

Osman Keskiner and Mehmet Yavuz Erler Ottoman Migrants to America Left to Their Fate in the Ports of Trieste and Rijeka (1896–1914)

UDK 314.745.25(7=943.5)"1896/1914"

KESKİNER Osman, asistent, 19 May University, Faculty of Divinity, Kurupelit/Samsun, osmankeskiner@gmail.com

ERLER Mehmet Yavuz, dr. prof., 19 May University, Faculty of Science and Literature, Department of History, Kurupelit/Samsun, myerler@omu.edu.tr

Otomanski migranti v Ameriko in njihova usoda v tržaškem in reškem pristanišču (1896–1914)

Zgodovinski časopis, Ljubljana 66/2012 (145), št. 1-2, str. 212–227, cit. 42

1.01 izvirni znanstveni članek: jezik Sn. (En., En., Sn.)

Prispevek govori o usodi otomanskih migrantov na tujem. Izguba teritorijev kot posledica pojemajoče moči Otomanov je povzročala notranje migracije, ki naj bi vzpodbudile življenje v državi. Razlogi, zaradi katerih so migranti iskali zatočišče v Ameriki, so bili popolnoma upravičeni. Prispevek opredeljuje razloge za migracijo in tihotapljenje ljudi. Otomani, ne glede na njihovo versko in rasno pripadnost, so bili žrtev prevar ladijskih družb in kot taki zapuščeni v pristaniščih v Trstu, na Reki in drugod. V prispevku bomo predstavili njihovo usodo po migraciji. S pomočjo otomanskega arhivskega gradiva bomo osvetlili njihove dosežke ali neuspehe izven otomanske države. Naše raziskave temeljijo zgolj na otomanskem in arabskem arhivskem gradivu. Nadaljnje rezultate bo prinesla nadgradnja študije z raziskavami v ameriških arhivih ter arhivih, ki hranijo dokumente, ki pričajo o pomorski zgodovini Trsta in Reke.

Ključne besede: Otomani, Amerika, Makedonija, Libanon, Trst, Reka

Avtorski izvleček

UDC 314.745.25(7=943.5)"1896/1914"

KESKİNER Osman, Assistant, 19 May University, Faculty of Divinity, Kurupelit/Samsun, osmankeskiner@gmail.com

ERLER Mehmet Yavuz, Prof. PhD., 19 May University, Faculty of Science and Literature, Department of History, Kurupelit/Samsun, myerler@omu.edu.tr

Ottoman Migrants to America Left to Their Fate in the Ports of Trieste and Rijeka (1896–1914)

Zgodovinski časopis (Historical Review), Ljubljana 66/2012 (145), No. 1-2, pp. 212–227, notes 42

Language: Sn. (En., En., Sn.)

The article deals with the Ottoman migrants' destiny abroad. The diminishing of the Ottomans' strength resulted in the loss of their territories, which caused internal migration which was to stimulate the domestic life. The migrants' reasons for taking refuge in America were full and just. In this article we describe the reasons for migration, along with the human smuggling. Ottomans, regardless of their differences in race and religious manner, were deceived by shipping companies and abandoned at the ports of Trieste, Rijeka and elsewhere. Their fate following the migration will be presented in this article. State policy and the migrants' success or their failure outside the Ottoman sovereignty will be enlightened by means of Ottoman archival materials. Our search is based solely upon the Ottoman and Arabic archival materials. The study could be upgraded and would bring further results by research in archives in America(s) along with research in archives where the documents regarding naval history of Trieste and Rijeka are kept.

Key Words: Ottomans, America, Macedonia, Lebanon, Trieste, Rijeka.

Author's Abstract

Introduction

The Ottoman Empire entered into the 20th century with a great loss of prosperity. As time went by, the Ottomans were losing their position of an empire due to territorial losses in North Africa and the Danube region, along with a decrease in number of subjects regardless of their religion and race. By 1908 the only remaining piece of the Ottoman Balkan Peninsula had been the Balkan midland stretching from Bosphorus to the Albanian Adriatic shores across Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania. The military coup of 1908 cancelled the imperial policy and put an end to the title of empire and replaced it with the national agenda. 1908 witnessed a substantial change of the administrative structure which had been caused by the political turmoil in the Ottoman sovereignty. The loss of the Empire's prestige resulted in the upset among the state-fond Ottomans and the idea of regaining the lost fame of Ottoman Empire.¹ However, their ideology was amid a dilemma. They could not demonstrate themselves as pro-Islamic since the conflict of the Arab national behavior divided a large portion of the community within the state. Comprehension of Islam among the Muslims was world-wide strongly tied to the Caliphate that was under the possession of the Sultan who was the focus of their opponent. Therefore they identified their ideology as Turkish-oriented; they named themselves "Young-Turks". However, their ideology was not based on any ground (ideological)²; the main problem was that the Turks did not support this ideology since the Sultan was again the representative of the Turkish community. Thus the "Young-Turk" group was mainly based on the citizens of non-Turk (non-Sunni) and non-Arab origin. Therefore, Young-Turks consisted of Ottoman subjects, such as Kurds and non Sunni Turks (they did not recognize the Sultan neither as the representative of the Turks nor as a Caliph) and also their subjects converted into Islam among Albanians, Armenians, Bosnians, Caucasians (Circassia and Georgians), Jews and Greeks.³ These oriented subjects of Ottomans (Young Turks) struggled to put the state back in line with the glorious heritage. When the "Young-Turk" policy gained

¹ Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, pp. 316–324.

² Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri*, pp. 126–127.

