-252.
- 2 “Harput’ta Bazı Kişilerin Ermenileri Amerika’ya Göçe Teşvik Ettikleri”, 6 February 1891, in T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Amerikan İlişkileri (1839-1895)*, Vol. 1, Ankara, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2007, pp. 36-37.
- 3 Suraiya Faroqhi et al., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. 2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 792.
- 4 Faroz Ahmad, “The Young Turk Revolution”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.3, No.3 (July 1968), p. 22.
- 5 Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1997, p. 52.

- 6 “Sultan Proclaims a General Amnesty: About 200,000 Armenians in the United States Are Understood to Come in Under the Provisions of This Order, As They Are All Political Fugitives”, *The Salem Evening News*, 31 July 1908.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 “Amerika’daki Osmanlılar”, *Sabah*, 4 August 1908.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Ahmed Emin Yalman, “Amerika’da Türk Muhacirler”, *Darülfünun Edebiyat Mecmuası*, No. 2 (1332-1334), pp. 179-188.
- 12 Karpat, “The Turks in America”, pp. 236-237.
- 13 “Visit by Turkish Consul”, *The Salem Evening News*, 18 December 1911.
- 14 “For Turkish Labor”, *The Peabody Enterprise*, 17 May 1912.
- 15 “Peabody Greeks and Turks had a Miniature Battle”, *The Salem Evening News*, 21 October 1912.
- 16 “Mass Meeting of Turks Sunday”, *The Salem Evening News*, 21 October 1912.
- 17 “Bâb-ı Âli, Hariciye Nezareti, Umur-u İdariyye Müdirriyet-i Umumiyesi, Umur-u şehbenderî Müdirriyeti,” No. 18,163.1. Undated Document, The Turkish Red Crescent Society Archives, Ankara.
- 18 “Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Risayet-i Âliyyesine Peabody Cemiyet-i İslâmiyesinden Gönderilecek Meblağ Hakkında”, Bab-ı Âli Hariciye Nezareti, No 19,209. Hususi 387. 30 November 1919, The Turkish Red Crescent Society Archives, Ankara.
- 19 “Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Risâyet-i Sâniyesine”, Bab-ı Âli Hariciye Nezareti, No. 19,395. 13 December 1919. Hususi 397, The Turkish Red Crescent Society Archives, Ankara.
- 20 “İstanbul’da Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Müdirriyet-i Umumiyesine”, No. 839, 21 August 1921. The Turkish Red Crescent Society Archives.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 S.S. Aquitania passenger manifest, 6 April 1923. In her novel *Roman Gibi*, Sabiha Sertel describes the arrival of Mehmed Fuad Bey in New York, on the ship named Gülcemal, the first Turkish ship that travelled to the United States. However, the Ellis Island ship records show that Gülcemal reached New York only in the years 1920 and 1921.
- 23 “Dr. Fuad Bey, Noted Turk, on Mission Here”, *The Salem Evening News*, 24 April 1923.
- 24 “Turks Contribute \$8000”, *The Salem Evening News*, 25 April 1923.
- 25 “Turkish Official Registered at the Hawthorne Hotel”, *The Salem Evening News*, 14 August 1925.

- 26 “Turkish Funds Raised”, *The Salem evening News*, 18 August 1925.
- 27 Şebnem Koşer Akçapar, “Turkish Associations in the United States: Towards Building a National Identity”, in Şebnem Koşer Akçapar (ed.), *Turkish Immigrants in Western Europe and North America: Immigration and Political Mobilization*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 37.
- 28 Tunç Umay, “Babam Fuad Umay”, *Bütün Dünya*, No. 4 (2005), pp.29-31.
- 29 Frank Ahmed, *Turks in America: The Ottoman Turks Immigrant Experience*, Columbia, Columbia International, 1993, p. 59.
- 30 Ibid., p. 59.
- 31 The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy”, at <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-diplomacy/humanitarian-diplomacy-policy/> (last visited 25 May 2015).