³ Ottoman archival materials prove the origin of the Young-Turks. However these manuscripts were not published yet. Nevertheless some authors mention their origin to some extent. See. Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, pp. 310–314.

power in the military coup in 1908, the Sultan was exiled to Thessaloniki, where he stayed for several years.⁴

The Ottomans did not obtain the imperial title any longer and turned out to be merely a simple regional state in the aftermath of 1908 (not in territory but in the matter of administration). The ruling class was thus redesigned mostly based on the converted Islamic subjects of the state (excluding the Turks – Sunni- and Arabs). However, the national movement and anxiety left some of the Islamic subjects outside, e.g. Albanians in the remaining part of the Ottoman Balkans and Arabs who were spread all over the mid-east. This fatal mistake caused the fall of the trust among the state-fond Albanian and Arab subjects, and eventually granted easy access to the Ottoman-ruled Arabia and Albania for the allied troops of Great Britain and France during World War I in 1914.⁵

When the Ottoman subjects resented and lost their hopes of being a part of the Ottomans in future, they turned to the American continent which was to nourish their destiny. Especially those who had economic difficulties decided to find flourishing jobs and ease their suffering which had been caused by the political turmoil of the Ottomans. There were two disputed territories at that time within the Ottoman lands: the first being Macedonia and Lebanon the second. The Ottoman Macedonia was oppressed by Bulgaria, the Greek Kingdom, Serbia and of course Ottomans.⁶ Each side tried to influence the people of Macedonia and to cooperate with the chosen groups of that area. The armed groups, which Ottoman referred to as “bandit”, stimulated the region and exercised pressure on the natives.⁷ Therefore, the Macedonian natives, who did not want trouble and did not get involved into this tricky game, decided to seek their refuge in America and migrated to this continent. The scheme in the Ottoman Lebanon was not different from the conditions of Macedonia. Nevertheless, all over the state peaceful people found themselves on the verge of suffering under the shadow of the military coup of 1908 and the approaching maelstrom of the Balkan War (1912–1913). At this stage human smugglers emerged and offered an easy exit for those who sought a remedy for their miserable poverty and for their circumstances that engulfed them into the political turmoil. Nevertheless, the Ottoman state had a great deal of unemployed population due to its failure in the industrial development. Vast Ottoman lands all over the country were not prosperous. Mountains, deserts, swamps and inadequate irrigation did not give opportunity for earning a living or wealth. Ottoman lost territories due to wars and that caused an increase of the population in the remaining territories. Unlimited source of employment was melted soon by new migrants. The Ottomans had to deal with political and national uprising along with the religious differences. The bleak conditions within the state forced the desperate subjects to move abroad.

⁴ “Young Turk based government Progress and Union exiled the Sultan and enthroned the Sultan V. Mehmet.” Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, p. 340.

⁵ Erickson, *I. Dünya Savaşında Osmanlı Ordusu*, p. 168.

⁶ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*, pp. 260–265.

⁷ Curtis, *The Turk and His Lost Provinces*, pp. 30–31.

We try to find answers for the existence of human smugglers and for the eagerness of migration to America among the Ottoman subjects from 1908 to 1914, along with the question of how some of those migrants who were headed to America ended up in the quays of Trieste⁸, Rijeka and other big European ports. In order to classify our search, the following topics will be dealt with: Human Smugglers, The Departure Cites of the Ottoman Migrants and Their Reasons for Migration, The Destiny of the Ottoman Migrants and Ottoman Official Approach for the Migration, The Goal of Ottoman Migrants and their Achievements.

Human Smugglers

In 1910–1911 Corc Nabedo appeared as an individual for human smuggling in the Ottoman Balkans. Corc Nabedo promised to the Ottoman migrants to provide transport to Buenos Aires via Bitola (Macedonia), Thessaloniki, Genoa and then Buenos Aires. Obviously he charged them the fare of 240 francs a person. In Genoa (Italy) the migrants would be passed to the Italian Navy-Time Agency's ship named "Regina Elena" in order to embark for Buenos Aires according to the promises given by Corc Nabedo. There is not much information about Corc Nabedo. However, we can identify Corc Nabedo as a human smuggler by looking into his deeds since he deceived the Ottoman Macedonian migrants and left them helpless at the Rijeka port. So he did not fulfill his promises.⁹

On the verge of the first Balkan War, in 1912 another human smuggler performed his false deeds in Beirut (Lebanon). As we can infer from the Ottoman manuscripts, his name was "Hanini", but no further information on his identity is reachable. "Hanini" promised to the Ottoman migrants (from the region of Syria and Lebanon) to transport them to America by one of Conrad-Line ships with the fare of 360–400 crones a person. As in the case of the Balkan migrants, he deceived the docile people and abandoned them helpless at the port of Trieste (Austria). As it can be inferred from the "Conrad-line"¹⁰ he worked for an Austrian navy-time agency and received the fare from the migrants in the Austrian currency.¹¹

According to the Ottoman Ambassador in New York, USA and in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the number of Ottoman migrants increased each passing year and work-power continuously lacked in the Ottoman lands because of the migration to America. The Ottoman Ambassador (in Buenos Aires) estimated that the numbers of migrants only in Argentina exceeded the number of 100,000.¹² One of the official investigation reports describes the reason, how human smugglers

⁸ Italian migrants to America used the port of Trieste in 1911 as Ottoman migrants. Barbieri, *Per un programma di ricerche*, pp. 25–40.

⁹ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive, further: BOA), Dahiliye İdare (Internal Affairs, further: DH. ID.), Nr. 11/9, 1332 Z. 5 Rumi (September 25th, 1914) "mentions on the events of 1911".

¹⁰ Lee, *Avstrijski pomorski razvoj*, pp. 467–489.

¹¹ BOA., DH. ID., Nr. 11/9, 14 Teshrin-i Sani 1328 (November 27th, 1912).

¹² BOA., DH. ID., Nr. 11/9, 21 Zilhicca 1330 (October 1st, 1912).

tempted the public for the labour migration. Ottoman investigators found out that the smugglers gave a booklet to the Ottoman newspapers and were successful in reaching the Ottoman public on a wide scale. The ambassadors of the Ottoman (London, Washington, New York and Buenos Aires) requested that the ministry of the internal affairs searched for the booklet in order to determine whether it was true or not. One of the identified booklets (given by the branch of American Maritime Company in Galata Istanbul,) offered to the intenders to work abroad with a daily wage of 2–5 dollars (10–25 franks).¹³ That was a very promising wage to the hopeless peasants and required no qualifications apart from the skill how to use shovel and spade. However, the Ottoman railway construction (Berlin–Medina, completed in 1909) required labour of such kind as well.¹⁴ Contrary to the American railway waged labour, Ottomans preferred to get the labour to work for the cost of tax exemption or presumably lower wage.

The Departure Sites of the Ottoman Migrants and their Reasons for Migration

Almost all over the Ottoman country, people who had no ability to earn for a living with the exception of their muscle power tended to migrate for a better wages. The rumour of returned workers from abroad¹⁵ and booklets, which were found in newspapers, lured the helpless from the Ottoman countryside. Mainly Ottoman Balkans, Syria, Lebanon and the vicinity of Jerusalem were the pioneers of the labour-migration. At the return of those cheap labours from abroad and their visible wealth among the society hastened the vast labour transfer to the promising countries. However, some of those labours destiny ended up with sad stories and confused the adventurers' bias for migration. Whatever the results of those sad migration stories and home-sick folks, the Ottomans sustainable labour migration to the prosperous countries kept going. The Ottoman officials warned the local authorities to stop the labour migration. If that was not possible, the representatives of the Ottoman State abroad asked the local authorities to take care of proper labours and eased their migration process rather than crooks. One of the official warnings of Ottomans gives us an elaborate list of the migrants' home-towns in the Ottoman state. According to this warning telegraph, issued for the governors of migrants' home-towns of Thessaloniki, Bitola, Skodra, Kosovo, Edirne (Adrianople) and Istanbul were the Balkan cities listed on the schedule along with the other cities of the Ottoman domain in the period from 1900 to 1914.¹⁶

The Ottoman migrants had their reasons for justifying their plea to move abroad. Some complained about the heavy burdens of taxation over the olive trees;

¹³ BOA., DH. ID., Nr. 11/9, August 5th, 1913.

¹⁴ BOA, Yıldız Tasnifi, Maruzat Defteri, (Yıldız = Star Palace, Petition Book), Defter No: 9994, 23 kanun-u sani 317 (February 5th, 1902), from Sadriazam Said (Prime Minister Said).

¹⁵ Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi, V. 28, p. 364–365.

¹⁶ BOA, DH. İD., NR. 11/9, 26 Eylül 328 (December 9th, 1912), lef: 10.

some came forward with the reason of poverty and unfertile land not allowing them to earn enough to cover their life expenditures. Apart from these complaints, Ottoman investigations suggest that the reason of the plots of national up-rising was the real fact at least in the case of some migrants¹⁷. For example, some migrants from the Balkans went to America and returned armed with their earnings to the Ottoman Bulgaria and Macedonia to fight against the government.¹⁸ One of the official correspondences on the migration was about the Macedonian migrants; the document states that 30 Macedonians did not regard themselves as Bulgarian and intended to migrate to America via Austria (via the port of Trieste), they claimed poverty and the Bulgarian pressure upon their region to accept the Bulgarian identity rather than the Ottomans.¹⁹

Last but not least, the Ottoman lands were emptied because of the migrations. Some caused by the labour transfer, some because of the emerging of the national differences which took place at the verge of the 19th century. The loss of the territories in the war with Russia (1808, 1815, 1853–1856, 1876) accelerated the process of migration within the Ottoman state. However, the destinies of those migrants did not end happily and the government was not eager to see the loss of their own subjects regardless of their religious or national identities.

The Destiny of the Ottoman Migrants and the Ottoman Official Approach to the Migration

Those who succeeded to embark aboard and grasped the opportunity for a safe access to reach America or Europe came across some serious handicaps. First of all, the migrants had difficulties to reach America due to the dependable transport company. Those who were deceived by false agencies faced the problems of being abandoned in the nearest port outside of the Ottoman shores. In many cases, they were abandoned in the ports of Austria–Hungary (Trieste, Rijeka), Italy (Genoa), France (Marseille) and Great Britain (London, Liverpool).²⁰

Those Ottomans who were abandoned in foreign ports suffered due to lack of resources. Some of them begged to ease their hunger and some offered their cheap labour to carry out heavy burden at the cost of a small fee. For instance the case of Trieste is described in the Ottoman manuscript as follows:

¹⁷ BOA., İrade Hususi (Private Decree), Nr. 65, s.21, 11 Mart 324 (March 24th, 1908), “Armenian, Albanian and Bulgarian migrants who migrated to the continent gather donations for their case against the Ottoman government.”

¹⁸ BOA., TFR. I. MN. (Documents from Macedonia), Nr. 10593, 1324 8 21 (November 3rd, 1908). “Bulgarian militants armed themselves in America and return to the mountains of Bulgaria.”

¹⁹ BOA, Yıldız Tasnifi, Maruzat Defteri, NR. 9994, 26 L. 1319, 23 K.S. 317 (February 5th, 1902).

²⁰ Emin, *Amerika’da Türk Muhacirleri*.

*"From Foreign Ministry to Internal Ministry, Respected Master of State, Mr. Hanini who is one of the residents of Beirut, issued fake ticket using the name of a navy agent of Conrad Line without having the right of representation or agent. He charged the fee of 360–400 crones each of those Syrians who aimed to migrate to America. He then sent those Syrians to the port of Trieste and paid the Conrad-Line 120 crone for each passenger in order to transport them to America. However Conrad-Line asked 180 crones for each of them as a fare of shipping from Trieste to America. Ottoman Syrian migrants could not afford to give the missing sum of 60 crones. (They had already paid 360–400 crones and Mr Hanini sent them to Trieste and paid the Conrad-Line 120 crones for each passenger to get them transported to America. He then disappeared with the rest of money. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry, via a representative in Trieste asked the ruler of the Conrad-Line and Trieste Police Head-Quarter about the conditions of the abandoned Syrians. The deceived migrants at the port of Trieste were sent back to Beirut by Conrad-Line. However, some of the migrants preferred to be refunded the fee of 120 crones which had been intended for their transfer to America on the part of the Conrad-Line. After having been refunded their pre-paid fare they wasted all the money they had. Some of them started begging on the streets of Trieste after having run out of the 120-crone fund which had been received from the Conrad-Line ..."*²¹

Those who were not satisfied with their earnings abroad applied to the Ottoman ambassadors for help to obtain the fare in order to return to their homes in the Ottoman land. Many of those deceived labour migrants received the Ottoman aids to compensate the transport cost back home. However, the cost of those Ottoman victims turned out to be a serious burden for the Ottoman budget, and had the Ottoman government took precautions. We will deal with the matter of this Ottoman policy further in this section of our paper.

Those who gained the privilege of stepping on the land of America for a new start in their lives had to cope with initial obstacles there. First of all, they had to prove if they were needed in this remote country. They had to be examined according to the devised health conditions. The United States custom officers asked them to have a proper body for the labour work and not to carry any epidemic diseases as regulations applied for newcomers. The Ottoman migrants had to cope with the same applications as other destiny-sharers. However, some of the Ottoman migrants had influenza, epidemics or some diseases and they even appeared deteriorated because of the improper long-distance sea voyage. On Ellis Island (in New York) Ottoman labours were examined by the customs officers. Some of them were discarded due to their improper health conditions. It was a turning point for some of the Ottoman adventurers; they could not explain their needs and conditions because of the lack of language. In Ellis Island, there was another obstacle which was caused by the improper documents. Some of the migrants could not obtain any official passports from the Ottoman state since they had been regarded as culprits.²² They could not find any explanation for their fault (without passport)

²¹ BOA., DH. İD., Nr. 11/9, 14 Teşrin-i sani 328 (November 27th, 1912): *"Migrants from Syria and Beirut of Ottoman state could not speak any apart from their native language"*. Ottoman Manuscript: Illustration A. Glej sliko dokumenta na str. 225.

²² *"First Ottoman migrants in America were prison-break culprits, deserted soldiers ..."*, Emin, *Amerika'da Türk Muhacirleri*, p. 180.

and kept quiet against the decision of being turned away from the threshold of a new start. Those who were discarded by the US custom service returned to the British ports rather than Ottoman ones. They were scared to return to the Ottoman lands for fear of being arrested and did not have any proper funds either to live abroad or to return home. The miserable life was beyond them at the ports of Great Britain.²³ We have no further information how many of them succeeded to survive in their dream for a better life.

The Ottoman migrants who had an affiliation via relatives or neighbours before the journey succeeded in stepping on the American soil safely. Some relatives, friends or neighbours from the former city or district eased the process of migration. Especially those who migrated to the USA have benefited from the advantage of being of Ottoman origin. The Ottoman subjects, Greeks and Armenians had long before migrated to the USA. The Turks from Naslic, Kirebine (the Ottoman Macedonia) and neighbours to Greeks or Armenians learned much on the prosperous condition of earning in the US. Those who were able to communicate with Greeks or Armenians asked their assistance in the migration and were helped by the pioneer Ottoman settlers. In 1904–1905 some Turks who had Greek or Armenian friends migrated to the USA and founded prosperous business.²⁴ Then they started to encourage their relatives to migrate in order to be able to lead a proper life. The Ottomans, mainly Christian Arabs, followed their example.

Armenians and Greeks could also speak Ottoman along with some of the Arabs (especially in Syria and Beirut). Ottoman was hence the common language of communication and united the Ottoman subjects abroad. Ottoman Greeks and Armenians infiltrated easily into the Christian society in America and held the corner stone. Greeks mainly preferred to move to the USA and Armenians moved to Latin America (mainly Argentina, Brazil and Central America). Consequently Turks who lived with Greeks asked their neighbours a favour to help them find earnings abroad. Therefore, Turks from the Balkans and Anatolia with its existing Greek community were at the top of the list of migrants to the USA. The Armenians largely departed from the Ottoman Syria and Beirut after the 1890s. The Arabs who knew them followed their path with their ex-neighbours' guidance and migrated largely to Argentina and Brazil. In America, both Arabs and Turks were regarded as Muslims and obviously Ottomans. However, they diverted from each other owing to their culture and their guides (Greeks for Turks and Armenians for Arabs).²⁵ In our research we have also found out that Christian Arabs took part in the migration guidance. In 1866 and 1879 the American University and Saint Joseph University, along with some institutes were founded in the Ottoman Egypt and missionaries were affiliated with the local Arab Christians. The Ottoman Arabs

²³ Ibid, p. 182.

²⁴ "Some of the Turkish migrants were guided by the Ottoman Armenian subject who had already settled in America. Those Armenians migrated from the Anatolian town Harput.", ibid, p. 180.

²⁵ "Turks in the Ottoman Balkans worked at the Greek Kingdom as farm labour and know how to speak in Greek as well", Emin, *Amerika'da Türk Muhacirleri*, p. 179–180.

were enlightened with the western civilization by means of missionary works performed around the Ottoman Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. In 1860 Muslims and Christian Arabs engulfed into a civil disorder and many Christian Arabs fled from the Ottoman lands to the continent. Christian Arabs hence reached the number of 60,000 between in the period from 1899 to 1910. The Lebanese represented a large portion of the Ottoman Arab migrants. The Ottoman Arab migrants were mainly visible around New York, Detroit, and Boston in the USA, and Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Buenos Aires in Argentina along with Venezuela, Mexico, Canada and Chile.²⁶

The Ottoman Turks gained initially the Greek neighbours' funds and guidance on the road to America. They benefited from each other. Those who migrated and established their own factories or business employed the migrants who originated from the former country. In return for their goodness, they enjoyed cheap labour and gained surplus in business with less expenditure. The Turks were employed in shoe, timber, and manufacture factories in Peabody (coal mining industry), Wooster, Providence, Chicago, Massachusetts, Manchester, Lovell, Nachivo (as it was written in the Ottoman text) and largely in New Hampshire.²⁷ As soon as Turks or Arabs managed to stand on their own feet, they began to land a hand to their community. They kept cooperating with the pioneers from their native lands (Greek and Armenians) but turned to newcomers of their kind and developed their stronghold for future.

In time Turkish migrants from the Ottoman lands reached the number of 40,000 (this number presumably covered all Ottoman subjects who were in the USA).²⁸ Ottomans in the USA had their own way of solidarity. The first settler helped those who came after them. One of the well-known individuals (mentioned in the official Ottoman texts) was Hasan Efendi (he engaged in husbandry before his migration). He was one of the residents of Manchester in the Hampshire province. When he landed in the USA he worked at a timber factory. When he earned enough, he opened his bakery and baked bread. He also opened a coffee-house with his Greek companion. Hasan Efendi was involved into the estate business and made 15,000 Ottoman liras within ten years. He was a well-known individual who gave a hand to needy migrants from the Ottoman lands. He had an extensive network and good connections with the USA officers both within the security forces and custom services. Many of the migrants in need received his voluntarily aid in the time of trouble. Last but not least, in 1897 Mustafa Ağa from the Anatolian town of Harput (in Elazığ) settled down in Wuster and earned his wealth. He opened butchery and an ice-cream shop in the luxurious district of Wuster (in the USA). He gathered his relatives around him (one of his nephews worked at the wire factory for 30 dollars per week) and employed Turks who spoke English well and dressed like USA citizens in one of his shops.²⁹ Although they had good relations with any

²⁶ Encyclopedia of Islam, V. 28, p. 364–365.

²⁷ Emin, *Amerika'da Türk Muhacirleri*, p. 179.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 179.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 186.

kind of Ottoman patriots at their arrival or even later, the flames of the Balkan War ruined the good solidarity abroad of those who were once forming so to speak an Ottoman Commonwealth. Especially Greek patriots despised the Ottoman Turks in USA and offended the Turkish labour.

The Ottoman Government's attitude towards the migration was not positive. The Ottoman administration did not like to lose their subjects since the fields were left deserted and the rural husbandry works shattered, the olive gardens were abandoned. Ottomans with large territory under their sovereignty needed cheap labour more than the New World. However, the Ottoman market could not offer satisfactory wages to the labour. The loss of the workers and peasants possessing taxable fields and husbandry resulted in decreasing revenue to the state. The Government took precautions to stop the flow of labour migration to the New World. One of the migrants' pleas for fleeing and leaving the lands unploughed was high taxation. Especially those who were settled in the Ottoman East Mediterranean lands claimed that the government levied unjust taxes on olive trees. The Ottoman officials made an investigation and discovered that the taxation regime needed to be considered. The Ottomans charged each olive tree a reasonable tax. However, the trees which no longer bore fruit were taxed as if they had brought profits. It was an unjust burden for the producers of olives. The Ottoman officers declined to lift the taxes on unfruitful olive trees. Nevertheless the investigators argued that the migrants' pleas should not be granted since the taxes on unfruitful olive trees did not represent a heavy burden to them.³⁰

Some of the migrants' pleas stated as the reason for their departure the environment which failed to provide means for survival. Especially the reasons of those who left the region in the Balkan Peninsula due to the unfertile lands and rocky terrain were regarded as justifiable in the eyes of the officials. The Ottoman investigator approved their case and found out that there was nothing but rocky mountain ranges around the migrants' villages. When the Ottomans had vast territories under their sovereignty, those who had living difficulties moved to Istanbul and Egypt for a labour work. The labour from the Aegean Islands and some villagers round Thessaloniki and Macedonia preferred to work in the house or heavy labour in the Ottoman wealthy towns.³¹ However, the residents of the Balkans tended to offer their labour power to the continent; in the aftermath of the 1908 Military Coup caused the national bias over the foreign workers around the wealthy towns. Egypt did not offer the labour for the Ottoman Greeks and Albanians any longer. When Great Britain gained the ultimate strength over Egypt in 1882, they preferred to bring cheap labour from India and hindered the opportunity of earning more wages for labour originating from the Ottoman lands in Egypt.³² Great Britain also introduced the industry which required less muscle power and replaced the human

³⁰ BOA., DH. ID., 11/9, 9 August 328 R. (22 August 1912), written by Governor of Syria.

³¹ Erler, *Osmanlı-Yunan Sınırında Ordunun*, pp. 50–51.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

labour with the mechanics. For example, one of the tobacco factories in Egypt used the Anatolian tobacco, but did not need labour from the Ottomans at all.³³

More or less all migrants' pleas for the departure gathered around the matter of the question of security. In 1876–78 the Ottoman Balkans and Caucasus witnessed formidable power advancing through the inland. Russian forces found an easy gain within the Ottoman Balkans and North–East provinces. Therefore the Ottoman residents on the Balkans were scared of a bleak future for their existence as a part of Ottoman world. The weakness of the Ottomans flared the national independence mood which was spread across the Balkans and caused the internal turmoil thus leaving the Balkans insecure.³⁴ The intervention of the European states (France, Great Britain and Piedmont) and Russia within the Jerusalem province and Syria (Lebanon), over the disputed struggle of Holy places diverted the locals to prove their authority over the Holy lands.³⁵ Either side gained the supremacy, but their fight irritated the peaceful subjects and hastened the migration. The Ottoman precaution backing the security and peace to the chaotic region was too harsh and the military iron fist crashed the weak national groups. The strong backlash from the Ottoman authorities pushed the national demands to the underground and terrorized the territory. The tensions increased steadily and people of the disputed regions were forced to choose sides. Regardless of their selection, peaceful subjects were accused of being traitors by the opposite side. Those who sought refuge and did not get involved preferred to leave the country and migrate.

The Ottoman government encouraged travellers who were included in trade activities. However, the Ottoman migrants were confused by the regulations and foreign countries made stricter conditions for those who came from the Ottoman lands. Therefore, merchants suffered because of such strict customs and complained against the state. The government regulated emigration and separated migrants from merchants. Thus, the government freed the merchants of any kind of regulations on two conditions: they had to prove their trade matter and their connections abroad, along with the adequate capital to trade. The government accepted the regulations on basis of those which were in use in Hungary. According to the Ottoman ambassador in the USA, the Hungarian instructions for the migrants were proper and the Hungarian migrants did not meet any difficulties in the New World. The Ottoman government decided to apply the same regulations on those who intended to migrate. In short, these regulations were based on the following:

1. Migrants should get proper passports.
2. In order to get the passport, migrants' health conditions should be examined according to the USA customs care.
3. Migrants should prove to have a sum of currency to live by.

³³ “13.000.000 kg tobaccos each year send to Egypt ...” Tüccarzade, *Memalik-i Osmaniye Cep Atlasi*, pp. 143–144.

³⁴ Bozhinov, Paneho Dorev's speech at the Ottoman parliament in 1909, p. 97.

³⁵ Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon*, pp. 245–250.

4. Migrants should not demand any aid for their migration costs from the government.

That regulation was tried to be applied to the Ottoman migrants. However, migrants were eager to migrate on their own and tended not to inform the government. Although the state declared not to take any responsibility for the uninformed migration, the state provided assistance to those migrants who had been deceived during the migration. The state had the ambassadors investigate the conditions of the Ottoman labour abroad. Some of the ambassadors' investigation reports proved the state's inefficiency regarding the migration problems. Their reports included depictions of unpleasant conditions of the Ottoman citizens abroad. They confessed that the Ottoman state, unlike USA authorities, did not have a proper list of migrants.

The Goal of the Ottoman Migrants and their Achievements

The Ottoman migrants innately aimed to find a safe place away from all the disputes concerning their domestic affairs. As comes for the living, they were initially all reluctant to work for not more than just for their daily bread. As time went by, they learned how to gain wealth and they found their way into marketing business for a better life. Those migrants who gained enough wealth and put a reasonable sum aside attempted to run their own small-scale business. Some of those entrepreneurs opened their shops or butcher-houses and some of them found themselves on the streets selling ice-cream, pop-corn, chestnuts, kebabs, lemon juice or any kind of beverages (apart from alcohol). The Ottoman migrants did not have any ambitions to learn the language or culture since the migrants largely carried the humble idea of returning home in their minds. Indeed large numbers of the Ottoman migrants returned home after having gained a sum which would enable them a shelter in their home-towns.³⁶

Nevertheless, some of the migrants decided to stay longer contrary to their initial expectations. Those exclusive individuals among the Ottoman migrants succeed to infiltrate among the society, found wealth and benefited from the estate business. At first, they were employed as labour in the field of the construction and even worse in the railway works struggle, later they turned out to be in charge of their own businesses. Later on they started employing their relatives or patriots at their properties. They no longer looked like the Ottomans, changed the way of dressing and learned the language. Their families were influenced by the adaptation; they sent their children to proper schools and received higher education. Their workers from the Ottoman lands were also required to learn the language fluently in order to satisfy their customers.³⁷

³⁶ "Those who migrates to America has returned back instantly with a large sum up money and thought the sum earned by forgery" BOA., DH. İD., 11/9, 21 Zilhicce 330 (1 October 1912), "to the interior ministry by the ministry of foreign minister."

³⁷ Emin, *Amerika'da Türk Muhacirleri*, p. 180.

The Ottoman migrants rested and settled around their initial working place. Some railway workers preferred to stay in the wagons. Some shared their rooms with at least six people. However, they learned to have their own shelters and some of them brought their families to their vicinity. Their family life and districts (shanty-towns) were much better if compared to that of the Italians, Slavs (loud, noisy crowd and the smell of fried pork covering the shanty-towns) and other labour districts on the continent.³⁸ However, some of the Ottoman migrants from Lebanon (Christian Arabs) got involved into forgery and deceived some warehouses. They asked the owner of warehouses to provide them some tradable goods in order to sell them on the streets. Once they convinced the merchants without paying any cash (paying back after the sale on the streets), they sold their goods in the streets and bargained the tradable goods at low prices. Because of their low price offer, the goods were sold very rapidly. Those street sellers or bargainers escaped to their hometowns as soon as they had reached the satisfactory sum for the non-paid tradable goods in the countries of the Latin America (mainly Brazil and Argentina). In some cases store owners complained to the Ottoman ambassadors and asked for compensation of their rights from the deceptive Ottoman migrants. The Ottoman officials investigated the matter and compensated the store-owners and attempted to get back the property of deceivers but failed to deliver. However, the Ottoman government admitted that the deceivers' easy gain and their wealth invited new crooks to raid the continent³⁹ and ruined reputation of the Ottoman labour.⁴⁰

The Ottoman migrants, at least the wealthy ones, participated in the educational system abroad. They sent their children to colleges or missionaries to improve their language. However, the Ottoman migrant community gathered and wasted their free time apart from work in coffeehouses by enjoying alcohol, dancing with girls and reading the Ottoman newspapers which were sent from their home-towns. However, the Ottoman Arabs and other minorities had their own way. The Greek, Armenian and other former Ottoman Christian subjects benefited from the language and cultural courses given by the city halls. They adapted easily into the foreign civilization because of their family life.⁴¹ However, the Ottoman Christian Arabs preferred to maintain their own culture and established a private association in Sao Paulo (Brazil) to print their journal in Arabic. They issued the poetry book entitled "Tezkarü'l Muhacir" written by Kayser Ma'luf. The Arabic society on the continent carried out their cultural mission even after the chief establisher of the association, Naum Lebeki, returned to Beirut in 1908. The Ottoman Arabs who migrated to the New World introduced the Arabic culture and language and kept maintaining their cultural heritage by issuing news papers, journals and books in Arabic. According to one of the investigations, their regular journal and newspapers issued in New York and Brazil reached the number of 250. They also became creators

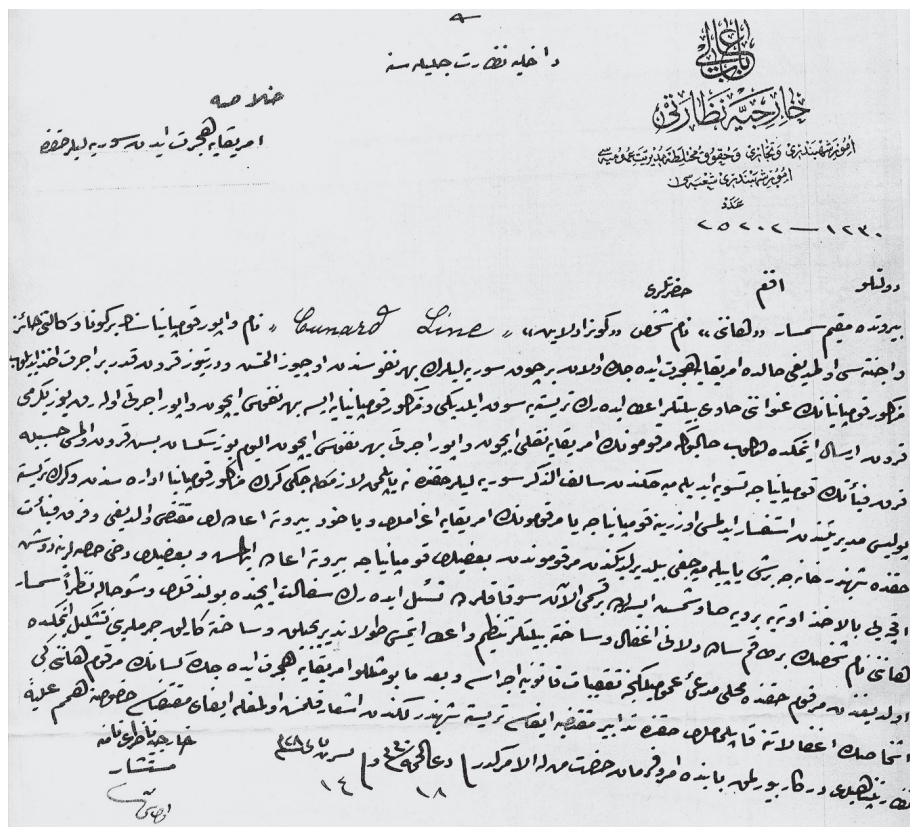
³⁸ Ibid, p. 181.

³⁹ BOA., DH. İD., 11/9, 21 Zilhicce 330 (1 October 1912).

⁴⁰ Whereas Ottoman labours accepted as trustworthy ones in the mining camps of South Africa (especially diamonds') in 1889. *Ankara Gazetesi* (Ankara Newspaper), 1889.

⁴¹ Emin, *Amerika'da Türk Muhacirleri*, p. 187.

of the migrants folk and poems in the Arabic literature (the Mehcer “= migration place” literature).⁴²



“BOA., DH.ID., Nr. 11/9, 14 Teshrin-i Sani 1328 > (November 27th, 1912).”

Conclusion

The Ottoman failure in governing vast population and territories created the waves of migration from the beginning of the 1800s. Lost wars (the Ottoman and Russian wars) and the territories of the Ottomans lured those who led humble lives to join the migration. Therefore, Europe and the American continent attracted the Ottoman migrants into the labour markets. As time went by, those labours turned to be citizens of the new states, which tempted the migrants. However, they remained being a part of the Ottoman soils and souls as well as the migration destinations. They did not forget their past, cultural habits, and their roots. Thus, migrants performed an imported role as a bridge in order to transfer the cultural and politic agreements between the East and West. The human smugglers' false

⁴² Encyclopedia of Islam, V. 28, s. 365.

deeds caused the emergence of the helpless individuals around the ports of Trieste and Rijeka. The poor, who had been deceived in the ports of Europe, ruined the Ottomans reputation. The state tried to save the unpleasant situation of the Ottoman subjects and attempted to rescue the abandoned migrants. However, the Ottoman migrants' sufferings and miserable lives shaped the outside communities' opinion towards the state.

Sources

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, İstanbul (BOA)
Funds: Prime Ministry (the Republic of Turkey)
Dahiliye İdare
Yıldız Tasnifi, Maruzat Defteri
İrade Hususi, TFR. I.MN.
Ankara Gazetesi (Ankara Newspaper), 1889

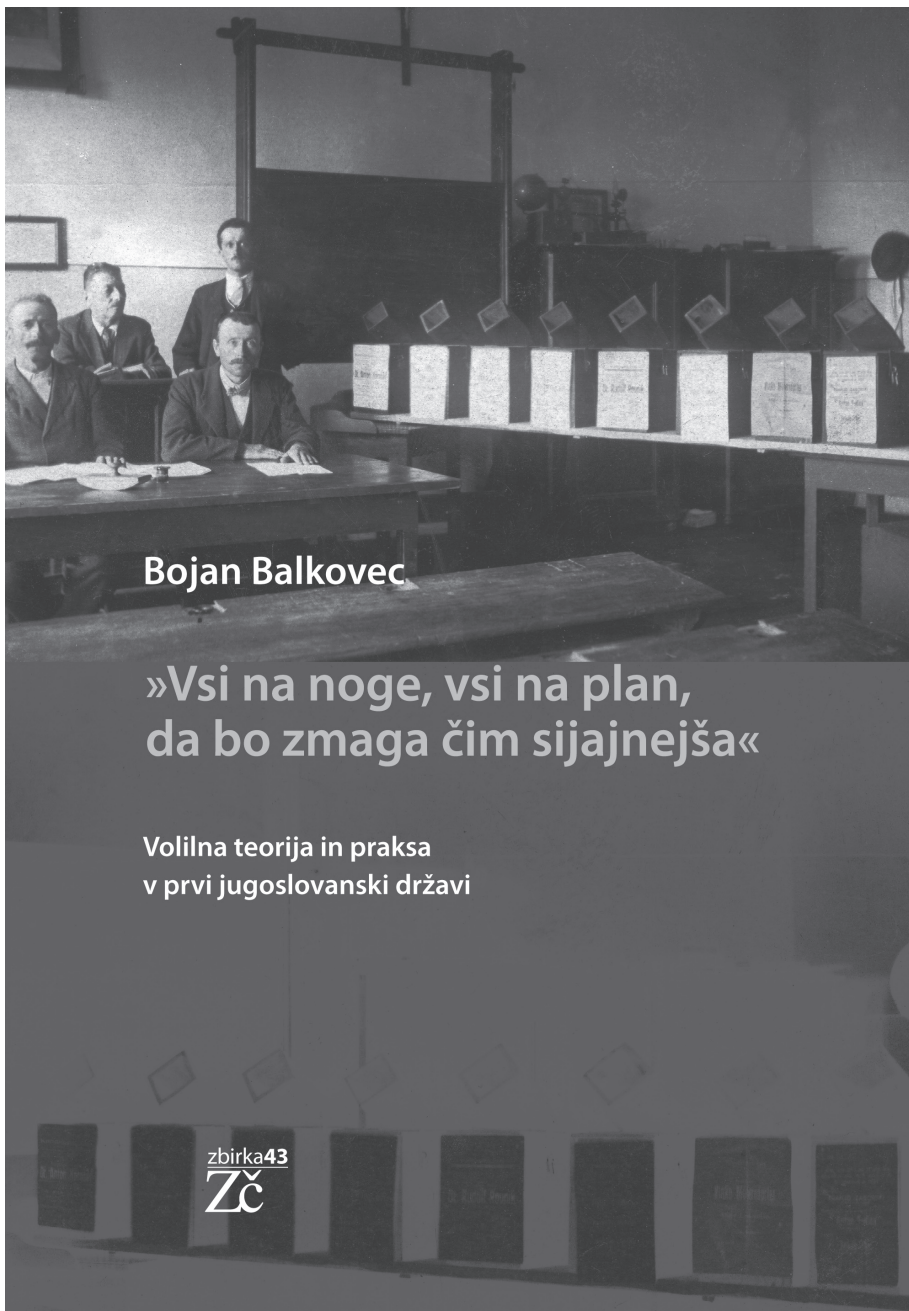
Bibliography

- Adanır, Fikret, *Makedonya Sorunu* (The Question of Macedonia), İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2001.
- Ahmet Emin (In Ottoman, there is not any surname), Amerika'da Türk Muhacirleri (Turkish Migrants at America), *Dar-ül Fünun Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası* (in exact translation: The Dore for Science = University, Journal of Faculty of Literature), sayı: 2, Mayıs 1332 (May 1916).
- Barbieri, Giuseppe, Per un programma di ricerche sulla emigrazione italiana in America, *Gli Italiani negli Stati Uniti e l'opera degli italiani negli Stati Uniti d'America*, Firenze: Istituto di Studi Americani, Università di Firenze, 1972, pp. 25–40
- Bozhinov, Voin, Paneho Dorev's speech at the Ottoman parliament in 1909, *Macedonia, (Documents and Material)*, Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, 1978. Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası, Issue: 2, Mayıs 1332 (May 1916).
- Curtis, William-Eleroy, *The Turk and His Lost Provinces*, London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903.
- Erler, Mehmet Yavuz, *Osmanlı-Yunan Sınırında Ordunun Sosyal ve Ekonomik Gözlemleri (1897–1899)* (The Military Investigation report of social and economic on the border of Ottoman and Greece 1897–1899), İstanbul: Milenyum Yayınevi, 2008.
- Erickson, Edward J., *I. Dünya Savaşında Osmanlı Ordusu*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2009.
- Lee, Chinyun, Avstrijski pomorski razvoj v Vzhodni Aziji 1869–1914 (Austrian Maritime Development in East-Asia 1869–1914), *Zgodovinski časopis*, let. 61 (2007), 3-4 (136).
- Mardin, Şerif, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri* (The Young-Turks opinions), İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003.
- Shaw, Stanford J., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye* (History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey), İstanbul: E-Yayınları, 1983.
- Thomson, David, *Europe Since Napoleon*, London: Penguin, 1965.
- Tüccarzade İbrahim Hilmi, *Memalik-i Osmaniye Cep Atlası*, Bab-ı Ali, 1323 (1907).
- Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Turkish Religious Affairs Endowment, Encyclopedia of Islam), Ankara, 2003, V. 28.

POVZETEK

Otomanski migranti v Ameriko in njihova usoda v tržaškem in reškem pristanišču (1896–1914)**Osman Keskiner and Mehmet Yavuz**

Množična brezposelnost v otomanski državi je bila posledica neuspešnega industrijskega razvoja. Obsežna območja po vsej deželi so stagnirala. Gorski in močvirnat svet, puščave ter neustrezna irigacija so onemogočali tako preživetje kot bogatenje. Izguba otomanskih teritorijev je posledica vojn, ki naj bi doprinesle k povečanju prebivalstva na obstoječih območjih. Novi migranti so izčrpali neomejene vire zaposlitve. Otomani so se poleg verskih razlik soočali tudi s političnimi in narodnimi upori. Neugodne razmere v državi so obupano prebivalstvo prisilile v selitev na tuje. Priljubljeni cilj otomanskih izseljencev je bila Amerika, kamor so jih zvalili otomanski misijonarji ter pionirji. Število migrantov je po 1853 letno naraščalo v skladu z nemiri in revščino znotraj države, v Ameriki se je tako znašlo več kot 100.000 otomanskih migrantov. Težave, s katerimi so se srečevali v procesu migracije, so segale od težav s transportom do težav pri iskanju zaposlitve ter nastanitve. Pričujoči prispevek predstavlja pregled migracijskega procesa v poglavjih z naslovi: Tihotapci ljudi, Izhodišča otomanskih migrantov ter razlogi za migracijo, Usoda otomanskih migrantov ter uradno otomansko stališče do migracije, Cilj in dosežki otomanskih migrantov. Naše raziskave so pokazale, da sta pristanišči Trst in Reka otomanskim migrantom predstavljali odpre duri do Amerike.



Bojan Balkovec

»Vsi na noge, vsi na plan,
da bo zmaga čim sijajnejša«

Volilna teorija in praksa
v prvi jugoslovanski državi

zbirka⁴³
ZČ